



Parents in the Process of Educational Impact in the Area of the Use of New Media by Children and Teenagers in the Family Environment

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Abstract

This article is the empirical answer to the question: "In what way does their family environment shape the awareness of youth people in terms of the positive and negative aspects of online participation, and what are the communication-information competences that are necessary to remain safe whilst online?". The theoretical analyses and research that were carried out (N=238, Poland) on youth people aged between thirteen and eighteen have made it possible to distinguish four different educational styles: neglectful, controlling, controlling-supporting, and partnership. Each is characterized by a variation in the specifics of the child-parent relationship, differing dynamics, the scope of educational influence in the family home, differing understandings of the significance of new mobile and web media, the varying knowledge of parents regarding their children's e-activity in the context of online safety, and the competences that determine the development of safe forms of e-activity. The gathered data imply that one of the significant factors that protect teenagers from the electronic threats is parents' knowledge and consequent parenting limits set in accordance with the ways of the new media are used in the family. Simultaneously, we need to point out that there is a further necessity to provide non-formal education among parents, increasing the digital competencies in the area of threats caused by the development of the information society.

Keywords

Youth
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Introduction

Systematic, daily internet use is currently an integral element of sociocultural activity in the younger generation, who are the so-called digital natives (Prensky, 2001). The sociocultural dimension of the reality created by new media is their most important power, one which has mentally transformed the modern human being. The framework of new media is becoming more of a social, public, and political space (Castells, 2013; Van Dijk & van Deursen, 2014; İşman & Canan Güngören, 2014). Moreover, this is also a space which, in the minds of the younger generation, is not an additional element of everyday life but its integral component (Potyrała, 2011; Ballano, Uribe, & Munté-Ramos, 2014). This situation is connected with a new quality of sociocultural activity, which combines are flection of events, the interactions, and the experiences of its participants, who are transferred from the social reality with

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the creation (regardless of the real situation) of events and interactions originally connected only with the virtual space. The key aspects of this afore mentioned virtual reality is, on the one hand, the authenticity of the personal experiences of the participants, which is shaped by virtual social connections (Maffesoli, 2008; Fichnová, Mikuláš, & Wojciechowski, 2012). On the other hand, the two fold character of events and social interactions, which may be developed independently from each other or may occur between the virtual space and reality, can influence their further development and dynamics (Katz & Rice, 2002; Gosling, Augustine, Vazire, Holtzman, & Gaddis, 2011; Awan & Gauntlett, 2013).

Changes in the social landscape are the background for the shaping of different forms of social activities by the younger generation of web users. Youth people are led by the belief that the web is teeming with social life and is full of attractions devoted to them (Foehr, 2006; Székely, 2015; Voorveld & van der Goot, 2013). The image of the web's potential which generates possibilities for individual self-fulfillment encourages youth people to participate constantly in web connections and interactions that take place mainly in the framework of social media and web-enabled games (Kopecky, 2010; Cornish, 2014). Moreover, it seems to be deemed important to keep up with news from the world as presented in information services. This belief of a web teeming with social life is observed in the whole population of modern children and youth is a source of motivation to stay online, which triggers the mechanisms of social privilege and impairment (Merton, 1968; Ayas & Horzum, 2013; Gündüz & Şahin, 2011).

The first is characterized by inclusion in the dynamically-developing web communities, and the second by marginalization or even exclusion from these communities. However, social inclusion and exclusion, in this context, are not of only a virtual character, but also influence the character of social relationships in the real dimension of social reality. One of the significant consequences of a low involvement of youth people in web activities is a limited possibility to build and develop group relationships with peers from school, the local neighborhood, and the local social surroundings, and also with members of their extended family (Wallace, 2001; Lee, Yen & Hsiao, 2014).

However, any association with an unknown web user is tainted by the problems of the instability, impersonal character, and superficiality of online social contacts (Ziemba, 2013). These problems do connect, though, with the potential to discover new people online, to challenge deeply held beliefs, and to discover new views and opinions (Gazi, Aksal, & Özhan, 2012). The social contact exchange dynamics can be observed during the establishment of new contacts and temporarily forgetting about "old" contacts. The temporariness of relationships with other users is based on the constant search for new contacts and refreshing "forgotten" ones, if they have not by then lost their luster or become attractive again. These dynamics and the associated temporariness reveal a relative feature of social activity of youth people in the virtual world that is associated with participation in a certain social game, in which everything is possible; a simulative possibility of acting with no responsibility and consequences (Wąsiński, 2010; Fraillon, Ainley, Schulz, Friedman, & Gebhardt, 2014).

A significant factor that influences the attitude of a youth person towards the virtual world and their style of e-activity is the quality of their relationship with their social surroundings. This transfers a sense of belonging to groups and one's own place within them, and also the ability to fulfill the self in the perspective of the spontaneous interpersonal actions which occur within. Considering the fact that e-activity takes place mainly when a youth person is at home, the atmosphere at home is crucial. The atmosphere at home is understood as the progenitor of the quality of interpersonal reactions (interpersonal and group), emotional closeness, and the durability of family relations and educational and social influences in the family environment (Rembierz, 2010; Pace et al., 2014). Also, influences within other social environments (neighborhood, school, peers), which stimulate the development of

interests and knowledge and the skill of managing one's free time. They create a psychological, educational and social background on which the experience of a youth person is shaped, along with their self-evaluation, a sense of belonging to the social environment, life ambitions, and social attitudes, including the individual attitude towards new media and its use (Walotek-Ściańska, Szyszka, Wąsiński, & Smołucha, 2014).

