Cyberbullying as a form of social and medial exclusion

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Abstract
The article is aimed to bring closer to understanding the issue of cyber violence, including cyberbullying (e.g. flame war, harassment, impersonation, denigration, cyber stalking) as variants of medial and social exclusion, showing its mechanisms and a number of forms which can be shaped. It also shows the issues of medial education as an important element to enable societies functioning with respect to freedom of speech and ethical norms in the process of medial and social inclusion which is again guaranteed by the EU documents and individual membership countries. It is also important to point out to the aggressor causing double harm: turned to others and itself.

Keywords: cyberbullying, mass media, media education, media exclusion, social exclusion, violence in the network

Cyberprzemoc jako forma społeczno-medialnego wykluczenia

Abstrakt
Artykuł ma na celu przybliżenie zagadnienia cyberprzemocy, w tym cyberbyuillingu (np. flame war, harrasment, impersonation, denigration, cybestalking) jako odmiany ekskluzji medialnej i społecznej, pokazanie mechanizmów funkcjonowania tego zjawiska i różnorodności form, jakie może przybierać. Ukazuje również problematykę edukacji medialnej jako istotnego elementu funkcjonowania społeczeństw w poszanowaniu wolności słowa z jednoczesnym zachowaniem norm etycznych w procesie inkluzji medialnej i społecznej, o czym traktują dokumenty Unii Europejskiej i poszczególnych państw członkowskich. Istotne staje się również ukazanie samego agresora jako podwójnie szkodzącego: innym i sobie.

Słowa kluczowe: cyberprzemoc, mass media, edukacja medialna, wykluczenie medialne, wykluczenie społeczne, przemoc w sieci
What makes cyberbullying so dangerous...is that anyone can practice it without having to confront the victim. You don’t have to be strong or fast, simply equipped with a cell phone or computer and a willingness to terrorize.

(King, 2006)

The sphere of media has become a true reality which is surrounding us but at the same time so often intruding our lives. The fact of possessing and making use of the media has become so common and it has spread into every sphere of our lives showing the world as it is but infrequently satirized. The fact of media manipulation has been proved for many years but what is even worse is the fact that they can intentionally create our perception of surrounding environment which is more difficult to prove as it is a long-lasting process during our life. Zygmunt Bauman claims that contemporary media culture is not only focused on launching products but occurs in various forms to win new clients over together with their needs before new products will be produced to meet customers’ desires. It can be said that media create our dreams, yearnings, our deep desires to possess something, never ending consumption reflected in various goods and services. The culture of constantly changing modernity is not aimed at ennobling people but it is focused on continuous delusion of its clients [1]. Currently emphasized needs to be up to date in ‘consuming the world’, developing eagerness of new possessions, more interesting is a characteristic feature of medial present times. ‘The news is not only created by a man but it becomes a self-powered element of the media culture and the culture understood in broad meaning’ [9].

The media is having more and more influence on socializing process among children and the youth [2]. ICT technologies are becoming a condition to have access to social life participation. However, it is the quality of the media usage together with the aim and its motifs which may influence social inclusion or exclusion. Thus, there arises a question whether the Internet space is a public sphere or it has restrictions? I support the view that in much extent the Internet is a public sphere so the ways of making use of it and the quality of one’s existence in it is not only the case of an individual or groups especially in all those situations where the contents and actions are observed or they influence the reception or image of other users of the Internet space. The user is referred to as a person who has used a computer switched to the internet through a dedicated line, the so called hosts.

Nowadays the media in surrounding us reality is more frequently talked about in terms of violence, direct, semi-direct, hidden, smuggled, all in all an act which is constantly present and continuous. It can be referred to visual images and sounds, advertisements which irrespective of their theme and quality are basically aimed to be effective. Even though, living in our reality does not let us isolate from the media. Any conscious choice to give up using the media especially modern ones such as the cell
phone or the internet if it is ever possible means in some way an exclusion from social and cultural reality. Still using the media may lead to violence because of improper or over exceeded use of them with other people involved who consciously use of the media to bring harm to others. All forms of violence are regarded as a way of exclusion. It may take on various forms, more or less complicated. The media is the tool to threaten, insult or humiliate individuals and groups by others. Such kind of violence is referred to as cyberbullying and it is a form of exclusion.

