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TEACHERS OF RURAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS AND PREVENTIVE ACTIONS IN THE AREA OF CYBERBULLYING

ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of research conducted on the research sample of N=388 teachers in rural secondary schools. The aim of the research was to answer the problems concerning knowledge and activities undertaken by teachers in rural secondary schools in the prevention of the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The method used in this study was diagnostic survey. The research technique was individual, categorized interview, based on the author's interview questionnaire. The collected data shows that educational classes are the most popular preventive actions organized in secondary schools in rural areas on the safety of children and young people in the Web. As part of preventive actions, the majority of teachers take the conversations with students to raise their awareness in the area of the dangers associated with the use of the Web. Analyses flow requests that the level of knowledge of the actions and initiatives organized by the institutions, especially the local environment, as well as the level of knowledge of websites and telephone hotlines among teachers in rural secondary schools is low. Such a low level of knowledge will translate into the quality of preventive measures implemented by teachers, especially in the aspect of information strategy.

Key words:

teachers of rural schools, prevention of cyberbullying, prevention in rural schools

1. Introduction

A personal computer with Internet access is one of the biggest and most important achievements of the civilisation. Percentage of households with computers is steadily increasing. In Poland, in 2013 75% of households were equipped with a computer¹. Access to the global network is even more popular among under-aged persons, who use the Internet at home, school, as well as in facilities and institutions that organise after-school activities developing their interest² (libraries, culture centres, youth clubs, foreign language schools, and others). The Internet is a living, constantly developing structure. This openness and a false impression of impunity and anonymity cause that apart from beneficial phenomena one may encounter various pathologies and threats online. Henry Jenkins writes that if people take the media in their hands, the effects may be fantastically creative, but this may also mean problems for all the involved parties³.

Peer bullying, using new electronic media in the recent years has become a significant and serious issue, not only in terms of education and prevention, but even in social terms. Research results show that over a half of the children experience cyberbullying⁴. The specificity of the Internet and mobile phones causes that even seemingly petty acts of cyberbullying are a serious problem for the victims, who often are not able to cope with them without professional support from the parents, teachers and specialists. The issue of cyberbullying clearly concerns schools. Acts of cyberbullying usually occur with the use of mobile phones in a classroom, a locker room, or school football field. More and more frequently “traditional” peer conflicts move from the school ground to the Internet⁵. The problem, defined as *cyberbullying*⁶, and in Poland the increasingly popular term is *cyberprzemoc*, was

¹ *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce*, Central Statistical Office of Poland, <http://www.stat.gov.pl>, [Access date: 01.08.2014].

² B. Danowski, A. Krupińska, *Dziecko w sieci*, Gliwice 2007, p. 5.

³ H. Jenkins, *Kultura konwergencji. Zderzenie starych i nowych mediów*, Warszawa 2007, p. 22.

⁴ N.E. Willard, *Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats. Responding to the Challenge of Online Social Aggression, Threats, and Distress*, Ann Arbor 2007, p. 1; *Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey, Cyberbullying, Sexting and Parental Control*, Cox Communications Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey. In Partnership with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and John Walsh (fielded among young people 13–18), Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey 2009.

⁵ *Jak reagować na cyberprzemoc, poradnik dla szkół*, Ł. Wojtasik (ed.), Warszawa 2009, p. 4.

⁶ S. Hinduja, J. Patchin, *Cyberbullying: Identification, Prevention and Response*, New York 2011, p. 1; M. Ybarra, *Linkages between Depressive Symptomology and Internet Harassment among Young Regular Internet Users*, “Cyber Psychology & Behavior” 2004, No. 7(2), pp. 247–257; M. Ybarra, K.J. Mitchell, *Online Aggressor/Targets, Aggressors, and Targets: A Comparison of Associated Youth Characteristics*, “Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry” 2004, No. 45; S. Hinduja, J. Patchin,

not noticed until several years ago, but very quickly it was considered to be a significant social issue, and its addressing is currently a priority of many programs, both involving upbringing, education and prevention, devoted to the safety of youth online⁷.