There is a regularity concerning both groups of youth e-users according to which the bigger the involvement in e-reality, the lower the awareness of the potential e-threats and also a higher level of mental identification with the virtual world, which deepens their self-isolation from the social environment and weakens or even leads to a termination of relationships built in the real world (Young, 2007; Tomczyk & Wąsiński, 2014; Gilbert, Murphy, & McNally, 2011). The environment in which there is the most noticeable process of mental "joining" with the virtual world is the family. Due to the strength of emotional relationships, the meaning of the original social and pedagogical influences and its authority, the parents are in the ideal position to prepare a youth person for constructive new media use (Turner, 1993). From the point of view of safety, the most important thing is to develop the awareness and the practical skills of maintaining the proper psychological distance from the web, and to attractively organize one's own activity in the real world. In this context, the prevention of behaviors which deepen the social isolation of a youth person, and the development of safe and desirable forms of media use, become the primary challenges for parents.

All the previously described phenomena of civilizational transformations, determined by the new media, require special parental competencies to be used when the educational activities to increase the safety of the use of the electronic media by the young people are undertaken (Baker, Sanders, & Morawska, 2017). Setting the limits as for the time spent with the new media, determining when and what types of software or content can be accessed by the young family members, increase their digital security. Effective education in the modern family involves not only setting the limits of the use of the electronic media, but also parents' knowledge about the threats associated with the uncontrolled Internet use (Moawad & Ebrahim, 2016). Of course, the educational role of the family is not reduced to imposing and enforcing dos and don'ts; it is also expressed through modeling (Ebbeck, Yim, Chan, & Goh, 2016). In this case, parents are models, a reference point for the behaviors of the younger family members. The efficient measurement of the educational impact is a complex task (Say & Batigun, 2016). One of the ways to learn about this area is to learn about the declarations of the young people regarding the norms and activities within the parental control. Proposition of this type determines only one of the many parameters illustrating the ways the network media are used in the family environment. From the methodological perspective, a participant observation or a measurement of the online activity confronted with the educational activities seem to be much more effective. Unfortunately, due to some organizational conditions, such studies are difficult to conduct.

The main aim of this piece of research is the analysis of the state of awareness among lower-secondary school youth connected with the potential threats presented by new media, and the form such online activity takes from the perspective of the educational and social influence of the parents. The research is of an explorative character and was carried out with the help of an online survey distributed among lower-secondary-school youth.

Method

The Characteristics of the Sample Group

The research included youth people studying in high schools in: Bieruń, Mysłowice, Łaziska, Mikołów (Poland). The average age of the people surveyed was 15.5 years of age, and the median was 16, with a standard deviation of 2. The research was carried out on a sample of 238 people aged between 13 and 18. The detailed characteristics of the study group is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Detailed Characteristics of the Study Group

	%	N
Gender		
Female	54.62	130
Male	45.38	108
Characteristics of family well-being		
My family lives rather wealthy	40.34	96
My family lives on the average level	52.52	125
My family lives rather modestly	7.14	17
Parents are aware about the frequency of the use of computer		
Yes	89.92	214
No	10.08	24
Declared problem with getting away from computer		
Yes	18.91	45
No	81.09	193

The research included students of lower-secondary schools, and high schools (high school and technical schools). The research was carried out between January 2014 and April 2014. The research was supported by Małopolski Kurator Oświaty (part of the Polish Ministry of National Education). The research sample was selected in a way that allowed the generalization of the research results for the students of the upper secondary schools in the Silesian voivodship. According the data received from the Educational Authorities, in the school year 2014/2015, the number of students in the technical high schools was 61,838 whereas in general high schools it was 76,416. Thus, the research conducted with the use of random selection, with the obtained number of filled questionnaires, allows to generalize with the confidence level of $\alpha = 0.95$. The research was conducted by means of the anonymous online survey questionnaire. The questionnaires were collected by the persons who have completed academic course in the methodology of pedagogical research.

Research Tools and Questions

In order to carry out the research a tool was created using the following resources: a questionnaire about cyberbullying from the research conducted in 2010 by Jacek Pyżalski (consent was obtained to use the questionnaire) (Pyżalski, 2011), a questionnaire about the risks of virtual communication in Czech Republic created by Kamil Kopecky and his team, and the internet addiction risk scale created by the Silesian Board of Education (Śląskie Kuratorium Oświaty). The tool underwent pilot research and was given the name "risky e-behavior scale 2.0". This research is a continuation of the cycle of research carried out between 2010-2015 by the authors of this article.

The tool used to conduct the studies consisted of 48 questions that were designed through the triangulation of the previously mentioned questionnaires. The authors of this paper obtained the approval of K. Kopecky and J. Pyżalski to include the selected questions and answers into their own tool. The vast majority of the questions (45) required nominal answers, while three had a numerical scale (age, the amount of time spent online and on Facebook). The research problems presented in the

paper forced the researcher to reduce the presented data to the ones regarding the parental control over the use of the new media.

The data obtained (nominal scales) were calculated by means of the descriptive statistics. First, the crosstabs were developed and then the degree of the co-existence of correlations between the variables was determined by means of the chi-squared test (χ^2). At the same time, the number of the degrees of freedom (df) was identified and the strength of correlations co-existence was set through the Cramer's V coefficient (V) or coefficient of contingency (C) for the 2x2 tables. The correlation between the numerical and nominal variables was determined by means of the single variant analysis.

