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Media Literacy and Academic Research is a scientific journal focused on the academic reflection of media and information literacy issues, media education, critical thinking, digital media and new trends in related areas of media and communication studies. The journal is devoted to addressing contemporary issues and future developments related to the interdisciplinary academic discussion, the results of empirical research and the mutual interaction of expertise in media and information studies, media education as well as their sociological, psychological, political, linguistic and technological aspects.

Media Literacy and Academic Research is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal published twice a year. The journal is international and interdisciplinary, inviting contributions from across the globe and from various academic disciplines of social sciences. It focuses on theoretical and empirical studies, research results, as well as papers related to the new trends, practices and other academic research areas. Also encouraged are literature reviews, innovative initiatives, best practices in online teaching, institutional policies, standards and assessment. The Journal welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and scientific excellence.

The members of the journal's Editorial Board are members of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), UNESCO-UNAOC UNITWIN Network for Media and Information Literacy, European Association for Viewers Interests (EAVI), The Slovak EU Kids Online Team, Media Literacy Expert Group and International Association for Media Education.

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When considering the impact that a pandemic era has and will have on the quality of human and social life, many questions and even more significant variations of answers arise. The age, which significantly collides with the era of hyperconnectivity, or activates this era to a greater extent, brings with it a critical dilemma concerning the improvement of the quality of life of the digitized individual. This dilemma takes the form of a renewed discourse on the advantages and disadvantages of its constant digital connectivity. It seems that the philosophy, according to which this individual has lived so far and which W. Powers describes as the concept of „Digital Maximalism“ is getting severe cracks.

In the practice of total connectivity in the Covid-19 pandemic era, it is necessary to anticipate the arguments for and against this philosophy, which he subconsciously applied.

Maximum screen time brings, on the one hand, increased productivity, speed and efficiency, but also the ability to nourish the mind, heart and soul of man through digital connections with others. On the other hand, such an approach touches its limits in confrontation with the current lifestyle, the needs of individuals and current social practice.

It is questionable to what extent technologies can saturate the real needs of man and support the optimal and at the same time valuable functioning of society. There is no doubt that the answers to these questions will be reconsidered in the context of a pandemic, and the post-pandemic reality will reflect the basic needs and values of man and society as such.

Within the outlined starting points and intentions, it seems that a different philosophy of life of the digitized individual, defining against permanent hyperconnectivity, is currently gaining in importance. The one that C. Newport describes in his work as Digital Minimalism. His central thesis is that in our relationship with digital means, less can mean more. This philosophy, which emphasizes the need for a slowdown, reflection, or the value of silence and loneliness in response to the loss of depth and diversion of the individual from one's interior, especially under the influence of constant interactions, information overload and a busy digital world. It also supports our entry into the resistance, as a means of sensible defensive action against the „traders with our attention and our time“ that the social media represents. Thus, it brings rest and relief to the technologically overburdened individual in times of global health crisis.

It also allows a return to the classic analogue conversation that one desires following one's nature and an overall rediscovery of analogue activities that will provide him/her with deeper and longer-term satisfaction. The aim is to achieve valuable forms of human personality development even without the help of digital means, which the current time intensively demands. At the same time, this philosophy helps to restart the life of man, in which technology acts only as an aid in achieving his meaningful goals.