Inclusion and exclusion in media education

Many models of media and information competences lead to communication competences. UNESCO suggests a combined analysis of both of these competence elements under its common heading MIL (Media and Information Literacy). Such attitude shapes into integrating (inclusive) trend combined with the process of digitalization and convergence of the media and telecommunication world. Nowadays media education is as equally important as the process of learning to write. Additionally, it is supported by the culture of images which is becoming dominant. Ryszard Kapuściński [3] claimed that we are converting towards the culture of image and comic. There appears the culture of abbreviations including emoticons which derives from English word ‘emotion’ presenting smiles, used as words expressing emotional states. Using these icons does not require grammar or speaking abilities which is annoying for linguists and all those in favour of a literate language, who undeniably admit that such process leads to narrowing of any language standards. Emoticon followers claim on the other hand, that all those borrowings make communication dynamic and more attractive. The list of emotions is vast.

Among the EU policy key documents referred directly to the issues of media education is the directive of the European Parliament and Council about audio visual media services approved in 2007. According to it the membership countries had been given two year period to implement its directives into home policies which means that the deadline was until December 2009. The EU directive apart from stating its definition of a proper media use and close monitoring over development of these techniques, provides examples of possible promoting actions referring to the Recommendation of the European Council and Parliament dated in December 2006 concerning under aged care, man’s dignity and the right to answer [14]. Here are some of the examples listed:

— education of teachers and instructors,
— special Internet training courses for children, to start with youngest age groups, spread to training parents,
— organizing state social campaigns with the use of various media on how to make a sensible use of the Internet.
Media education is not the aim in itself. It is an essential part of citizenship education and the key towards development of speech freedom and the right to be informed being at the same time an important element of a shared democracy and intercultural dialogue counteracting digital and social exclusion including a communication one [11]. Media education in terms of acquiring widely understood communication competences can be received more than an attitude rather than technical skills. In medial education the following elements decide of its prior character: Comprehension, Critical Capacity, Creativity, Consumption, Citizenship and Cross Cultural Communication, Access, Understanding, Create and Cultural, Critical and Creative. These are often enlarged by three other elements: Protection, Promotion and Participation.

An inclusive media education concept is focused around three major tasks:
1) allowing everyone access to the media which is a potential tool to understand world changes, social structures and active participation in the life of democracy. At the same time it turns towards counteraction of social exclusion phenomenon;
2) developing abilities of critical analysis all forms of transmission starting with information then education to end up with entertainment;
3) supporting development of creativity and interactive attitudes in different areas of medial communication [6].
4) media education is combined with reducing and counteraction of media violence phenomena in various forms.

Pedagogium College of Higher Education in Poland together with NASK Research Institute carried out studies in 2013 among a group of lower secondary and secondary school students comprising seven schools in Mazowieckie Province. The results were alarming:
1) 41.4% of students declared that they had had no guidance on the Internet.
2) 79.6% of students declared that their parents were not interested how their children used the Internet.
3) 30.9% of students without their parents’ consent used to meet new people in the net;
4) only 51.2% of the students admitted that they used social networking sites made their profile settings to be viewed only for their friends [13].

While writing about inclusion and exclusion in the media I understand that it takes place and develops in media and through the media, with their presence and use. In the media we find meanings which touch the problem, show its motifs, threat and present real examples of images referred to inclusion and exclusion area. On the other hand, the media is a perfect tool both for inclusion and exclusion just to give an example of the phenomenon of cyber violence, which may
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take on shape for instance of cyberbullying. Exclusion may be expressed here as a direct action isolating an individual e.g. by international deletion of a particular person from the Internet contact list.

**Cyberbullying in contemporary world**

The Internet for the present moment has become one of the most important inventions of 20th century and still having its strong position in this era, but it is also the most excellent tool for communication. The Internet has as many pros as its cons. During the process of using the net there has appeared a new branch of violence – the so called cyberbullying, which means electronic aggression with the use of a cell phone or a computer with the Internet access.

Cyberbullying which is an English word and it means persecution, threatening, harassment and laughing at others with the use of information and communication technologies such as text messages, visual messages, e-mails, internet displays, discussion forums, blogs and communication sites like GG or chat sites. According to Łukasz Wojtasik’s definition of cyberbullying ‘it means using information and communication techniques towards conscious, multiple and hostile behaviors of an individual or a group of people aimed consciously to cause harm to others’ [12]. Cyberbullying is regarded as a behaviour causing emotional harm to other person and leaving long-lasting tracks in one’s psychic. Cyber aggressors (meant here as people who commit violence using the net space) are using either cell phones or the Internet which comprises such behaviors as: humiliating, insulting, threatening, harassment with the use of the above means, to impersonate other people in social networking sites, forums, blogs, communication sites, e-mail correspondence, hacking into other people’s e-mail sites or accounts, publishing and distributing somebody else’s photos, information and films which might insult in some way other person, creating insulting blogs, internet sites, accounts as well as writing offensive comments on social forums, portals and blogs.