Due to the extended range of empirical data, in this article references were made only to a selected portion of the results of the research realized through the questionnaire "risky e-behavior scale 2.0", on the basis of which the following research problems were distinguished:

1. In what way do youth people of lower-secondary school age use new technological information (ICT)?
2. What meaning is attached to web media by the students?
3. What styles of educational influence are shown by parents of lower secondary students in order to shape their positive use of new media?¹

The methodological structure of research was created so it is possible to verify the correlation (K) between the following quality variables (Z):

K1 – parental supervision of e-activity time of the students vs respecting the rules of downloading content from the web

Z1 – parental supervision of the student's e-activity time

Z2 – respecting the rules of downloading content from the web

K2 – Parental supervision of the content of software, computer games, and websites visited by students vs respecting the rules of downloading content from the web

Z1a – parental supervision of the content of software used by students

Z1b – parental supervision of types of computer games used by students

Z1c – parental supervision of the content of websites browsed by students

Z2 – respecting the rules of downloading content from the web

K3 – Styles of communication with parents vs controlling one's own e-activity

Z1 – styles of communication with parents

Z2a – controlling the time devoted to everyday e-activity in the context of other forms of activity

Z2b – controlling e-activity connected with the ability to terminate such activity in certain situations

K4 – The attitude towards e-activity and the awareness of the risk of internet addiction

Z1 – the attitude towards e-activity in the context of traditional forms of activity

Z2 – the awareness of the risk of addiction to the virtual space

The hypothetical correlations of the quality variables included in the research methodology concern determining whether there is a correlation between the character of communication in the parent-child relationship and the educational involvement of parents and the quality of e-participation of youth in the lower-secondary age in reference to constructive and safe web media use. The quality variables referring to parents fall into two categories regarding their educational activity:

¹ The research problem presented is evaluated from the perspective of the students, that is, their experiences with parental control in the area of the electronic media use in the family environment.

- a) control over the quality of children's e-activity;
- b) form and range of communication with a child concerning the quality of e-activity.

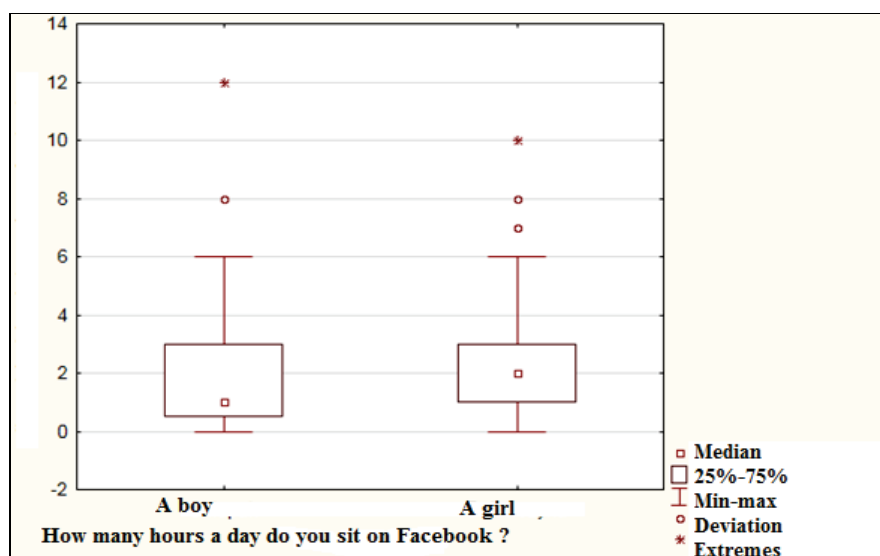
However, as far as students are concerned, there are four categories regarding the range and character of their e-activity:

- a) following the rules of using the new technologies and acting in cyber space;
- b) the sense of control over their own e-activity;
- c) keeping their distance from the content of experience shaped in the cyber space;
- d) the awareness of the risk of addiction to virtual space.

Results

The most significant meaning, from the point of view of the risk of internet addiction, is connected to the attitude of students towards computers and the Internet, which symbolize the virtual space. They show a clear attitude towards virtual reality identifying it with pleasant forms of activities (93.7%). However, this does not limit the image of their own functioning in the modern world to participation in cyber space. 45.8% of those surveyed state that their lives are something more than random attractions in the e-world and declare that they can imagine living without a computer. Although this declaration is not the same as saying: "I would rather live in a world without computers", nearly half of those surveyed clearly separate the real world from the virtual one. More than half of those surveyed (54.2%) do not make such a declaration which means that they attach a much bigger role to virtual reality in their own life. For nearly half of the students surveyed, the process of interweaving digital technologies with reality does not blur the boundary between these two worlds. This factor is crucial considering the skill required to build the proper psychological distance from cyber space by students, which decreases their risk of internet addiction.

It is important that although the attitude towards virtual reality did not vary according to the sex of the students, there is an analogy in the matter of time devoted to everyday e-activity in social media (Graph 1).



Graph 1. Time Devoted to Everyday E-Activity in Social Media by Students

The average time spent on this activity by boys equals 2.5 hours a day, whereas by girls it was 2 hours a day. Thus, the risk of addiction to the Internet applies both to boys and girls. The lack of diversity according to sex derives from the fact that a constant participation in the events of the web community is currently perceived as an integral element of not only social activity but also forms a part

of the socio-cultural dimension of modern existence of the youth generation – the activity, which is the same case for boys and girls. Moreover, it is not treated as a substitute to social life in so-called reality, but as an extension.