The scale of cyberbullying, and its widespread nature, may be defined using the research results published so far. One of few studies conducted in Poland is the survey study by Jacek Pyżalski. The results obtained by the researcher on a large sample N=719 of junior high school [Polish: *gimnazjum*] students indicate that 20% of the respondents at least once in their life have taken actions which fulfil the criteria of cyberbullying, such as long-lasting of the action, its intentionality, and inequality of power. The percentage of respondents who admitted to being victims of cyberbullying was slightly over 16%⁸. The cited research results also show that the total of 32.4% of junior high school students direct the acts of aggression towards persons who they know only from the Internet, whereas 27.8% towards their acquaintances, mainly from the school, housing district, or class. 19.6% of the students admitted that they directed electronic aggression towards their close friends⁹. A similar pattern was observed in the United States. Ybarra and Mitchell found that almost 80% of cyberbullies attack online the persons who they know more or less¹⁰. So far, there have been few comparative studies in which specific countries would use the same research tools with unified questions regarding the experience of cyberbullying. One of the studies where questions about cyberbullying were similar to Pyżalski's, is Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey¹¹. American results under the aforesaid project slightly differed from the Polish ones.

Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying, Thousand Oaks 2009, p. 5; R. Slonje, P.K. Smith, *Cyberbullying: Another Main Type of Bullying?*, "Scandinavian Journal of Psychology" 2008, No. 49.

⁷ A. Waligóra-Huk, *Kampania i działania społeczne na rzecz bezpieczeństwa dzieci i młodzieży w Internecie* [in:] *Technologie edukacyjne – tradycja, współczesność, przewidywana przyszłość*, T. Lewowicki, B. Siemieniecki (eds.), Toruń 2011, p. 180.

⁸ J. Pyżalski, *Agresja elektroniczna wśród dzieci i młodzieży*, Sopot 2011, pp. 77–79.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 75–79.

¹⁰ M.L. Ybarra, K.J. Mitchell, *Youth Engaging in Online Harassment: Associations with Caregiver-Child Relationships, Internet Use, and Personal Characteristics*, "Journal of Adolescence" 2004, No. 27, pp. 319–336.

¹¹ *Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey, Cyberbullying, Sexting and Parental Control*, Cox Communications Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey. In Partnership with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and John Walsh (fielded among young people 13–18), Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey 2009.

The percentage of victims 3 pp. higher than in Poland and it was 19%, while the percentage of bullies was significantly lower and it accounted for 10%¹².

The research published in 2009 by the Anti-Defamation League indicate that 35% of teenagers aged between 13–17, in one year have experienced specific forms of cyberbullying: harassment, insulting or offensive comments, gossip, threats, or received aggressive messages. 8% of the teenage respondents admitted that they were victims of cyberbullies at least once a month or even more often¹³. Similar results were obtained by iSafe, an organisation dealing with activities supporting education and safety online. 35% of teenagers examined by iSafe experienced online bullying, and nearly 20% were a victim of cyberbullying more than once¹⁴.

Moreover, according to the research carried out by Wired Safety, 40% of secondary school students have experienced theft of their passwords to e-mail or social network accounts. The thieves modified passwords, blocked access to the users' accounts, or sent different kinds of messages unlawfully using the users' identity¹⁵.

The above data, resulting from research conducted both home and abroad, make us aware that the issue of cyberbullying is actually an important phenomenon within the range of problem behaviour¹⁶ in children and teenagers, and the need for information and education prevention is justified.

The justification of taking the said own study is generally unsatisfactory status of research on the issues concerned in the Polish literature. Main and significant studies in this field were conducted in 2006 by the Nobody's Children Foundation [Polish: *Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje*] from Warsaw. Selected results of the studies were published in several magazines, in particular in "Dziecko krzywdzone"¹⁷ and in J. Pyżalski's¹⁸ and Ł. Wojtasik's¹⁹ publications. The existing studies on the issue of

¹² J. Pyżalski, op.cit., p. 78.