Cyberbullying has become a plague in 21st century because unlike physical violence it does not leave any marks on the victim’s body so it becomes difficult to recognize the offender. People who have suffered such kind of violence feel hurt, humiliated, excluded and they are deeply affected by what has happened to them. They are left with unpleasant thoughts and accompanying emotions such as: helplessness, shame, humiliation, fear and sometimes anger, loneliness, rejection and alienation. About the styles of aggression found on the Internet has already been written by Jacek Pyżalski [7] or Stanisław Kozak [4]. They described ways of insulting and indignity with the use of means of mass communication, criticizing, impersonating others, differences in aggression among children and adults, women and men.
**Fig.1. Differences in direct and indirect violence (cyberbullying)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Direct physical and verbal aggression</strong></th>
<th><strong>Violence with the use of mass communication devices</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The aggressor is visible</td>
<td>The aggressor is invisible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is possible to state his/her sex, age, posture and other features</td>
<td>The aggressor may impersonate using false data, change NIK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When it comes to physical aggression marks can be clearly visible</td>
<td>Lack of external marks of violence found on the harmed person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct behavioral reaction is clearly seen and expressed according to particular situation</td>
<td>Difficulty in adequacy of undertaken actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of immediate response</td>
<td>The victim is often told about personal aggression from third party after a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to identify personal data</td>
<td>Aggressor's personal data can be often difficult to designate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During a direct incident there is a limited number of participants, there may be observers</td>
<td>Edited texts can be viewed by unlimited number of the Internet users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The incident including the victim and the aggressor does not change its shape</td>
<td>The incident leads its own life, it can be multiplied in the net, changed and commented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offensive slogans made with the use of traditional technique can be removed (eg. print or a photograph)</td>
<td>Offensive images or similar can be difficult to erase in the net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct aggression turned towards adults and children can be easier to fight as they arise</td>
<td>Children and youth find it difficult to fight against cyberbullying. For various reasons they hide the fact of violence turned towards them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The aggressor and the victim are usually in disagreement, mutual animosities</td>
<td>One can become a victim of cyberbullying with no particular reason</td>
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Source: Agnieszka Roguska – author’s study

Cyberspace rules with its own principles and its users are subjected to obey basic law as to their presence in public media sphere. It refers as an example to Netiquette which is in some way the Internet savoir-vivre, a kind of etiquette which is to follow in the net, a set of rules of appropriate behaviour on the internet. Netiquette is a set of established rules which applies to all the Internet users and can be found under following names: netiquette, internet etiquette, internet code of behaviour, electronic savoir-vivre while in English it can be referred to as: netiquette, internet ethics, nethics, cybermanners. The netiquette code was established by numerous internet forums, channels and the internet moderators, which are aimed to obey norms of communication among the users. Recommendations included in netiquette refer to four major groups: discussion groups, chat, @-box and World Wide Web sites. Arlene H. Rinaldi of Florida Atlantic University quotes examples of malpractice while using the net:
— putting illegal information in the net,
— using offensive language in messages sent the so called heyting,
collective work scientific edited by: Alicja Antas-Jaszczuk, Sergiusz Nikitin, Agnieszka Roguska

— putting information which is either untrue about its author or harmful for others,
— sending the so called ‘chain letters’ broadcasts or spam,
— other actions which might cause harm to the net users or disrupt their functioning in society [10].

Robin M. Kowalski, Susan P. Limber, Patricia W. Agatson [8] divide cyberbullying into the following categories:

1) Flaming (flame war) – it is based on aggressive exchange of ideas among the users of communication channels, which usually have open public character e.g. discussion groups.
2) Harassment – persistent messages of offensive meaning sent via electronic communication channels.
3) Impersonation – pretending on the net someone else. The offender steals or secretly gets access to the password of the e-mail user.
4) Outing – it means here revealing private information of the victim to others which is possessed by the user e.g. photos, correspondence etc. The aggressor passes them via electronic mail.
5) Cyberstalking – surveillance of the victim via electronic mail and harass him/her with unwanted messages or mail.
6) Happy slapping – based on unexpected attack (assault and battery, robbery, damage of personal belonging/s) in order to film the incident and edit the recorded material in the net widely viewed.
7) Denigration – publishing false information or materials about other people with the use of electronic communication devices.
8) Direct exclusion – intended and malicious deletion of a person out of the contact mailing list and isolating him/her from other users or contact groups.
9) Technical aggression (hacking) – actions turned towards computer equipment, software, information infrastructure of the victim. They are aimed at sending viruses and breaking into personal or company computer systems.