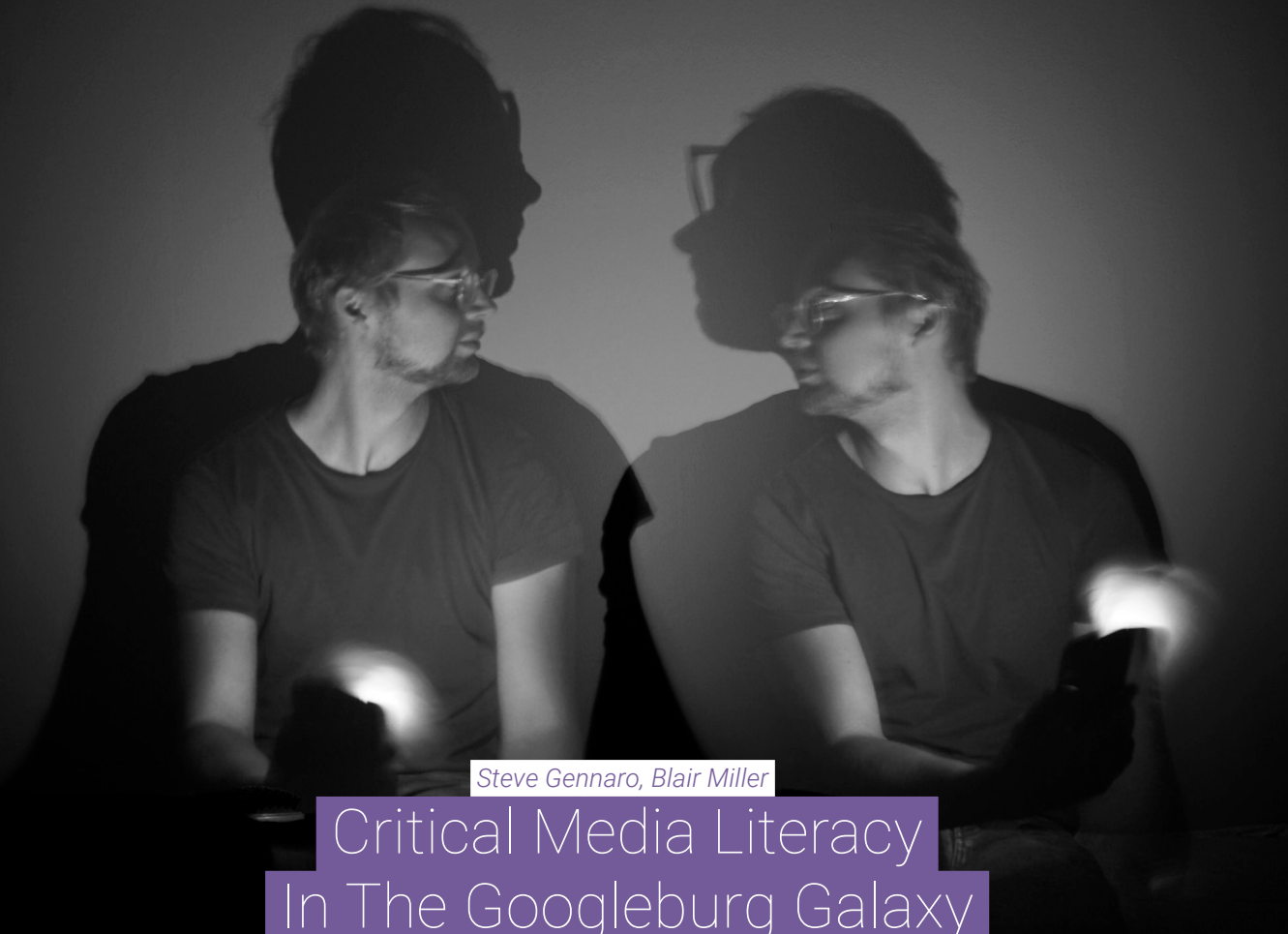
The current situation thus represents a challenge for individuals to decide on the wise use of digital means, resp. highlights the need to learn this through media education strategies. Prenský's concept of digital wisdom is, therefore gaining in importance much more than ever before.

Viera Kačínová
Member of the Editorial Team

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Steve Gennaro, Blair Miller

Critical Media Literacy In The Googleburg Galaxy

ABSTRACT

With the popular and the political competing for our global electronic attention what is often overlooked are questions surrounding access and participation on social media platforms, which have become contested domains of advertising, recruitment, propaganda, and activism. As the very definitions of what it means to be „*literate*“ or what constitutes a „*text*“ continue to change, having the ability to „*read*“ continues to hold significant importance. Marshall McLuhan argues in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* that the printing press created a paradigm shift. In removing the mystique from texts and making ideas more accessible not only did literacy rates rise, but for McLuhan, social relations and power dynamics were fundamentally and irrevocably changed. In line with a history of humanity that continually shifts power and social relations through uses of new technologies, this paper explores how new forms of language and social patterns of interactions on social media have created a similarly potent paradigm shift, changing the meaning of existence both online and in person. This is the Googleburg Galaxy.