¹³ S. Hogan, *Cyberbullying Is Worse than Traditional Bullying* [in:] *Cyberbullying*, L.S. Friedman (eds.), Farmington Hills 2011, p. 26; S. Hogan, *Cyber Bully: The Schoolyard Bully Now Has a Screen Name*, "Times Publications" October 2008.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 30.

¹⁵ L.T. Sanchez, *Cyberbullying Should Be Treated as a Crime* [in:] *Cyberbullying*, L.S. Friedman (ed.), Farmington Hills 2011, p. 41.

¹⁶ R. Jessor, S.L. Jessor, *Problem Behavior and Psychosocial Development: A Longitudinal Study of Youth*, New York 1997; R. Jessor, *Problem – Behavior Theory, Psychosocial Development, and Adolescent Problem Drinking*, "British Journal of Addiction" 1977, Vol. 82, Iss. 4.

¹⁷ M. Walrave, W. Herman, *Skutki cyberbullyingu – oskarżenie czy obrona technologii?*, "Dziecko krzywdzone. Teoria, badania, praktyka" 2009, No. 1(26).

¹⁸ J. Pyżalski, op.cit., p. 79 and following.

¹⁹ *Jak reagować...*, op.cit., pp. 5–10; Ł. Wojtasik, *Przemoc rówieśnicza a media elektroniczne*, Warszawa 2007.

cyberbullying refer in particular to the scale of the phenomenon, specific forms of cyberbullying, frequency of its specific forms, emotions felt by the victim, as well the issue of informing other persons, especially parents, teachers and peers of experiencing cyberbullying. The studies concerned were conducted only in big city communities and they were not representative. Moreover, they did not explore this new social phenomenon any further. A shortage of studies on the issue of cyberbullying among children and youth from rural areas is felt, also in the field of preventive actions taken by the teachers. Moreover, in the times of progressing social changes, developing industrialisation, globalisation, and socio-economic transformations, as well as technological development, dysfunctional individual behaviours change, including behaviours of children and youth. In line with development and extension of knowledge in the area of pedagogical sciences, teachers' and specialists' methods of responding to and preventing the incidents changed too, including the violence using the media. Interest in this issue partly results from practical teaching experiences and day-to-day observations of the children's and teenagers' behaviours, where the media play a very important role, both in the course of establishing, maintaining and breaking interpersonal relations and contacts. Frequently, the child's functioning after time spent at school "moves" from the school life to the virtual realm of games, chats, social media, and online identity. Children are left alone in this realm without any clear instructions, not taught how to cope with the encountered difficulties, how to solve conflicts in the course of non-synchronic communication, how to respond to attacks or insulting comments received online, or through the mobile phone and they actually feel stranded, helpless, lonely, and they often become aggressive. The teaching practice shows that in the face of traumatic situations experienced by a young man, many peers, and also parents, teachers and school psychologists remain as helpless, inefficient and uninformed as the victim.

In order to prevent cyberbullying among teenagers, teachers should take a number of preventive and intervening actions²⁰. To make such actions efficient and yielding measurable results, apart from the knowledge of the phenomenon concerned, their initiators should have a certain portfolio of strategies and kinds of influence which may be used in emergency.

²⁰ See. S. Shariff, *Cyber-bullying, Issues and solutions for school, the classroom and the home*, Abingdon 2010.

2. Methodology of own studies and description of the research sample

The objective of own studies was to provide answers to the research issues, comprised in the following questions: What actions are taken by rural junior high school teachers in the area of prevention of cyberbullying among the teenagers? What is the knowledge of rural junior high school teachers in the area of preventive initiatives taken in schools against the issue of cyberbullying? What is the teachers' knowledge of websites and hotline numbers, which may be useful for the cyberbullying victims, and of initiatives implemented by local institutions, local authorities, non-governmental entities for the benefit of safety of children and youth in the Internet?

In order to find answers to the defined research problems, diagnostic survey method was selected, including individual, open, classified interviews based on the author's interview form.