The characteristics of e-activity of students covers four categories connected with everyday forms of cyber activity, the attitude of the students towards their own activity in that matter, their lifestyle in the context of everyday forms of activity, and their attitude towards the risk of internet addiction (Table 2).

Table 2. The Characteristics of E-Activity of Students of Lower-Secondary-School Age

Categories	Answers	[%]
Everyday forms of e-activity of students	Due to the computer, I often do a few activities at the same time e.g. I listen to music, I'm logged in to social media, I read various websites	86.55
	I submit my artwork to the web e.g. graphics, music.	33.19
	I run a blog or a website	22.69
Attitude of students towards their own activity	Among my interests, the Internet is the most important one	14.71
	It would be better if nobody knew what I did on the Internet	34.03
Student life style	I notice that I spend more and more time on the Internet	31.09
	I get bored when I do not have access to the Internet for a whole day	29.41
	When I have a free day, I spend it all at the computer	17.23
	Very often I stay up all night at the computer	20.17
The attitude of students towards internet addiction	I know people addicted to the Internet	69.75
	I have a problem with switching off the computer	18.91
	I am afraid I might get addicted to the Internet	21.85

One common form of e-activity for lower-secondary students is multitasking (86.55%) which is based on undertaking many activities simultaneously at the computer and continuing to do so during the whole time spent on the web. This is one of the most characteristic features of e-activity of youth connected with the possibilities of new technologies in the matter of multitasking and their higher functionality. However, this is not directly reflected in their creative work since most students are considered passive e-users, following web content and occasionally taking part in an exchange of experience with other users. On a smaller case (around 20%-30%), lower-secondary school students get involved in their own creative work based on publishing their own art work, and creating blogs or websites. Every third secondary school student considers their own e-activity as breaking set rules and standards; moreover, he/she considers this activity to be shameful. Thus, he/she decides to hide it from adults and other users from his/her peer group. Also, it is interesting that nearly 15% of students treat the Internet not only as a tool – a space which allows him/her too undertake various forms of activity, but as a valuable thing itself treated as the subject of their own interests. It seems that they are fascinated by the web and they intentionally organize their own activities around it in many areas of life (cognitive, social, creative, recreational, or self-fulfillment). For these students, the web becomes crucial since they can fulfill and express themselves with its use.

Every third secondary student notices the changes that take place in the way they organize their free time in the context of e-activity. These changes are based on prioritizing e-activity over other forms of activity. Thus, it is characteristic for students to prolong the time spent on e-activities not only during the day, but also at night. Such a focus on virtual reality leads to a reduction in their own activity to spending every free moment in cyber space during a normal school day and during a day that is free from school duties. Practically, these students show a complete lack of interest in anything that is not connected with virtual reality and state that they get bored when they lack access to a computer.

Most of those surveyed state that they know people addicted to Internet. This result suggests that the common symptoms of addiction among the younger generation of e-users are well known, that students are quick to label peers as addicted, or that the students have only an imprecise understanding

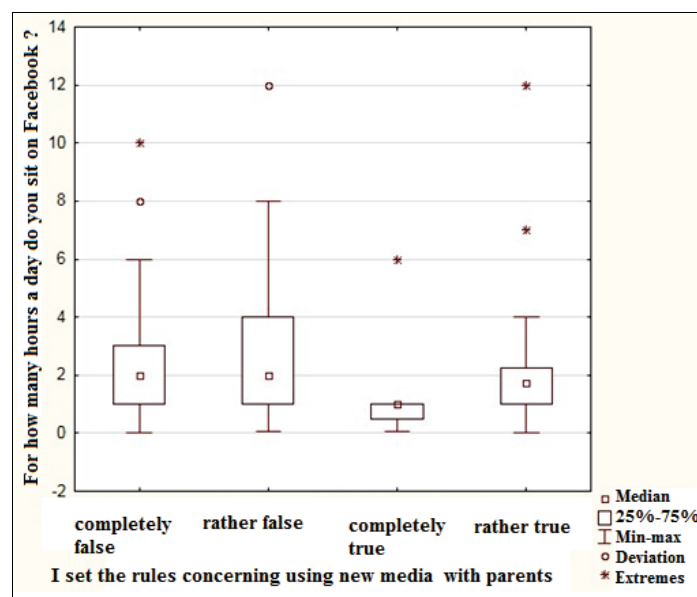
of what addiction to the Internet and computers actually is. However, the awareness of students is crucial, which indicates the recognition of this state of addiction with a change of priorities for the advantage of virtual reality and a partial loss of control over their own actions. It is worth mentioning that almost every fifth students has problems with switching off the computer, so with the termination of e-activity as he/she had earlier planned. The result of the above mentioned change of priorities is the awareness of nearly 22% of those surveyed to the risk of internet addiction with reference to themselves.

Aparallel aspect of the research is the attitude of parents and their readiness to educationally influence the e-activity of their child, but also their common or joint participation in cyber space. As it turns out, parents (89.2%) have an overall knowledge of the intensity and time duration of their children's e-activities (included in the research). Every tenth parent does not have such knowledge of their child. However, only very few parents actively influence the process and content of their children's e-activity (Table 3).