KEY WORDS

Critical media literacy. Media. Media literacy. Critical media. Social media. Marshall McLuhan. Discourse.

1. The Googleburg Galaxy

Modern society exists in a state of contradiction, awash in both blinding change and defeating repetition. The changes are so frequent, fast, and noticeable that they obscure the repetition, enabling individuals to see everything as new. But to overlook the obscured is to neglect the totality of one's own relationships to the world and others. Marx and Engels knew this all too well, describing the state of affairs in an appraisal of the bourgeois epoch: „*Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.*“¹

All that is solid melts into air; nothing feels like now; no one can keep up. As such, anxieties around change abound while one feels a lack of control, a diminishing of agency. Modern selves know too much – increasingly so during this Digital Age – but only make sense of it looking backwards.

This is, for the most part, a particularly human state of awareness, given that humans have it in them to devote attention to such matters – ones that tend to rest beyond the cause-and-effect existence of other animals. As Marshall McLuhan observes in *War and Peace in the Global Village*, „*One thing about which fish know exactly nothing is water, since they have no anti-environment which would enable them to perceive the element they live in.*“² In McLuhan's world view, humans are able to initiate such anti-environments across various mediums of technologies, or media. Change occurs in the type of technology/medium earlier than it does in the content, which always resides in a different, previous medium, because the only way to observe said content is when it is re-contextualized in contradistinction to new media. Framed within the terminology of McLuhan's fish reference, this sort of observation of content and medium – itself part of a discourse which is to be referred to here as critical media literacy – is performed thanks to the emergence of a new environment, or anti-environment, made possible by a new medium that can make human users of media aware of its content like never before, much like if a fish were to be immediately conscious of water. New media grants individuals the opportunity to engage in critical media literacy, riddled with anxiety as it might be, because it allows users to translate and grasp the change by looking at things passed, as opposed to trying to stay ahead of what they cannot. It might sound disorienting, but it is the terrain contemporary individuals must map if they are to be critically media literate, it is a fundamental part of McLuhan's constellation of theories of media, and as such it embodies this attempt to superimpose that cluster of ideas onto digital media – to navigate the Googleburg Galaxy.³

As kitschy as the term Googleburg Galaxy might seem, the stakes are high for critical media literacy with a McLuhanesque infrastructure because it is about power. For McLuhan, all media are active metaphors in their power to translate new experience into new forms. The spoken word was the first technology by which man was able to let go of his environment in order to grasp it in a new way.⁴

Though the influence each medium has upon greater civilization varies, the advent of the printing press has a similar impact in scale as the spoken word for McLuhan, as detailed in his seminal book *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. So does the Electric Age, which brought audio-visual forms of translation with it. Digital media as a technology represents such a change as well.

¹ MARX, K., ENGELS, F.: *The Communist Manifesto*. New York : Penguin Books, 1967, p. 83.

² MCLUHAN, M., FIORE, Q.: *War and Peace in the Global Village*. New York : McGraw-Hill, 1968, p. 175.

³ The topic of the „*Googleburg Galaxy*“ was first raised as a conference paper at the Canadian Communications Association's annual conference at the University of Waterloo in May of 2012.

⁴ MCLUHAN, M.: *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Berkeley : Ginko Press, 2017, p. 85.

These changes are tantamount to paradigm shifts, taking the contemporary self, the fish, and placing it out of water, as it were – and into yet another environment that sublimates solids into air. Unprecedented rates of production of both new technology and its obsolescence in the Digital Age means that people are able to perceive the sorts of changes the digital media landscape presents to us, but it is not direct, it cannot be static, and it must always be facing backwards, like Walter Benjamin's angel of history.⁵ Applying some tenets of the McLuhan-Gutenberg Galaxy to digital media is required for critical media literacy because the change brought about by digital media, specifically social media, possesses this translational power.

