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*Wojciech Kułaga*<sup>1</sup>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15804/rop2023103>

## **THE PHENOMENON OF PATHOSTREAMING AND PATHOLOGICAL CONTENT IN THE FACE OF MEDIA POLICY**

**Keywords:** pathostreaming, pathostreamer, pathoinfluencer, pathouser, media pathologies

**ABSTRACT:** Pathological online communication behaviours and their detrimental effects have remained a significant component of Internet research ever since it became a field of study in media science. It is safe to say that, in addition to the valuable content posted on social media, one can also find content that can be threatening given the media reality of today's online audience. In the author's opinion, pathostreaming and pathological content should certainly be considered as such. Pathostreaming is a new phenomenon in the media space, which involves posting of online recordings or images containing obscene, vulgar and sexual content, as well as, spreading hate speech on various digital platforms. Its peculiarity has contributed to the emergence of new media entities – the pathostreamer, the pathoinfluencer and the pathouser. The author of this article attempts to analyse the activities of obscene content creators and their viewers using content analysis and interviews. The paper's goals are to demonstrate the phenomenon of pathostreaming as the risk of social pathologies being transmitted into the online space and to outline media policy towards this media problem.

### **PATHOLOGICAL CONTENT IN THE MEDIA**

Online pathological communication and its harmful effects have played a significant role in scientific research on the Internet ever since it became an area of study and discussion point. The term “pathostreaming” was

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<sup>1</sup> Szkoła Doktorska Nauk Społecznych Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego; ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9220-0151>; [wojciech.kulaga@doctora.uj.edu.pl](mailto:wojciech.kulaga@doctora.uj.edu.pl).

coined by fusing the words “pathology” and “streaming”, as a result of the transmission of social pathologies into the network. Pathological behaviour includes all destructive and self-destructive actions and attitudes of people, groups, and even societies that go against basic moral principles, go against the values of a certain culture, and cause social harm. Bis divided the categories of deviant attitudes into those that have an individual character, such as drug abuse, drug addiction, paedophilia, spreading hate speech, xenophobia, homophobia, prostitution, and those that have an overarching collective character, such as organized crime, social orphanhood or ostracism (Bis, 2012, p. 12). Ultimately, therefore, according to Irena Pospiszyl, social pathology is most often defined as a negative social phenomenon that must take into account the following conditions: 1. the violation of norms and values; 2. the destructiveness of the behaviour as measured by the scale of social condemnation; 3. the occurrence in a larger collective or on a mass scale; 4. the need to use collective force to oppose such problems (Pospiszyl, 2011, p. 12).

The term “streaming” should be understood as an online service that involves the transmission of audio-visual files in real time using a specific communication channel (Kmieciak-Goławska, 2019, p. 171). Many audio-visual platforms, including HBO GO or Netflix, operate on the principle of streaming. Pathostreaming usually consists of videos of several seconds or several hours of online live reports, which are published online via Snapchat, YouTube or Instagram. These audio-visual files usually refer to values from the subculture of violence, i.e. a system of norms condoning the use of violence (Tomasz, Hejmej, 2015, pp. 79-88). So the term “pathostreaming” in the media refers to any broadcaster or content creator behaviour that might be deemed abnormal as in the aforementioned definitions.

The trend of showing one’s private life to other users has proved attractive to some audiences who, wishing to fit into this trend, have started their online activities (e.g., lifestyle bloggers or vloggers). The popularity and interest in online forms containing deviant behaviours has led to the development of new media entities called pathocreators (pathology creators). They record alcoholic libations, vulgar speech, erotic content, fights, and even pissing on camera in exchange for monetary payments made by

viewers. This is characteristic of pathostreaming on YouTube (Kułaga, 2022). Nowadays, pathological content is spotted on almost every social platform, e.g. TikTok, Instagram, Twitter or Facebook groups.