Table 3. The Role of Parents in Setting the Content-Organization-Activity Rules of Students

	No [%]	Rather Not [%]
Parents determine the rules of e-activity of students and they monitor their compliance	46.22	26.05
Parents determine the time of the day and time devoted to e-activity by students	48.32	23.53
Parents determine types of software which students may install on their computers	61.34	25.21
Parents determine types of computer games which students are allowed to play	69.75	16.81
Parents determine types of websites which students are allowed to visit	62.61	23.95

Parents do not take the initiative in the matter of determining the rules of e-activity of students and they do not monitor the compliance of those rules by students (around 72.3%). Moreover, they give students a free hand in the determination of the types of software and computer games, websites, and time of the day spent on their e-activity. The parents of students do not take part in their daily e vents in cyber space. The educational role of parents in the matter of the quality of e-activity of the students surveyed is significant. There is a certain regularity (Graph 2) connected with the fact that students who do not consult the rules of their own e-activity on social media with their parents, dedicate more time to this activity (2-3 hours) than students who consult these issues with their parents (25 min- 1h15min).



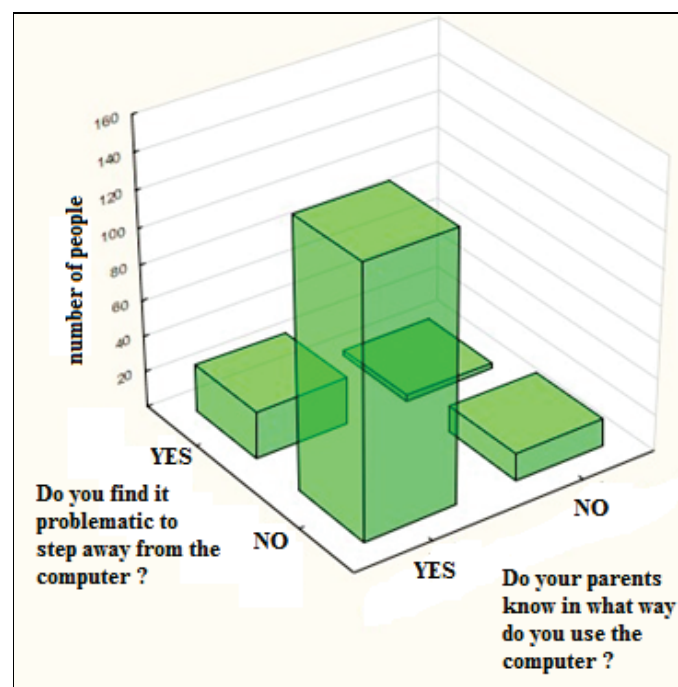
Graph 2. Setting the E-Activity Rules for Students in Relation to the Amount of Time Spent on Using Social Media

The significance of the educational role of parents is confirmed by other results which show a certain regularity based on the fact that students' use of new technologies is far safer when parents show at least a little interest in the e-activity. This regularity is shown in the set of the following data:

- a) From the perspective of the parent: the parents' knowledge connected with the time their child spends online every day and the involvement of the parents in determining the rules of their children's e-activity;
- b) From the perspective of the students: the ability to control their own e-activity along with its termination at the time planned earlier and their ability to control the download of illegal content.

Among the lower-secondary students surveyed, the key indicator that determines the ability to control their own e-activity is the ease connected with stopping at the time that was planned earlier. The student who plans for instance two hours of e-activity in his/her day schedule is able to stop this activity when the time is up and start other planned activities. If he/she did not develop the ability to control their e-activity, he/she shows a tendency to prolong it by minutes or even hours. As it turns out, students do not have a problem with controlling their schedule if their parent's know how much time is spent on their e-activity. On the other hand, students whose parents do not have such knowledge, tend to have problems with controlling their own e-activity, which is demonstrated in problems with stopping in order to start a different activity not connected with the virtual world (graph 3).

We can notice on the Graph 3, that there is a group of students experiencing complex parental control in the area of the use of the electronic media, who at the same time declare that they have no problems with limiting the time spent with digital media. This, of course, is not a clear relation, as simultaneously, we can notice the co-existence of the group experiencing the parental control and yet declaring problems with the use of the digital media. In the course of the further research, it seems interesting to identify the factors mediating between the parental control and the destructive use of the Internet.



Graph 3. The Ability of Students to Control their own E-Activity in the Context of the Parents' Knowledge of How Much Time is Spent Online

Another sign of the regularities connecting the e-activity of students in the context of the involvement of the parents is the downloading of illegal content from the Internet. The results obtained in the research showed polarized results in this matter. Students who, along with their parents, set the rules for their e-activity, rarely decide to download illegal content from the web (13.4%) compared to students who do not set the rules with their parents (44.04%). This indicator of downloading such content increases three times (its value equals 3.31% in the second case (Table 4).

Table 4. The Role of Parents in Setting and Monitoring the Legal Rules Connected with Downloading Content from the Internet

Parental supervision / downloading the illegal content from the Internet by students	[%]	The indicator of occurrence of the phenomenon (downloading illegal content)
Students and parents set the rules concerning e-activity and downloading illegal software and audiovisual materials	13.47	4.3
Students do not set the rules with parents concerning e-activity and downloading illegal software and audiovisual materials	44.04	1.3

The research produced five statistically significant correlations of variables (Table 5). The K1 correlation indicates the dependency of the students respecting the rules of downloading legal content from the web determined by their parents' control of the time spent on their e-activity. This is the case for students whose parents monitor their use of time online. The attitude of parents influences their children's respect for the rules of e-activity in the matter of downloading illegal content from the web.