Apart from the parallels in verbal taxonomy with McLuhan's expression Gutenberg Galaxy, using „Google“ in this new term merely stands as an embodiment for greater networks of socio-technological relations in the same way that the proliferation of Gutenberg's printing press does not amount to an adequate description of all that its phenomena entails as well. In other words, McLuhan's account of Gutenberg's influence is not solely an account of Gutenberg's direct influence, but rather an access point to analyse things indicative of its specific era. In the same fashion, an exploration of the Googleburg Galaxy takes on a wider evaluative scope than the eponymous one.

The Googleburg Galaxy is a discursive space about trying to „sense the water“ via critical media literacy that investigates the power dynamics within digital media. The specific sub-discourse examined here concerns one of the more daunting and imposing new technologies – social media – and brings the work of several theorists to bear on the matter. Those texts will be approached from a perspective framed by two McLuhan adages: the medium is the message, and the user is the content. Since the stakes have already been assessed as significant, mapping the Googleburg Galaxy also situates users and/or critical media readers and creators as active democratic citizens with responsibilities.

This task of mapping – and constantly maintaining and re-maintaining orientation – is not a forgone conclusion. For one, there are societal structures, industries of culture, and behavioural patterns that effectively empty media's content of meaning. Secondly, the aforementioned anxiety is even something McLuhan acknowledges, in the form of users' disorientation towards constantly transmogrifying media technologies. Attempting discourse from this position can often evoke anxiety as „the result of trying to do today's job with yesterday's tools.“⁶ While it might not be wholly possible yet to look back on social media content in the way McLuhan means proper, some discourse about a case study in social media's virality – one that has largely ran its course – can serve as a starting point, and a trail to circle back to throughout the process to follow.

2. From obscurity to domination to virality to being hegemonized – the case study of Kony 2012

First, some context, some articulation of this key constellation of modes of communication in the Googleburg Galaxy, social media. Such context involves mapping social media with critical media literacy, to highlight both social media's immense hold on culture and the emptiness

⁵ „A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.“, BENJAMIN, W.: *Illuminations*. New York : Schocken Books, 1968, p. 257-8.

⁶ MCLUHAN, M., FIORE, Q.: *The Medium is the Massage*. London : Penguin Press, 1967, p. 10.

with which it maintains that hold. Ecologies – including media ecologies, to evoke another of McLuhan's terms – have collective lives of their own that are not static, so critical media literacy and its pedagogies exist accordingly.⁷ Still, despite the relative youth of social media technologies and the dynamic understanding required to stay educated about them, critical media literacy can, in principle, enable access and/or opportunity to an extent similar to traditional literacy. Given the seemingly unstoppable power social media has been gathering over recent years, one can see this appraisal of critical media literacy as exaggeratory – at one's own peril.

Critical media literacy seeks to explore questions about power and justice through understanding media, and how new technologies create media that produces texts, stories, and images often without properly explaining them to the user. Therefore, the user requires some basic understanding of how those texts are created, for whom they are created, and how the texts themselves get taken up by audiences and influence society, often reproducing hegemonic ideologies. This also necessitates inquiry into the ever-changing forms of mediums, structures of media ownership, and human interactions with new media. (In this sense, McLuhan's meaning of the word „media“ tends towards that of multiple mediums of technology, as opposed to news media content – though the two terms overlap considerably.) Discourse of this nature amounts to an awareness of how our understandings of the discourse itself get problematized, altered, and even spurred forward by social networking, digital technologies, virtual spaces, and online personalization.