The studies under diagnostic survey were conducted in 2012 in ten randomly selected rural junior high schools in the Silesian Voivodeship. The schools were selected for research on the basis of data published by the Ministry of National Education under Education Information [Polish: *System Informacji Oświatowej*]²¹. While creating the sampling frame, an advanced system of searching interesting facilities was used. The key category was the type of school: gimnazjum [junior high school], the supervisory and registering authority: commune, publicity: public school, category of students: children and teenagers, school specificity: without any specificity, related organisations: unrelated and the size class: countryside. Other size classes allowing the search in the system are: town with population of over 5 thousand and city with population up to 5 thousand.

The schools selected for the research are localised in rural areas. According to the definition provided by the Central Statistical Office (GUS), which is based on the division of administrative units in the TERYT register, rural areas are localised outside the administrative borders of the city – areas of rural communes and the rural part (located outside the city) of rural and municipal communes. It is possible to isolate the rural part in a rural and municipal commune owing to a separate territorial identifier²². In a set of system-selected schools, ten random facilities were added, where survey studies were conducted among 388 teachers – all of them employed in the schools.

²¹ System Informacji Oświatowej, <http://www.cie.men.gov.pl>, [Access date: 26.01.2012].

²² Główny Urząd Statystyczny, <http://www.stat.gov.pl>, [Access date: 26.01.2012].

The research sample analysed in terms of the sex shows that there are definitely more female (90.5%), compared to male (9.5%) teachers.

Moreover, the conducted analysis shows that majority (96.4%) of teachers of rural junior high schools have specialised master's degree. During the studies, 3.6% teachers were developing their professional skills.

The data obtained during the research shows that over a half (51.2%) of teachers of rural junior high schools have a certified teacher's title, whereas 22.5% are nominated teachers. Slightly lower number of teachers (17.7%) are contracted teachers. In the research sample, only 8.6% were trainee teachers applying for the title of a contracted teacher.

To conclude, as it follows from the conducted interviews the majority of research sample of rural junior high school teachers are women with specialised master's degree and with teaching background. The teachers employed in rural junior high schools usually have average (from 10 to 15 years) and long (over 20 years) seniority in the public education sector. The data obtained in the studies shows that over half of the teachers of rural junior high school teachers have a certified teacher's title, which confirms that they are experienced teachers with many years of teaching, education and guardianship practice.

3. Results of own studies

The conducted analyses show that 83.8% of the teachers declare that in the rural schools where they work, the students are strictly forbidden to use mobile phones both during the lessons and breaks. Therefore, the students should not have or use mobile phones both for communication and entertainment purposes. Breaching the regulations results in sanctions according to the School Grading System; usually these are reprimands and minus points, which affect the final student's grade from their general conduct. Despite the applicable rules, in the teachers' opinion, the junior high school students breach the existing rules and they use mobiles phones at school. What was noticed by the teachers is that they usually send short text messages to one another, take photos of one another, listen to music, access the Internet, and play games. There are also attempts to use the phone dishonestly during written tests. The research shows that vast majority (80.4%) of the teachers working in rural junior high schools are of the opinion that the teenagers, despite the bans, use mobile phones at school. 9.0% of the teachers are of the opposite opinion, and 10.6% state that they do not know (Table 1).

Table 1. Using mobile phones in school by students according to the teachers

Using mobile phones in school by students	Number of answers	%
Students use mobile phones	312	80.4
I don't know	41	10.6
Students don't use mobile phones	35	9.0
Total:	388	100

N = 388

Source: The author's study.

As it follows from the conducted studies, as part of actions aiming to prevent the issue of cyberbullying among rural junior high school students, vast majority of teachers (62.1%) conduct talks both individually and in groups, aiming to make the students aware of the online threats (Table 2). 14.2% of the teachers admit that they conduct form periods, mainly when necessary, when they tackle the issue of cyberbullying prevention. 12.6% of the teachers also have occasional educating lectures during teacher-parent meetings²³, aiming to make the parents aware of the online threats for the children and teenagers. A very low percentage of the interviewed teachers (1.8%) organise preventive school competitions and campaigns in the area of cyberbullying and safety of children and youth online. A similarly low percentage of teachers (1.3%) organise preventive lectures and meetings conducted by specialists or the police representatives. The gathered study results allow the conclusion that teachers of rural junior high schools do not take holistic, coherent, comprehensive, and long-term preventive actions in the area of safety of children and youth in the Internet, which may result from the lack of understanding, or little understanding of the rules and theory of social prevention²⁴.