Table 5. The Set of Correlations between the Quality Variables

Quality variables	Statistically – significant correlation
K1. Parental control of the e-activity time of students vs respecting the rules of downloading content from the web	$X^2=9.33$. $df=3$. $V=0.21$. $p=0.05$
K2. Parental control of the content of software, computer games, websites visited by students vs respecting the rules of downloading content from the web in the matter of:	
a) content of software used by students	$X^2=10.65$. $df=3$. $V=0.234$. $p=0.05$
b) types of computer games used by students	$X^2=11.88$. $df=3$. $V=0.248$. $p=0.01$
c) content of websites visited by students	$X^2=8.20$. $df=3$. $V=0.206$. $p=0.05$
K3. The style of communication with parents vs controlling their own e-activity in the matter of:	
a) controlling the time devoted to everyday e-activity in the context of other forms of activity	$X^2=10.43$. $df=4$. $V=0.232$. $p=0.05$
b) controlling e-activity connected with the ability to terminate it at a given moment	$X^2=10.75$. $df=4$. $V=0.236$. $p=0.05$
K4 The attitude towards e-activity and the awareness of risk of addiction to the Internet (internet addiction)	$X^2=13.69$. $df=1$. $C=0.257$. $p=0.001$

K2 correlation indicates the dependency of the students respecting the rules of downloading illegal content from the web determined by parental control of the content of the software, computer games, and websites used by the students. This is the case for students whose parents control the materials downloaded by students from the web and the content they find on the web, and shows the attitude of respecting the rules of downloading and installing software, computer games, and content from the web. They show a better understanding of the point of these rules set by their parents but which are also explained to them. Students whose parents do not control the content of their e-activity ignore these kinds of rules and declare that they systematically download illegal content from the web.

K3 correlation concerns the connection between the style of communication of the students with their parents and their ability to control the process of their own e-activity. However, the style of parent-child communication is considered optional: as an open dialogue with parents about current events on the web, and as a one-way stream of messages addressed to the students. In turn, the students' control of their own e-activity is connected with the ability to plan the day's schedule regarding various forms of activity and the ability to terminate the e-activity in the scheduled hours of the day.

K4 correlation indicates a strict connection between the attitude of students towards their own e-activity and the awareness of internet addiction. Students who favor e-activity at the cost of other forms of activity in reality tend to lack interest in other abilities to fulfill themselves outside virtual reality and get bored if they do not have access to technology. This correlation is based on the fact that students become aware of the risk of internet addiction and connect it to themselves as a realistic risk that is a result of their own e-activity. However, students who are able to keep their distance from cyber space and do not consider it more important than other forms of activity, develop their interests deriving from creative interaction with the outside world, which results in a lack of negative emotions when they do not have access to new web technologies. This group of students does not show any signs of internet addiction.

Discussion

The results obtained from the research show significant meaning for the educational influence of parents on the improvement of the e-activity of their children – youth of secondary-school age. There is a clearly polarized image of the attitude of youth towards web media in the context of their parents' educational readiness. Parents who control the time and the time of the day of their children's e-activity and who also control the content of software, computer games and websites reach a crucial educational goal. This goal is connected with shaping the awareness of a youth in the matter of the meaning of constructive and safe forms of activity undertaken in virtual reality. Indicating the meaning of constructive and safe forms of e-activity is connected with the necessity of suffering the consequences in the real dimension of social reality, in which it undergoes an evaluation in accordance with those criteria that bind it. The characteristic result of a lack of parental control is a low awareness on the part of youth people in the matter of potential threats on the web and the consequences of their own online activity which results in a false belief that it is unnecessary to respect ethical and legal rules in the virtual world and a lack of consequences to their own e-activity suffered in the real world (Wartberg, Aden, Thomsen, & Thomasius, 2015).

Parents' knowledge about the electronic threats is one of the significant factors protecting young people against the risk behaviors in the online media space (Dowdell, 2011). The competencies of parents enable the reduction of the risk behaviors related to online image, sensitive data (Tomczyk & Kopecky, 2016), addictions (Wąsiński & Tomczyk, 2015) and cyberbullying (Tomczyk, 2017). However, we need to emphasize that the role of parents in the process of technological socialization is sometimes limited by the insufficient technical knowledge (Özgür & Uçar, 2016) or young people's desire to create their own, adult-free space in the network media (Batchelor, 2006). Therefore, the preventive activities undertaken by the parents in the technological socialization process are one of the paramount educational tasks in the age of the intense development of the information society (Schrock, 2016). Knowledge and competencies of parents in the area of new technologies allow to reduce the susceptibility to destructive content (Rashid Soron, 2015). Through modeling – that is, shaping the behaviors among the young Internet users – they also develop proper patterns of behaviors (Ritterband, 2001).

The areas of the use of the new media, selected in the empirical part, regarding the amount of time, the time of the day spent using the network media, are crucial for the proper media socialization (Livingstone, 2011). However, the technological changes force parents to take up new activities when it comes to setting limits, for example the ones connected with restrictions in the use of smartphones (Warzecha, 2016). Over the recent years, the young users have been changing their strategies of using the new technologies, reducing the amount of time spent with PCs for the benefit of mobile phones. This poses some new challenges in the educational process. Controlling the content stored in the computer (Hashim, Kannan, Maximiano, & Ulmer, 2014) may, in turn, be seen as one of the oppressive behaviors towards the young family members. On the other hand, this type of parental control sets the limits for good and bad behaviors. It is also worth to point out that the activities discussed in the empirical part, connected with the knowledge and control exercised by parents in the form of modeling the behaviors of the young family members support the development of the digital competencies (Antasari, 2017). These competencies include not only the ability to use the new technologies, but also to anticipate the consequences of their negative impact and to develop positive habits.