As a form of media that is at once ubiquitous and unavoidably politically charged, social media and more specifically networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become more than just popular culture technologies. They have also become contested domains of advertising, recruitment, surveillance, propaganda, and activism. Youth Climate Activist Greta Thunberg has established a virtual presence, with her online voice reaching over 4 million Twitter followers.⁸ In comparison, counternarratives on Twitter from American President Donald Trump resonate digitally to a following of more than 86 million. Yet, both Greta and President Trump lag considerably behind social media czars like 2019's most popular Instagrammers: footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, actress Selena Gomez, and singer Ariana Grande – each with almost 200 million followers or more.⁹ However, what is often overlooked are questions surrounding access and participation on social media platforms: who has access and who is denied participation in virtual spaces when the popular overlaps with the political? Critical media literacy is a lynchpin here; being a reader continues to hold importance even as the traditional forms of text and the definition of what it means to be literate change.

In *The Gutenberg Galaxy* McLuhan argues that the printing press created what historians of science regard as a paradigm shift, which suggests technological innovation can fundamentally change and alter the course of human history.¹⁰ In removing the mystique and aura from texts, most notably religious texts, and making ideas accessible at a more reasonable cost to more people, not only did literacy rates rise with the introduction of the printing press, but, for McLuhan, social relations and power dynamics were fundamentally and irrevocably changed. With new practices comes a new understanding of how the world works, which results in changing social roles, changes in human understandings of those roles, and therefore changed power relations in society. Critical media literacy in the Googleburg Galaxy asks the reader/user to explore how new mediums like the iPhone or a Google search engine have created new forms of language and therefore influenced social patterns of interaction whereby liking,

⁷ Media ecology as per McLuhan deserves its own separate discursive space within the Googleburg Galaxy's. For a useful summation, see also: ISLAS, O., BERNAL, J. D.: *Media Ecology: A Complex and Systemic Metadiscipline*. [online]. [2016-10-11]. Available at: <<https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/media-ecology/43968>>.

⁸ All social media statistics such as followers and likes are accurate to September 18, 2020.

⁹ Cristiano Ronaldo: 237 million followers; Selena Gomez: 193 million; Ariana Grande: 202 million.

¹⁰ KUHN, T.: *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1962.

friending, following, or trending on social media have resulted in a similarly potent paradigm shift which is changing what it means to exist both online and in person.

Critical media literacy involves active engagement with a text in a way that employs a user's power to construct meaning that is not wholly reliant upon the intended or surface message. When activated, critical media literacy pushes individuals to think beyond themselves to ask questions about how systems of power and ideologies actively participate in our perception of the galaxy we live in. User involvement in the production of meaning also helps individuals fulfill their civic duty as members of a participatory democracy. However, when applied to social media and its locales of power, a committed understanding can be evasive. Participation can be thwarted, resulting in a weakened democracy. Revolving around ephemeral modes such as popularity, trends, manipulated images and video, and even a limited shelf life for some methods of posting content, social media is, by nature, transitory. Without an activated critical media literacy, what should be legitimately influential social media content ends up instead being co-opted into a fad, like the humanitarian cause against Joseph Rao Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army.

In the name of literacy, let's frame this with pedagogy in mind, applying critical media theory to what might have been a user's experience of what became known on social media as Kony 2012. It can be assumed that there was a degree of anticipation for some users for April 20th of that year – a day of action proposed by the makers of a viral YouTube video of that same name: Kony 2012.¹¹ Released on March 5, 2012 by a not-for-profit organization¹² named Invisible Children, the video sought to expose the actions of Lord's Resistance Army leader Joseph Kony in the hopes of having him found and arrested for violations of human rights in Uganda. Kony's LRA was originally a guerilla group whose purpose was to combat government oppression in the name of citizens. However, Kony fell stereotypically prone to the trappings of religious edicts, narcissism, and the power they hold. As of present day, Kony is „*accused of brutalising civilians in northern Uganda through murder, abduction, mutilation and the burning of property*,“¹³yet still living in hiding from authorities.