In the opinion of 94.8% of rural junior high school teachers, some of the preventive initiatives in the area of cyberbullying are usually form periods on safety of children and youth online (Table 3). Moreover, 77.6% of the teachers declare that there are IT classes in their schools on online safety and cyberbullying. 77.1% of

²³ See: M. Musioł, *Pedagogizacja medialna rodziny. Zakres – uwarunkowania-dylematy*, Katowice 2013.

²⁴ See: J. Szymańska, *Programy profilaktyczne. Podstawy profesjonalnej psychoprofilaktyki*, Warszawa 2000.

Table 2. Preventive actions taken on the prevention of cyberbullying according to the teachers

Preventive actions	Number of answers	%
Conversations with students	241	62.1
Conducting educational lessons on safety in the Net	55	14.2
Training, lectures for parents	49	12.6
Constant cooperation with school's pedagogue or psychologist	31	8.0
Preventive actions, art competitions	7	1.8
Conducting lectures with the Police	5	1.3
Total:	388	100

N = 388

Source: The author's study.

the interviewed teachers are of the opinion that in the rural junior high schools, there are also educating meeting for parents as part of parent-teacher meetings, during which the issues of safety in the Internet and cyberbullying are tackled. Workshops, lectures with the school psychologist on safety online and cyberbullying are organised in the school in the opinion of 51.0% of the teachers. 43.5% of the teachers declare that they have knowledge on information campaigns, posters, brochures, leaflets on safety in the Internet and cyberbullying. 24.2% of the teachers admit that in rural junior high schools, Internet Safety Days are organised using the materials available on the websites of the Nobody's Children Foundation and Safer Internet.pl, while 7.2% of the teachers admit that they have initiated and coordinated the Online Safety Days in their schools. It is worrying that no workshops have been organised with a specialist and parents on safety in the Internet and cyberbullying. Such workshops, conducted by the police representatives for the parents, were organised in the opinion of 14.2% of the interviewed teachers. The workshops concerned the issue of safe use of the Internet, personal data protection, publishing private photographs and materials by the teenagers in the social media and methods of protecting oneself and responding to harmful situations, which may be experienced online. Moreover, none of the schools has any preventing programs implemented, which would refer to the issue of cyberbullying. While analysing the research data, a conclusion may be drawn that the scope of actions taken in rural schools regarding cyberbullying prevention is not sufficient. According to the prevention theories ad hoc talks or form periods are part of information strategies, which based on the results of the studies turn out to

be the least efficient²⁵. In the face of distinctive scale of cyberbullying among the Polish junior high school students, limiting the preventive initiatives in schools to occasional lectures, workshops or few school contests seems to be actions disregarding the seriousness of the problem.

Table 3. School initiatives in the prevention of cyberbullying according to the teachers

Initiatives	Number of answers	%
Educational lessons on safety in the Net	368	94.8
IT lessons on safety in the Net and cyberbullying	301	77.6
Lectures for parents on safety in the Net and cyberbullying	299	77.1
Workshops, talks with the pedagogue / psychologist on Internet security and cyberbullying for students	198	51.0
Information campaigns, posters, newsletters, flyers on security in networks and cyberbullying	169	43.5
Competitions for youth in the area of safety in the Internet	118	30.4
Organising Internet Safety Days	94	24.2
Familiarize parents with the procedures in the case of cyberbullying	93	23.9
Workshops, talks with the pedagogue / psychologist on Internet security and cyberbullying for parents	91	23.5
Lectures with expert for students	55	14.2
Appeals on security in the Internet and cyberbullying	53	13.7
Conducting cyberbullying preventive program	0	0
Lectures with expert for parents	0	0
Total:	1839	–

N = 388

The percentage data do not make up the total of 100 as the questioned people could give any number of answers.