Considering the data gathered and the co-existing correlations, we suggest the strengthening of the parental competencies in the area of the new media-related educational activities (Huk, 2014). This change involves the development of skills – in the course of non-formal education or self-education (Dvorakova & Serak, 2016; Veteska, 2016) – that would allow to reduce the risk behaviors in the virtual space. It is feasible through, e.g. expanding the knowledge of parents (Szpunar, 2016). This can be done within projects carried out by schools and financed from the ministerial resources as it is happening nowadays in Poland (the project *Bezpieczna+ <Safe+>*, in which the following subjects are involved: The Modern Poland Foundation and the Cities on the Internet Association). The parental knowledge and skills in the area of the new media, as well as the whole range of conditions in the relationships between children and their parents, are the key to safe presence in the area of the online media.

The discussion concerning the quality of Internet use by youth is determined by the will to be online in order to maintain their mainstream social life and the constant search for new incentives and inspirations during spontaneous contact with other users. Both the aforementioned motivations of youth to be online, as well as the educational initiative of the family environment may lead to positive results as far as their psychosocial development is concerned, but alternatively to destructive results generating a variety of developmental disorders in such areas as the physical, psychological, and social (Snyder, Li, O'Brien, & Howard, 2015). A vulnerability to threats deriving from inappropriate styles of participation in the web especially refers to two groups of people, that:

- a) Lose their psychological distance from new media, resulting in people treating it as an alternative to social reality. Then, the attempt is made to locate the key issues in the virtual space connected with a gradual withdrawal from issues, especially unsolved family, peer, or school problems (Wąsiński & Szyszka, 2013);
- b) Are not aware of the threats connected with their own e-activity due to a lack of a proper educational influence and in appropriate patterns of free time and work time management transferred during socialization. This is the case in the parent-child relationship in which the parents are not interested in the e-activity of the child, do not set any kind of rules concerning their online actions, and they underestimate the dangers of inappropriate Internet use (Pyżalski, 2012). In turn, the youth person does not have a need to discuss their own Internet experiences with their parents, and is not able to express themselves in a way that are comprehensible to the parents since they do not share a common language.

Youth who have the possibility to lead an open dialogue with their parents, are able to plan and respect the daily schedule in which e-activity is balanced with other forms of activity in reality (López de Ayala López, Sendín Gutierrez, & García Jiménez, 2015). Moreover, they do not have a problem with terminating their own e-activity in order to undertake activities outside cyber space. In turn, lower-secondary students who are deprived of any educational dialogue with their parents tend to have problems connected with controlling their own activity in cyber space both in the matter of planning and respecting the daily schedule as well as terminating their involvement in accordance with the plan (Simpson, 2016). This means that students who develop this competence of controlling their own use of web media extend the understanding of the meaning of keeping their distance from their own participation in cyber space and balancing time devoted to other (non-virtual tasks, chores, interests and pleasures). At the same time, they shape their ability to independently set the time frame for e-activity. However, the lack of educational dialogue in the family home space does not stimulate lower-secondary students to develop competences of self-control connected with their e-activity (Chng, Li, Liau, & Khoo, 2015). This situation might lead to students putting too great a focus on web media, and planning their day around their use of the internet rather than the other way around. A lack of spontaneous and open communication with their parents does not favor the development of the skill of planning the daily schedule and its realization. Therefore, it is about inculcating a way of thinking and acting in a youth, whose key feature is favoring the participation in cyber space over other forms of activity (Eynon & Helsper, 2015). The reinforcement of such a way of functioning disturbs the realization of other tasks included in the daily schedule, and in extreme situations leads a youth to abandoning other tasks due to a strong will to continue their participation in cyber space.

A youth's open dialogue with their parents has educational value. On one hand, the dialogue allows them to share their current experiences and opinions on participation on the web; on the other hand, it creates a common platform to set the key rules, principles and forms of being online – a discussion which leads to attaching a meaning to everyday experiences gained in cyber space. It helps to familiarize one with other points of view and favors reflection covering other meanings than just one's own. This, in turn, is reflected in building a psychological distance of a youth from their own virtual-space-oriented activity. Thus, youth may be constantly stimulated to not confine themselves mentally to only the world of virtual events and interactions with other users (Park, Kim, & Lee, 2014). Then, they have the awareness of the importance of the real world and the personal value of creation. The situation that is clearly unfavorable, however, is the educational passiveness of the parents, which is reflected in a lack of conversations with their child about important experiences in cyber space. A lack of common dialogue in the parent-child relationship limits the youth intellectually as they will not be encouraged to think reflectively about what they do and see online (Curtiss et al., 2016). Thus, there is a higher risk of remaining in a non-critical attitude towards cyber space, their own activity online, and giving it a greater meaning in the hierarchy of the individual.

The withdrawal of parents from the dialogue with their child leads to their limited knowledge of their child's experiences shaped in the virtual space. This creates a mental distance from the youth due to a lack of common ground and acting as a player of modern web games, participant of popular social media or a reader of teenage blogs. Parents whose involvement in their child's education is low do not step into the range and form of their child's e-activity, whereas slightly more involved parents limit themselves to setting the general rules and criteria of the choice of content available on the Internet (Wu et al., 2016). In this context, the meaning of even the slightest sign of the parents' educational influence on the positive behavior of lower-secondary students in the school environment is characteristic. In the positive behavior of youth, there is a visible set of factors connected with the family-home atmosphere, appropriate interpersonal relations, common conversations and skills to set new regulations in key issues, and positive patterns of behavior transferred by the parents (Şenormancı, Konkan, Güçlü, & Şenormancı, 2014). Typically, the most popular educational influence of parents is of a direct character in the form of constant monitoring of e-activity and the application of rewards and punishments. The most desirable educational influence is, in this context, of an indirect character and is far less attainable – only in this group of students surveyed, whose parents prefer trust built on the responsibility of their children for the quality and safety of their own behavior in cyber space (Pace et al., 2014).