The video also demonstrates the democratic potential of technologies of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to raise global awareness of a local issue by turning an event that would be foreign to casual users into an object to be uploaded, downloaded, shared, liked, tweeted, emailed, and discussed. Indeed, Kony 2012 went viral; in light of new technologies and increasing globalization, messages can spread and/or go viral in less than a minute. Consider that in the eponymous year of Kony 2012 social media was well on its way to ubiquity. In the spring of 2012, according to Rogers Communications (the largest telecommunications company in Canada) every 60 seconds there were more than 695,000 status updates on Facebook, more than 98,000 tweets, more than 66,000 photos uploads to Flickr and more than 600 new videos uploaded to YouTube.¹⁴ The potential for voices and proliferation of critical media literacy was considerable, and Invisible Children pegged April 20th for an event called „*Cover the Night*“ to make use of this power and further expose Kony's legacy of savagery in order to pressure international authorities to locate, apprehend, and charge the divisive leader for his atrocities. Supporters were meant to perform local charity work in their community for the morning of April 20th, followed by an evening of posting flyers and posters in neighbourhoods, culminating in an

¹¹ *KONY 2012 (Full Video) HD*. [online]. [2012-03-05]. Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc>>.

¹² *Financials*. [online]. [2020-09-17]. Available at: <<https://invisiblechildren.com/financials/>>.

¹³ *Joseph Kony – child kidnapper, warlord, 'prophet'*. [online]. [2018-07-27]. Available at: <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-17299084>>.

¹⁴ Social Media in 60 Seconds. In *Rogers Connected: Communication. Entertainment. Information.*, 2012, May/June, p. 11.

online meetup. Leading up to then – barely a month after the video’s release – Kony 2012 had swelled to 88 million views on YouTube,¹⁵ so an event of consequence was widely anticipated.

And yet, when logging onto social media on 4-20-2012, Kony 2012 was virtually nowhere to be found. It was not trending on Twitter, nor was it proliferating through status updates on Facebook. Instead, what was trending on Twitter that morning and continually throughout the day were relatively vapid tweets about April 20th or 420 – a number that is largely connected to marijuana use in popular culture. Social media’s potential for positive grassroots social change via new technology had disappointed, proving Kony 2012 to be nothing more than empty activism – and this failure goes beyond the explanation of 420 trending annually. Over 50,000 people signed up online for the event or bought flyer and poster kits, but the global participation was exemplified in places like Vancouver, where „about 17“ demonstrators met downtown at a location disclosed by a Facebook event which 21,000 users had said they would attend.¹⁶ Kony 2012, much like Joseph Kony himself, had become invisible to a public who hunted him, disappearing into the ether as all that is solid melts into air.

What’s more, social media’s waning effectiveness here eventually superimposed itself upon the actual state of affairs much in the way that content catches up to media for McLuhan, not only muting the search for Kony but also allowing Kony himself to be swallowed up by the same systems and environments he had once antagonized. On July 8, 2005, the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for Kony’s arrest – one which has proven to be impotent.¹⁷ Over the ensuing years, the LRA moved from Uganda through South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, eventually ending up in the dense jungles of the Central African Republic. Though shrinking in numbers, the army remained enough of a threat to resurface in the global news cycle again in 2011 when Invisible Children motivated then-US President Barack Obama to send 100 soldiers to the Central African Republic to help locate and defeat Kony. Six years later, some 2,000 total US and Ugandan soldiers sent to the area ended their mission with this report from US army spokesperson Lt. Col. Armando Hernandez: „*The US sees him [Kony] as irrelevant, no longer a threat. When you look at the LRA’s effectiveness it’s no longer what it used to be.*“¹⁸ This decision echoes the lack of commitment across time exhibited by social media users, since Kony and his soldiers still loot and abduct from nearby villages. It also neglects any, let alone adequate, justice for all involved. Healthy but almost 60 years old, Kony and his army have been the victims of mass defections, to the extent that the once-significant LRA, now, in 2020, consists of „*just several dozen people, including Kony’s sons Salim and Ali...the group’s main activities consist of subsistence farming and sometimes selling honey at local markets.*“¹⁹ Social media’s power to subsume and co-opt voices is so strong it can hegemonize both activists and war criminals with the same indifference, rendering either of them into spent-up reaffirmations of what is currently en vogue – all of that to then be washed away by new hashtags.