Source: The author's study.

18.0% of the interviewed teachers admit that they personally conducted form periods, classes, talks on safety of children and youth in the Internet. The subjects of lessons conducted by the teachers related in particular to the rules of safe use of the Internet, netiquette, protection of personal data relative to using the social media, Internet addiction, the threat of cyberbullying and methods of responding to online

²⁵ Z.B. Gaś, *Psychoprofilaktyka: Procedury konstruowania programów wczesnej interwencji*, Lublin 2000.

aggression, as well as publishing inappropriate photographs and other materials online. Teachers and tutors admit that they organised such classes on an ad hoc basis, responding to current needs and possible suggestions on the part of the students and other teachers, as well as school psychologists. The said lessons were organised in grade one, two and three of the junior high school, but in grades one and two, emphasis was put on the risk of Internet and computer addiction resulting from too much time spent using the media by the students, and in grade three, the issue of personal data and image protection was tackled, related to the use of social media. On average, in each grade one form period per semester is organised on safety in the Internet. The teachers who declare that they organise such classes admit that they introduce the topic related with cyberbullying prevention on average twice a year. Moreover, during the school year, they tackle ad hoc the issues related with cyberbullying and safety in the Internet, thus responding to the current needs. However, such talks do not fill in all the time devoted to the lesson and they are only the teacher’s response to the problems occurring in the class. On the basis of the obtained research results, it may be stated that the number of form periods regarding cyberbullying and online safety of children and youth is insufficient. Although 94.8% of the teachers declare that such lessons are organised, only 18% of the respondents admit that they organise them personally on average twice a year.

A clear conclusion may be drawn that the teachers have insufficient knowledge of the websites and phone numbers of hotlines which may be used by cyberbullying victims, or persons who want to provide support and assistance. 80.4% of the interviewed teachers do not know such websites or hotline numbers. It may be concluded that lack of the teachers’ knowledge will be reflected in insufficient providing information on institutions and organisations providing assistance in the situation of experiencing cyberbullying. Therefore, specific recommendations may be formulated for the teaching practice, related to extending the teachers’ knowledge of institutions and other entities providing assistance and information

Table 4. Knowledge of websites or telephone hotlines where victims of cyberbullying can find a help according to the teachers

Declaration of knowledge	Number of answers	%
I don't know any websites or telephone numbers	312	80.4
Yes, I know such websites or telephone numbers	76	19.6
Total:	388	100

N = 388

Source: The author’s study.

for the cyberbullying victims and the persons who want to report illegal, harmful or offensive contents.

The studies also show that majority of the teachers (59.5%) do not know about any actions, initiatives, campaigns or programs implemented by local, self-government, non-government institutions for the safety of children and youth in the Internet. 40.5% of the interviewed teachers declare that they know various initiatives concerning cyberbullying prevention and safety of children and youth online. However, the teachers cannot specifically point to any initiatives organised by the local self-government or non-government institutions apart from campaigns organised by the police, which are declared to be known to 13.9% of the respondents, as well as ad hoc initiatives conducted by local Polish Scouts' Association, which was identified by 1.0% of the interviewed teachers. 2.8% of the teachers point to the knowledge of incidental knowledge of actions taken under cyberbullying prevention by community centres, culture centres or community libraries. The initiatives refer in particular to the visual art contests entitled "Safe use of the Internet". The highest percentage (22.7%) of the teachers declare that they know about selected actions and campaigns implemented by the Nobody's Children Foundation. However, the teachers say that they know about such campaigns mainly from the media. Only few persons demonstrated a good knowledge of the current and previous actions of the Nobody's Children Foundation for the safety of children and youth in the Internet. Vast majority of the respondents cannot precisely point to the names of the programs, campaigns, or specificity of a given initiative organised by this foundation, being the most efficient entity acting for cyberbullying prevention in Poland. It can be concluded from the above analyses that the teachers' level of knowledge of actions and campaigns organised by institutions and specific entities, in particular local ones, is low. This low level of knowledge will also be reflected in the quality of the preventive measures taken by the teachers, in particular in the aspect of information strategy. Teachers who do not know about institutions taking actions directed to cyberbullying prevention will not provide the teenagers with full and extensive information in this respect. What is more, they will not use the education offer and materials distributed by the foundation and other entities under the conducted actions and campaigns.