An interesting aspect of the topic covered is the economic layer and media policy towards the phenomenon of pathostreaming. The amounts paid during pathostreams on YouTube are most often realized via text messages sent by phone. They are referred to as “donejts”, which is the polonised equivalent of the English verb “to donate”. The amounts sent by users are displayed on the screen during the recording. Furthermore, donating allows users to post any comments, even those with vulgar overtones, which also displayed on the screen. The exchange of sentences between the pathocreators and their viewers can take place simultaneously during the stream in a chat room via YouTube (Kmieciak-Goławska, 2019, p. 172). The topics of pathocreators’ online activities depend on the type of the content they create. The tool for communicating with viewers, which allows them to display their comments and pay money on air, has its origins in gameplays mainly. Pathology creators have used it for other purposes, though. Agnieszka Kmieciak-Goławska states that one of such categories are videos with vulgar content and aggressive statements that initially appear harmless. Another type are streams that in their form resemble the popular online videos on YouTube designed to entertain viewers (Kmieciak-Goławska, 2019, p. 173). I propose to complement this concept with another categories. One of them are videos which consist of several seconds resembling lifestyle content posted on social media (e.g. Snapchat, Instagram or TikTok). The next category are intentional online forms that are explicitly pathological, i.e., features of pathological behaviour and transgression of social norms and Internet etiquette appear on them.

The aim of this article is to characterise the activities of pathocreators and pathousers and to illustrate the phenomenon of pathostreaming in the Polish media space. The researcher was guided by a purposive selection of extreme and illustrative cases (Flick, 2018) to fully illustrate the phenomenon of pathostreaming and its specificities. It was assumed that the achievement of the above research objective could only take place with answers to the following research questions: Who are the pathostreamers?

What characterises their activity on the Internet? What content do they create? What is their relationship with their audiences? What (potential) mechanisms can be discerned in the activities of pathostreamers? Why do online users watch pathostreams? What (potential) mechanisms drive the audiences of pathostreamers?

## **EXPOSURE OF PATHOLOGICAL CONTENT VS. MEDIA CONSENT**

Recordings of pathostreamers are becoming a new form on the Internet, which allows viewers to acquire and learn violent behaviours, reactions and harmful communication patterns. Thus watching pathostreaming can contribute to the weakening of the instinct of self-preservation, which can consequently concur to the increase in violent behaviour among young people (Ogonowska, 2021, pp. 79-100). According to Polish Public Opinion Research Centre, people aged 18-34 make up the largest group of Polish Internet users (CBOS No. 90/2015). Young people willingly delve into virtual reality primarily for the sake of the desire to satisfy their needs associated with adolescence. One of them is a sense of self-identity (Wojcik, 2013, p. 16). Beata Zajęcka says that adolescents have yet to fully develop their hierarchy of values, so they are unable to objectively assess the world and deem it hard to differentiate between the good and the bad. For this reason, young Internet users resort to the Web in search for new values, idols or authorities (Zajęcka, 2012, p. 221).

Following the words of Małgorzata Laskowska that “affect is a natural consequence of the perception of a media message” (2019, p. 2.), it can be said that every message “marks” the user, guided by the concepts of eufunctions and dysfunctions of the media (Bartoszcze, 2006, p. 62). So pathostreaming can influence the formation of attitudes that embrace violence by having the viewer identify with the emotions of the pathostreamers. The exposition of violent content presented on Web becomes a message to young viewers that aggression is an appropriate form of response in certain situations (Groves, Prot, Anderson, Saleem, Allen, 2016, pp. 119-139). Audiences’ susceptibility to accepting and adopt-

ing violent models presented online depend on issues of perceived consequences of aggressive behaviour in other people. When the user identifies with the broadcasters and has sympathy for them, they may subconsciously adopt their model of behaviour (Kmieciak-Goławska, 2019, p. 178). Creators of obscene content are now becoming idols in the online space. The interest in broadcasts and the spread of pathological content is a clear sign for pathocreators that they are providing entertainment for the audience. This directly affects viewers, as they may accept and adopt the violent patterns contained in the transmissions. Not only does pathostreaming cause viewers' normative system to be distorted into a subculture of violence, but it can also desensitises them to violent habits.

Desensitisation in the psychological literature is known as the desensitisation effect. It consists in extinguishing the physiological and emotional response to a given stimulus according to the frequency of its occurrence (Kmieciak-Goławska, 2019, p. 178). Desensitization results in a marked reduction in the perceived fear once confronted with violence, and thus can affect an increase in aggressive behaviour and thoughts. According to Agnieszka Kmieciak-Goławska; "It is anxiety that strongly prevents individuals from resorting to violent solutions" (2019, p. 179). The mechanism of desensitisation to aggression also contributes to reducing the need to help others. This phenomenon affects the interpretation of deviant events as a commonplace that requires no intervention. It also significantly weakens the ability to notice the problem and thus delays the decision to react.