¹⁵ HAGER, M.: *Kony 2012 campaign fails to go offline in Vancouver*. [online]. [2012-04-21]. Available at: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/236629/kony-2012-campaign-fails-to-go-offline-in-vancouver/>>.

¹⁶ HAGER, M.: *Kony 2012 campaign fails to go offline in Vancouver*. [online]. [2012-04-21]. Available at: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/236629/kony-2012-campaign-fails-to-go-offline-in-vancouver/>>. It is worth noting that Invisible Children did not help matters by explicitly discouraging meetings beyond a local scope, but such pseudo-barriers should not be able to match what was in theory meant to be an important moral stand. See also: MILLER, N.: *Catch Kony campaign loses couch potatoes*. [online]. [2012-04-22]. Available at: <<https://www.theage.com.au/technology/catch-kony-campaign-loses-couch-potatoes-20120421-1xdqc.html>>.

¹⁷ *Kony et al. Case, The Prosecutor v. Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti*. [online]. [2020-09-17]. Available at: <<https://www.icc-cpi.int/uganda/kony>>.

¹⁸ BYARUHANGA, C.: *Has Ugandan rebel leader Joseph Kony been defeated?*. [online]. [2017-05-23]. Available at: <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39999324>>.

¹⁹ RONAN, P., TITECA, K.: *Kony’s rebels remain a threat, but they’re also selling honey to get by*. [online]. [2020-03-10]. Available at: <<https://africanarguments.org/2020/03/10/joseph-kony-lra-rebels-threat-selling-honey/>>.

This example shows the positives and negatives of social media activism. Kony 2012 demonstrates the potential of social media as a resource for positive social change at the same time as it exposes the challenges in getting people to see the importance of social media messages while they are over-inundated with media and oversaturated with its endless content. Fast-forward to 2020 when movements such as #metoo and Black Lives Matter have continued to demonstrate how technological spaces for resistance and activism rest inside of a Gordian knot of power and privilege, medium and message, whereby the ability to act or be acted upon – a critical tension within responsible democratic citizenship – can be decided by critical media literacy.

A reminder of the stakes involved with critical media literacy is worthwhile here as literacy has a historical connection to power. McLuhan's argument for the impact of the printing press as a transformative technology in the Gutenberg Galaxy only further emphasizes this point. On an explicit level it is simple: those with the ability to read the laws have historically also been the people to write them. On an implicit level, a person cannot exercise their democratic rights if they are denied access, and literacy has historically been a roadblock or access provider for democratic participation. Something as simple and vital to democracy as voting is predicated on the ability of the individual citizen to read a ballot. For many democratic societies, unjustly, literacy tests were used for decades as a tool for disenfranchisement by acting as a barrier to deny marginalized groups the opportunity to exercise their rights as citizens to vote. In America, for example, literacy tests remained a barrier for disenfranchisement of the African American community (especially in southern states) a full century after the conclusion of the American Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation. This obstacle was only removed in August 1965 when then-President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. In many ways, reading and literacy have served as an ideological head tax in the West for the last three centuries.

Literacy's historical connection to power can also be seen through what Paulo Freire deems the naming of the word and the naming of the world.²⁰ In Freire's ground-breaking text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, one of the greatest struggles for marginalized groups to overcome is to participate in the creation of language, what Freire calls „the naming of the world“ – something denied to them through their oppression. „To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming, Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection.“²¹ Throughout modern history the ability to participate in language has been essential to community and activism, illuminating the line between inclusion and exclusion. Whether it be Benedict Anderson's notion of the „imagined community“ for Creole people²², diasporas, or McLuhan's typographic man who required the printing press in order to have access to the knowledge previously withheld from the everyday individual, language, literacy, community, and power are inextricably linked. For contemporary purposes, one need only look at the present moment to witness the confluence of power, privilege, race, and literacy. The imminent collision of the 2020 US presidential election and raw civil rights movements lay bare the urgency in critical media literacy, as made evident by movements such as More Than A Vote, which was started by star athlete LeBron James and other prominent Black athletes and entertainers in order to mobilize citizens within their roles and responsibilities in their fight for social justice and equality.²³

²⁰ FRIERE, P.: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York : Continuum, 2000, p. 88-90.