The character of the parent-child relationship influences the form of e-activity of their child and the form of the educational influence of parents in the matter of safe web use (Tyszkowa, 2014; Çetin, Eroğlu, Peker, Akbaba, & Pepsoy, 2012; Lin, Lin, & Wu, 2009; Günüç & Doğan, 2013; Eijnden, Spijkerman, Vermulst, Rooij, & Engels, 2010). There are a few forms of educational influence that typify the forms of e-activity of a child – namely:

- a) Neglectful, in which the e-activity of a youth does not raise the interest of the parents, and as a result the parents leave the youth on their own as they build relationships within cyber space and gain experiences based on their own activity. Parents who show this kind of attitude prefer a liberal style of upbringing; thus, they do not set strict rules, principles or forms of participation in cyber space. However, they are willing to take action in special situations;
- b) Controlling, in which the youth is still neglected by their parents but their presence is marked by systematic or casual educational actions of a restrictive character (setting the limits for e-activity) or of a behavioral character (rewards and punishments used in e-activity education). Parents who show this type of attitude, set rules and forms of e-activity, but do not take part in the world of cyber space with their child.
- c) Controlling-supportive, analogous to the controlling style but with one difference – the parents take the initiative to have systematic conversations with the youth about issues connected with e-activity. That way, the parents break the barrier of knowledge about the participation of their child in cyber space and monitor the potentially negative symptoms in the child's behavior. Parents who show this kind of attitude are willing to reach an educational goal based on understanding the sense of the rules associated with their child's e-activity, who then respects and accepts such rules.
- d) Partnership, based on a different kind of involvement of the parents, who are interested in the everyday e-activity of their child. They show a high level of interest in their child's progress in extending their e-knowledge and e-competence, and also their experience as shaped by cyber space (especially in reference to social media and web games). Parents who show this kind of attitude count on dialogue with their child; this should be the background for negotiations concerning the rules and forms of e-activity. At the same time, they have a strong belief about the educational value of dialogue, which shapes a sense of responsibility for their own good in the child; this is a foundation of trust in the matter of respecting the rules accepted with free will without the necessity to monitor their behavior and activity on the web.

Partnership-participation, which requires the full involvement of the parents in the common participation with their child in the realm of cyber space. Parents become natural partners for their child, since as e-users, they all gain experience in the virtual space, they all learn and talk about issues concerning e-activity, they share a common language and bridge the generation gap. Parents who show this kind of attitude work out rules and forms of e-activity with their child and monitor them in practice. They do not have to use punishment or reward in order to reach a sense of respecting the rules, since, being online with their child, they have a positive socio-educational influence on the child and shape the behaviors and attitude desired.

The key factor that determines the quality of e-activity for lower-secondary students is the educational activity of their parents. If they are, on a daily basis, involved in their educational actions then, on one hand, they create the possibility to monitor students e-activity through determining the time and content frames, to which they may have access on the web and on their own digital device. On the other hand, they may successfully create situations which favor the dialogue and exchange of their own thoughts and opinions. This gives them the opportunity to make the lower-secondary students understand the rules of educationally-desirable rules for online behavior, and attitudes which influence the quality of e-activity. Parents' educational passiveness does not create an atmosphere favorable for reaching the agreement and cooperation with a youth in order to understand the reasons for their behavior in cyber space. As a result, they allow or even promote undesirable behaviors due to their destructive nature.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The polarization of attitudes among youth towards web media is determined by the background of the educational activity of their parents. If parents monitor the e-activity of the students surveyed, they all set the rules concerning the desirable forms and content of this activity, and they participate in an open, dialogue-oriented exchange of experience and opinions. Then, there is a visibly positive influence on the attitudes of the lower-secondary students surveyed and the quality of their e-activity. However, the parents' lack of interest in the e-activity of their own child promotes risky behavior. These are mainly connected with the chaotic use of new media, a lack of self-control in using the web, a lack of inner boundaries in downloading illegal content from the web, an excessive focus on interests connected with the virtual world, a gradual loss of the possibility of individual self-fulfillment in the real dimension of social reality, and a deepening awareness of the risk of addiction to web media (Wąsiński & Tomczyk, 2015).

Despite the possibility to choose one of a few styles of natural education within the family home, the majority of parents show a controlling or neglectful style, which is the least demanding in the context of their own involvement in their relationship with their child and the consequent necessity to dedicate time to him/her. Although the controlling style is more positively valued than the neglectful, both styles do not fulfill the educational requirements formulated for parents. Parents much more rarely show the controlling-supportive style, not to mention partnership. The character of the parental relationship determines the atmosphere of the family home and the quality of a youth person's e-activity. The most serious problem which derives from the educational passiveness of parents is the non-reflective and non-critical attitude of lower-secondary students towards web media and their own behavior online. The most noticeable developmental advantage in the case of a serious educational involvement by parents is the constructive and safe participation of a youth person in the virtual world.

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