The appearance of new groups (e.g., pathousers), that is, a certain change in the social structure, has consequences of a far-reaching nature. Krzysztof Krajewski states that for some individuals, the use of violence and aggression will be the result of the internalisation of certain norms and values of the subculture of violence. For others, it may be a consequence of identification with a particular social group or its individual members, as well as the will to conform to certain standards and norms typical of a particular group. The last group mentioned by Krajewski are individuals who want to obtain a certain reward or avoid punishment. The use of violence in the latter two cases does not necessarily constitute a positive stance toward such modes of behaviour and does not necessar-

ily give the individual enough satisfaction (Krajewski, 1987, p. 37). Therefore, the transmission of norms of the subculture of violence as a result of watching pathostreams depends on the frequency of an individual's contact with a particular pattern of behaviour. It can be correlated with the consequences of observing hostile attitudes and a particular interpretation of them.

It is worth noting the systemic dimension, i.e. the privacy policies of social media platforms. Due to its obscene, vulgar and violent nature YouTube under public pressure, did suspend several channels in which pathostreams were run. However, various social media platforms (Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok) allow pathocreators to continue their online activism. This phenomenon shows that the Internet is a difficult medium to control, and the occurrence of harmful content has become inevitable. Modelling of attitudes and behaviour by the media, mainly through the Internet, is now becoming a reality. Agnieszka Kmiecik-Goławska argues that in the face of pathostreaming, an increasing social control is necessary to defend a negative standpoint towards online manifestations of psychological violence, hate speech and pathological acts (2019, p. 179). The values of pathostreamers can be qualified as crucial to the aforementioned subculture of violence. The network mediates the internalisation of values associated with violence and aggression through their widespread acceptance on the Web. This contributes to the formation of new groups in the online society: the pathousers, i.e., audiences who have acquired deviant behaviour through pathological Web content.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The study used a quantitative technique, mainly the content analysis (Lisowska-Magdziarz, 2004) to focus on depicting the phenomenon of pathostreaming accurately. I analysed the activities and profiles of two pathostreamers (Daniel Magical and Marta Linkiewicz) and their viewers guided by the criterion of popularity, extremity and imagery (Flick, 2018). I applied content analysis to audio-visual materials available on YouTube platform, Facebook and Instagram. Other methods used in the study of

pathostreaming were: observation of Marta Linkiewicz's activities and the activities of her followers, as well as interviews with them.

Pathostreamers, who carried out their activities mainly on the YouTube platform in the form of live streams, extremely rarely did archive recordings on their channels. Playback of pathostreams for retrospective analysis was only possible thanks to viewers who, using the screen recording function, made record of the content and posted it on their channels in the form of so-called shots or compilations. Thanks to this, recordings related to individual pathocreators continue to appear in the media space, even despite the discontinuation of their activities or the blocking by YouTube of accounts that violate the rules of ethics.

The organisation of the research was determined by its structuring into two segments. In the first segment of the research, comprising three elements: characteristics of the broadcasters' activities, messages and comments, a variety of primary sources were used. With regard to broadcasters, these were mainly materials found on the Web – articles, press releases, news from news websites, posts from social networks, etc. It should be emphasised here that due to the dispersion and fragmentary nature of this information, the profiles of the pathostreamers presented are incomplete. However, they give a certain outline of their activities. The characterisation of the messages, in turn, required an examination of the pathostreamers' posts and videos, so-called "shots", published on YouTube and other social networks. The key issue here was to decide on the criteria for classifying materials for research. As mentioned above, popularity, extremity and imagery (Flick, 2018) of the individual messages was considered the deciding factor here. The final step in this segment of the research was the analysis of viewers' comments posted during the coverage or under posts on the Instagram platform.

The second segment of the research involves the analysis of interviews with fans of one of the pathostreamers. Six of Marta Linkiewicz's followers, randomly selected from those available on Instagram, were invited to participate in the research. Each of them was informed of the intention to conduct an interview – a study that would serve as an important source of information necessary to draw conclusions related to the interest in pathostreaming in the media space in Poland. The interviews were based

on the same design. They contained six main questions (sentiments) that formed the starting point and foundation of the interview with each of the six selected individuals. The conversations took place via an instant messaging service available on Instagram, which allows contact between a person and their audience. The conversations were in writing.