4. Conclusions

Taking into consideration the gathered data, one may formulate a conclusion that in rural junior high schools, among preventive initiatives regarding cyberbully-

ing, the most frequently organised classes are form periods and IT lessons on safety of children and youth online. Few rural junior high schoolteachers express the opinion that educating classes are also organised for the parents, as part of parent-teacher meetings, where the issues of online safety and cyberbullying are tackled. Such a narrow scope of actions taken as part of cyberbullying prevention may result from the lack of appropriate knowledge or awareness in the area of this increasingly common teenagers' problem behaviour. Moreover, the parents being insufficiently informed, may fail to demonstrate alertness regarding the child's closest circles, thus ignoring or failing to perceive the appearing problems. It should also be noticed that in rural environments, where the studies were conducted, the parents have a significantly limited access to institutions and organisations dealing with the issue of threats related with inadequate use of the media. In agglomeration environments, access to foundations, non-government organisations or other similar institutions is incomparably better. Therefore, the role of teachers making preventive efforts in the rural environments should be even more significant.

As part of cyberbullying prevention directed at rural junior high school students, vast majority of teachers organise talks both individually and in groups, aiming to make the students aware of the online threats. Few of the interviewed teachers organise preventive school contests and campaigns regarding cyberbullying and safety of children and youth online. A similarly low percentage of teachers organise lectures and preventive meetings conducted by specialists or the police representatives. Moreover, teachers initiate actions and initiatives ad hoc using promotional, information and educational materials. Too few workshops, lectures and classes are offered both to the rural junior high school students, and their parents. Insufficient is also the level of cooperation between the schools, local institutions and non-government organisations. Basically, specialists and teachers do not take up any form of continuous cooperation with the local environment in the area of cyberbullying prevention. The data gathered in the course of studies allow concluding that in rural junior high schools, basic rules resulting from the prevention theory are not respected, which refer to the necessity of using systematic, coherent, comprehensive, long term, and repetitive educational and upbringing influence. Actions taken occasionally, in particular the informational ones, are characterised by low level of efficiency.

A clear conclusion may be drawn that the teachers have insufficient knowledge of the websites and phone numbers of hotlines which may be used by cyberbullying victims, or persons who want to provide support and assistance. It may be concluded that lack of the teachers' knowledge will be reflected in insufficient providing information on institutions and organisations providing assistance in

the situation of experiencing cyberbullying. Therefore, specific recommendations may be formulated for the teaching practice, related to extending the teachers' knowledge on the knowledge of institutions and other entities providing assistance and information to the cyberbullying victims and the persons who want to report illegal, harmful or offensive contents. Teachers should broadly participate in various forms of professional training, in particular conferences, workshops, seminars and trainings on safety of children and teenagers online. Social problems are changing in line with the technological development, so the specialists working with children should catch up with such development. Teachers should therefore demonstrate a higher level of motivation regarding professional development in the area of cyberbullying. A high level of knowledge of the teaching staff is the reference point of the preventive actions which are implemented in schools.

The research results allow formulating a clear recommendation for the teaching practice. Although teachers of rural junior high schools conduct ad hoc prevention in the form of form periods on safety of children and youth online, or occasional school contests and promotional campaigns, in none of the schools they implement any form of comprehensive cyberbullying program in a competent, continuous and systematic manner. Moreover, they little benefit from the support of specialists who may join the efforts. Therefore, the level of rural junior high school teachers' knowledge should be developed continuously in the area of possibilities, forms and strategies of prevention actions in the area of cyberbullying occurring among teenagers, as aware and competent teachers have definitely a better chance to take efficient actions aiming to prevent the threats related with using the new media by young people.

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