Due to a widespread use of cyberbullying there are new and more varied preventive programs invented against such crime. The addressee are usually children and youth but also adults with the Internet access. The programs are designed to educate and realize:

— range, size and variety of cyberbullying;
— forms of cyberbullying;
— consequences of violence in the net against the offenders but also emotions which arise among the victims and consequences of such acts;
— behaviors of the victims and possible ways of looking for help;
— ways of behavior in the net and real world leading to a decrease of risk of becoming a victim.

Together with the development of electronic media and popularity growth among young people, there arises a number of acts regarded as cyberbullying. Marginality, which is a kind of exclusion can be caused by a destructive activity of other people e.g. with the use of violence, blackmail or indoctrination [5] and a perfect tool for doing that are the mass communication electronic devices. Moreover, in the net there are contents found, which may have destructive influence on young people e.g. contents showing violence, injuries or death, cruelty to animals, contents encouraging towards auto-destructive acts calling for committing self-mutilation, suicides, pornographic contents and inciting to intolerance. Coming in contact for children and youth with this kind of contents may cause long-lasting negative emotional and cognitive consequences. It may result in false perception of the world, neglect a sense of feeling of security and build up belief that antisocial behaviors are the norms, which as a result may lead to self-exclusion from social functioning norms. Cyberbullying victims who are not left alone for themselves may expect help among close family members – mainly parents but also teachers when it refers to children and youth, supported by specialists and organizations’ support including the police. The Program of European Commission ‘Safer Internet’ comprising period of 2009-2014 was aimed to fight against cyberbullying and deluding children in the net. Within the activity of the Polish Center of the Program ‘Safer Internet’ a few projects have been carried out comprising:

— Saferinternet.pl – it is aimed to increase social awareness about the dangers associated with latest communication techniques. Among its prior actions is education referred both to children and the parents, raising competences among professionals on safe use of the Internet.

— Helpline.org.pl – it is based on providing help to young internet users, parents and professionals in situations involving dangers in the net and its safe usage.

— Dyżurnet.pl – it is a contact place, the so called Hotline; Everyone can anonymously report acts of internet content forbidden by the law such as children’s pornography, pedophilia, content of racist or xenophobic meaning.

1 Osoby zainteresowane pomocą mogą znaleźć u konsultantów helpline.org.pl, mogą zadzwonić na podany numer 0800-100-100 jak również skorzystać z poczty e-mail: helpline@helpline.org.pl lub odwiedzić stronę: www.helpline.org.pl (transl. Anyone interested may get help from the consultants on helpline.org or by calling at 0800-100-100 but also e-mailing at: helpline@helpline.org.pl or visiting the site www.helpline.org.pl)
Consequences of experience based on electronic aggression may be deep and long-term preserved which in fact depends on an individual, duration of time of the cyber bullying, its variety and potential but also many other factors. A morally harmed person may reveal negative emotions experienced, deterioration of mood and depression, nervousness, fear, feeling of being rejected, negative self-image, feeling of being isolated from the others, illegal drug taking or neglecting duties.

**Conclusion**

The problem of media exclusion is complex and multi-dimensional. The fact of possessing means of communication, especially a cell phone – especially a smartphone or a computer with the Internet access does not only imply social and medial inclusion. It may arise as a cause or an excuse for social exclusion. It is becoming important to make a conscious use of the media, abilities and knowledge of making use but what is found more often to outline an aim when using modern media. Even the fact that we are not the aggressor may lead to a moment when we might become a victim with the use of dishonest actions of another user whose intention is to make harm e.g. by exposing our inappropriate image to others. Parents, guides and teachers often disregard the Internet risks. Their lack of knowledge and care-free behaviour which result from being unconscious of the danger, cause that children often use the Internet without their guidance and their agreement. The biggest obstacle of becoming internet safe or acting as a guide of one’s charges is the lack of knowledge or ignorance. Making aware especially for young Internet users the power of the media and its dangers which may accompany the process referred to an individual and others, including ways of preventing or decreasing is thus a prior task for media education.

**References**


2 Dyżurnet.pl przyjmuje anonimowo zgłoszenia za pomocą formularza na stronie: www.dyżurnet.pl za pomocą e-maila: dyżurnet@dyżurnet.pl lub infolinii: 801 615 005. (transl. The Internet site Dyżurnet.pl receives anonymous queries by filling the form on www.dyżurnet.pl by e-mails sent to dyżurnet@dyżurnet.pl or a direct call line at 801 615 005)
Within the sphere of inclusions issues, Polish and Ukrainian scientific experience exchange


[14] Zalecenie 2006/952/WE z dnia 20.12.2006 w sprawie ochrony małoletnich, godności ludzkiej oraz prawa do odpowiedzi w odniesieniu do konkurencyjno-
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