### **THREATS POSED BY THE ACTIVITY OF PATHOINFLUENCERS, PATHOSTREAMERS AND PATHOUSERS**

According to the Polish Ombudsman, pathostreaming is: “(...) vulgar, demeaning online forms, often full of physical and verbal violence, not infrequently recorded under the influence of alcohol or other drugs with disregard for the law and the rules of social coexistence (...) It is the showing of violence and vulgar content, sometimes in violation of the law, so that viewers watching it over the Internet pay the broadcaster. In Poland in recent years, the phenomenon has intensified in a way not known in other countries”. The popularity of pathostreams and pathocreators is steadily growing guided by the fact that almost 84% of teenagers surveyed by CBOS have been exposed to online materials referring to pathological behaviour (CBOS No. 90/2015).

Pathostreaming is a phenomenon that occurs at various levels. It consists of number of factors related not only to media discourse, but above all, also relates to functional disorders in public life referring to the concept of social pathology. Therefore, the phenomenon is developing in the main areas of communication. Referring to the basic model of communication, we can distinguish: the sphere of senders, messages and recipients. Analysis of these dimensions allowed me to depict the scale of the phenomenon in broad communication terms as a complex and progressive media threat.



## FACING MEDIA POLICY

Media policy is instantly changing as governments and civil society organisations increasingly recognize the potential harms of pathological streaming on vulnerable individuals and societies. Social media in particular have started to pay attention to harmful content and fake-news (TikTok, Facebook, Instagram), thereby adapting flexible privacy policies and regulations to changing content. Ultimately, it is clear that the proliferation of pathological streaming content on the Internet has necessitated a re-examination of traditional media policy and a corresponding shift towards more effective regulation and enforcement. One key example is that the phenomenon of Daniel Magical and his reality-show-like pathostreams came to an end due to his public praise of a crime. The pathostreamer also urged his family in one of the broadcasts to make false statements in court. As a result, he was banned from publishing any content online and from participating in videos with similar themes. After losing the trial, the family also had to pay a bail of one thousand zloty and was placed under police supervision (*Kim jest Daniel...*, n.d.).

In order to ensure the safety of users, some social media platforms try to keep up with pathological online behaviour and continuously adapt their regulations as TikTok which deletes videos containing profanity, damaging descriptions (e.g. incitement to sex or suicide) and potential danger (e.g. alcohol intoxication or smoking). TikTok's Terms and Conditions state: "We will remove any content that violates our rules – including videos, audio recordings, livestreams, photos, comments, links or other forms of text. Violators are informed of our decisions and may appeal if they believe there has been no violation or a mistake. We will temporarily or permanently block accounts and/or users who commit serious or repeated violations on the platform. In making such decisions, we may also take into account information about behaviour on other platforms and in real life. Situations where there is a specific, credible and imminent threat to human life may be reported to law enforcement" (TikTok, 2023).

Conversely, how does YouTube identify content that violates community guidelines? The answer also appears in the regulations: "Hundreds of

hours of new content are uploaded to YouTube every minute, so we use a combination of learning systems and human labour to detect problematic content. Learning systems are good at detecting patterns, which helps us detect content that is similar to content we have already removed, even before it is displayed. We believe that the best way to remove content quickly is to anticipate problems before they occur. Our monitoring department reviews news, social media and user submissions to detect new trends related to inappropriate content. Its job is also to prepare our teams to resolve problems before they become bigger ones. Learning systems make it easier for us to automatically identify and remove spam and to remove re-uploaded content that we have already reviewed and found to be in breach of our policies. YouTube takes action on other flagged videos after they have been checked by trained verifiers. They check whether content violates the rules and protect material uploaded for educational, documentary, scientific or artistic purposes. Verification teams remove content that violates the rules and age-restricted videos that may be inappropriate for some viewers. If, in the opinion of the verifiers, the content violates the community guidelines, we remove the video and send the creator a notification. The first time a creator violates the community guidelines, they will receive a warning from us, but the channel will not be penalised. After the first admonition, we send the channel creator a warning for breaching the community guidelines and impose temporary restrictions on the account, including not being able to upload videos, live stream or create testimonials, for one week. Channels that receive 3 warnings within 90 days are shut down. Channels whose main purpose is to violate our rules or who have 1 instance of serious abuse on the platform are closed without warning. If a creator believes there has been a mistake, they can appeal against any warning and closure. Our teams will re-examine the decision made” (YouTube, 2023).

Governments and civil society organisations must ensure that their regulations and enforcement keep pace with the changing face of pathological streaming content on the Internet, while also providing appropriate education to users on the potential risks associated with viewing such content. In order to adequately address the potential risks posed by pathological streaming content, governments and civil society organisa-

tions must take a two-pronged approach. Firstly, they must ensure that their regulations are comprehensive and up to date so as to provide effective protection for users against any harmful content they might encounter. Secondly, they must provide users with adequate education on the potential risks of viewing pathological streaming content so as to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions when consuming this type of content (e.g. everyone has the opportunity to report harmful material on the Internet).

### **PROBABLE CAUSES OF PATHOLOGICAL CONTENT**

The theory of media voyeurism may be important in capturing one of the reasons for the development of media pathostreaming. Laura Mulvey concedes that voyeurism is such a kind of pleasure that comes from just looking at something. She argues that the screen makes it possible to observe the private lives of other individuals, and the result of this activity is a feeling of relaxation, amusement or joy (Mulvey, 1989). Opposedly to this point, Joanna Wieczorek states that media voyeurism is an attitude of the audience, which consists in observing the reality created by the mass media and the people participating in it, whether they are aware of it or not. The phenomenon of media “voyeurism” occurs not only physically, but also mentally. An individual participating in the lives of others consciously or unconsciously enters the intimate sphere of a person. The phenomenon of voyeurism and media exhibitionism satisfy human natural curiosities. The second notion implies behaviour that involves making nudity and elements related to private life public in order to gain fame and popularity. Both concepts also enable participation in a new form of an interpersonal communication (Wieczorek, 2014, p. 52).

One of the ideas behind the creation of pathostreams, therefore, may be the essence of media voyeurism. The analysed excerpts from Daniel Magical’s account presented a deeply dysfunctional family, which became the focus of the audience’s attention. In the case of Marta Linkiewicz, the viewers’ attention was directed to the sexual aspect and the sense of body liberation. Therefore, it is possible to categorise pathostreamers and delin-

eat the pathological thematic circles that motivate their activities and actions. Daniel Magical was distinguished by his form referring to Big Brother. The most prominent theme in the pathostreams he publicised was alcoholism. Marta Linkiewicz's activities have alluded to utter sexual liberation and exposure of sexuality and private life.

The phenomenon of the popularity of pathostreams can also be seen in the light of Erving Goffman's scene theory. Based on this view, pathostreamers become actors who play certain roles, testing the limits of possibilities and enhancing those elements of "play" and appearance (subculture of violence, sexuality, vulgarity) that attract the attention of the audience (Goffman, 2000, p. 192). Hosted by Linki Master and Daniel Magical, pathostreams are both the "stage" where they present themselves, perform, and the "backstage" where they show their privacy (the factor of most interest to viewers). Erving Goffman stressed that the behaviour of actors on stage is somewhat deceptive. Although role-players control their behaviour. They want to be perceived in a certain way, but all this is done so as to manipulate the environment. According to Goffman, every individual, from time to time commits dishonest acts so that they could present themselves in a certain light. What is important is that manipulative habits are not always of a conscious nature. Each individual acts in accordance with their own self-image (Goffman, 2000). The fine line between the "stage", on which the behaviour of actors differs from that "behind the scenes", is blurred in the case of pathostreaming. The backstage, a symbol of privacy, turns into "stage" during the broadcast.

It can therefore be thought that the expansion of pathological content would not thereof be possible if it were not for the "audience", which influences the play of the "actors", controlling their practices and expressing great interest in activities borderlining on social pathology in the Internet discourse. In the case of pathostreaming, privacy has become a commodity for broadcasters (pathostreamers), which on the one hand has had the effect of increasing media visibility, expanding the audience and earning more money. But it is the renunciation of an important part of a person's natural space and dignity as well.

In the media, the privacy of celebrities and politicians has been exposed and exploited many times, shocking the audience and increasing the

income of a given medium thanks to readership and viewership. Although, pathostreaming has become a stronger stimulus for viewers, stronger than any source of news and gossip ever before. The broadcasts of Linki Master or Daniel Magical, on which they completely surrender their privacy for instance by showing sexual intercourses, fights, family problems, are a transgression of normative rules related to everyone's private space. This is an example of the transgression of social taboos and may be a reason for the popularity of this phenomenon.

The process of classical conditioning, which involves the association of behaviour with reaction, may also be crucial to pathostreaming. Reaction can take the form of weakening or strengthening the impact of the stimulus. Effective gratification of an aggressive behaviour can be psychologically beneficial (increased self-esteem) or provide tangible reward (fame, money). Agnieszka Kmieciak-Goławska claims that "The activities of pathostreamers provide them with enough profits that they are motivated to continue and develop their work" (2019, p. 176). Pathostreaming and pathoinfluencing are solid source of income, providing broadcasters of deviant content with high earnings that extend to tens of thousands of zlotys gross per month (Kmieciak-Goławska, 2019, p. 175). Another reward that reinforces aggressive behaviour is the reduction of unpleasant psychological states (*catharsis*), which allows users to relieve internal tension by the means of passive or active observation of the pathomessages and consequently improve their well-being (Wojciszke, 2009, p. 369).

### **PATHOSTREAMING AS A PHENOMENON THAT THREATENS AUDIENCES**

For the purposes of the study, I contacted six randomly selected followers of Marta Linkiewicz via the Instagram platform, which is the hotspot of activity of this pathoinfluencer. Currently, Linki Master's account gathers 1.3 million followers. The results of individual interviews with Marta Linkiewicz's followers revealed two important aspects of the progressive phenomenon of pathostreaming in Poland. The first is the observation of

this pathostreamer motivated solely by the curiosity of viewers, what was confirmed by the research in the article published in the “Wirtualne media” website, where it was curiosity that accounted for 75% of patostreamers’ viewing (Dąbrowska, 2019). The second group of factors attracting observers are similar values and a sense of alignment with the pathostreamer. This was particularly evident in the case of one respondent, who felt a similarity in her traits and experiences when viewing videos and pathological content posted by Marta Linkiewicz. The analysis of the comments and interviews with the followers showed that each of these people is aware of what they are watching. As a result, they participate in creating and expanding the structure of the internal group associating around the activities of a given pathostreamer.

The threat of pathostreaming and the consequences it can cause have been noticed by the Ombudsman and the Polish media, which have taken steps to make users aware of the negative impact of pathostreaming on the Internet culture since 2018. A change in YouTube’s privacy policy and awareness of the threat of pathostreaming resulted in the removal of pathological content posted by Daniel Magical. Be that as it may, Marta Linkiewicz, a pathoinfluencer, is an example of how the issue of materials referring to the subculture of violence and sex remains prevalent in the online space, specifically on the Instagram. In my view, the most noteworthy aspect of this social medium’s privacy policy is that it shifts responsibility for offensive content to users and attempts to inspire them to build online shared responsibility. For example Instagram’s extensive and intricate privacy policy states: “If someone shares photos and videos that bother you, you can stop following or block that user. You can also report something you think violates the Community Rules directly from within the app” (Facebook, 2023). So judging by the aforementioned examples of TikTok’s and YouTube’s privacy policies, one can conclude that Instagram is less restrictive.

## SUMMARY

Over the past few years, the Internet has fundamentally changed into a user-oriented space. In turn, technology has enabled the activation of individuals online. Numerous blogs, social networks and video-sharing platforms have emerged on the Web. Thus, social technologies have made it possible to revolutionise user-generated content in the global online community and to publish their opinions and reactions (Stępnicka, Wiązek, 2014, p. 254). This form now dominates the web, and platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram and Twitter have become key platforms for the exchange of opinions. These sites are indicative of the current state of society and the behaviour of Internet users (Dubose, 2011). Katarzyna Fabjaniak-Czeraniak concludes that online social media are now one of the most dynamically functioning channels of global communication. The researcher sees the reasons for the development of social media in the changing society, its evolving expectations and needs in relation to technology and media. Alongside radio, television and the press, social media are a fundamental part of the media space, the specificity of which is the particular proximity of the receiver of the message to the sender (Fabjaniak-Czeraniak, 2012). Various phenomena thrive on this media background, pathostreaming can be one of them.

Pathostreaming is an online activity that involves the publication of audio-visual materials that refer to social pathologies (e.g. violence, fights, sexual acts, obscene behaviour, alcoholism, etc.). Its sources are: the need for entertainment, the transmission of features associated with social pathology to digital space, curiosity of obscene behaviour and sometimes a sense of community resulting from the similarity of values between broadcasters and users. Pathological content can be distinguished by its subject matter (sexual, referring to a subculture of violence, related to an alcohol problem) and the form of sharing obscene material (live streams, recordings on Instagram, “shots” on YouTube, quick videos on TikTok). Pathocreators try to attract Internet users in various ways: they conduct broadcasts during which they show their sex lives, reveal the daily functioning of the family, portray its members addicted to alcohol or record

fight. The language used by the broadcasters of explicit content was extremely vulgar in all analysed cases, referring to the subculture of violence and sexuality. The structures of speech were dominated by cursing, while the composition was haphazard and poor in its form. The language of the audience was largely reflected in the nature and style of communication of the individual pathocreators included in the analysis. The statements of the audience were equally extreme, vulgar and offensive, and alluded to the sphere of sex and violence. The overall audience is predominantly young people, some of whom identify with the pathostreamers, as evident in the approving comments on the posted accounts. The majority of viewers accepted and applauded the behaviour of the pathostreamers, the language they used and their values. In some cases, viewers defended the pathostreamers against those who were critical of them in their comments.

Since the Internet became a subject of scientific research, pathological online communication behaviours and their negative consequences have been an important part of it. They were also defined and discussed in detail in a study compiled by the Ombudsman in 2018, and continue to be studied by experts due to dynamic changes and increasing reach. One of the negative effects that pathostreaming generates is the modelling of obscene behaviour among young viewers and the condoning of pathological content online. This phenomenon is linked to the change in the culture of the Internet and the creation of a new form of user called the “pathouser”.

The author of the study distinguished 3 new types of media entities. Pathostreamer is a person who transmits audio-visual files marked by a pathological factor into the media space. Pathoinfluencer, on the other hand, is an influential figure who is able to impact on a large group of people through social media due to their media reach. For this reason, pathoinfluencers are sometimes used as part of marketing campaigns, as they are able to skilfully influence the behavior of Internet users and spark more interest in their audience. The last entity, pathouser, is an individual who observes deviant content, which can model behaviours similar to those published by pathostreamers.



As a result of the research, I attempted to outline the complex phenomenon of pathostreaming: its nature, characteristics and probable sources. In my opinion, pathological content is a threat in the media space due to the possibility of modelling pathological behaviour in younger users and creating a sense of acquiescence to obscene and vulgar actions that may conflict with the normative system and moral values in society. However, the privacy policies of many websites are tightening steadily and media entities are now paying more attention to controlling the material that appears, in order to stop the expansion of pathological content.

The factor that accounts for the popularity of watching pathocreators is primarily curiosity and breaking taboos. Watching pathostreams feeds the spiral of hate speech and pathological behaviour, which is evident among viewers of the analysed materials. The pathostreamers resort to even more extreme pathological behaviour to attract viewers. They expose their sexuality, show alcoholism and violence. This influences the popularisation of obscene behaviour and acquiescence to pathological reactions on the Internet, disrupting the normative system. Pathological content also contributes to the creation of a generation of pathousers who condone the recording of obscene behaviour. Exposure of privacy is an important element in the process of creating pathostreams and, at the same time, is one of the sources of the popularity of this phenomenon in Internet discourse.

Pathostreaming is a progressive phenomenon in media structures, awareness of which is fundamental to controlling content and limiting negative impact. Likewise online hate speech, pathostreaming is among the threats that have grown out of social pathology transferred to the online area. Nevertheless, the privacy policies of many social media are changing in relation to pathological content. The key, in my opinion, is therefore to make the public aware of the possible negative impact on young users and internet culture. Pathostreaming can be referred to a real-life situation in which people standing in a circle watch a fight, but none of them intervene. The observers only react with shouts and cheering. This situation, which refers to social pathology and voyeurism, has found its counterpart in the media space as pathostreaming.

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