²¹ Ibid., p. 88.

²² BENEDICT, A.: *Imagined Communities: Reflections On the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition. London : Verso, 1991, p. 44-45, p. 61-62.

²³ MARTIN, J.: *LeBron James and Other Stars Form a Voting Rights Group*. [online]. [2020-06-10]. Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/10/us/politics/lebron-james-voting-rights.html>>.

So, in the Googleburg Galaxy critical media literacy provides a vantage point from which to aptly observe and analyze relationships of power, which relationships thrive, which wither away under competitive pressure, or which ones get assimilated by dominant technologies such as social media and its always-melting-into-thin-air terms of existence. In many cases like Kony 2012, the intersectionality of media, power, user, and content renders typical explanations – that Kony was left to reap the rewards of public fickleness, or that some form of poetic justice was meted out by legal ramifications of exposure – unsatisfactory. Rather, it is as though the system co-opted content in what manifests as a twisted irony.

On the surface, the Kony 2012 example does not appear to be different from any fad unrelated to social media – a common criticism of social media analysis. As mentioned above, for McLuhan, content takes time to catch up to technologies, so this is not surprising. What is surprising, however – and specific to social media – is the sheer speed and volume of users on social media²⁴, thus amplifying an impact that is already seismic – that last term somehow putting it mildly still. Which begs the questions: Is anything unrelated to social media anymore? If it is almost impossible to escape the medium, how does this mean that it is equally impossible to escape the message, since said message(s) can be so easily ignored or left behind?

3. The medium is the message

In the Googleburg Galaxy one must reconsider what the message is, exactly, given that for McLuhan it is the media. Media in the Googleburg Galaxy – social media, the internet, smart phones, tablets, and/or whichever new technologies humanity will be subject to in the years to come – are nothing short of a manifestation of capitalist modes of consumption. So, it makes an economic sort of sense for ideas that should persist to instead be consumed and forgotten with minimal engagement and minimal literacy. As with capitalism in various degrees of a free market, or as seen with Kony 2012, engagement is about power, and power is consolidated continually underneath a cover of fast changes in new technologies. (This is even more true in the context of COVID-19, during which increased government restrictions upon citizens' behaviour hampers literacy in various ways.) Critical media literacy applied to „*the medium is the message*“ means that attentiveness to the media syntax of ownership and power is central to an understanding of technology.

So, why the need for a new and critical media literacy? In keeping with the self-reflexive nature of critical media literacy, this argument can be made in parallel fashion to some of the characteristics being read – that is, through an intersectional convergence of theorists on the matter. Drawing upon the work of critical theorists Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share, critical media literacy is „*a pedagogical approach that promotes the use of diverse types of media and information communication technology (from crayons to webcams) to question the roles of media in society and the multiple meanings of the form and content of all types of messages.*“²⁵ To practice this requires what Kellner calls „*a three-pronged approach*“ that examines form, content, and uses of media through the prongs of political economy, textual analysis, and

²⁴ As of the second quarter of 2020, Facebook had 2,7 billion active monthly users, far exceeding the forecast of 1,7 billion by 2020 made in November 15, 2019. See: CLEMENT, J.: *Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 2nd quarter 2020 (in millions)*. [online]. [2020-08-10]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>>; CLEMENT, J.: *Number of Facebook users worldwide from 2015 to 2020*. [online]. [2019-11-15]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/490424/number-of-worldwide-facebook-users/>>.

²⁵ Quoted in: SHARE, J.: Young children and Critical Media Literacy. In HAMMER, R., KELLNER, D. (eds.): *Media/cultural Studies: Critical Approaches*. New York : Peter Lang, 2009, p. 127.

audience reception studies.²⁶ To instill continual recency in this sense of media literacy – to make it new – Carmen Luke postulates that a new media literacy must engage in the critical, social, and cultural analysis of representation politics in a new world order.²⁷ Carolyn Marvin, in her exploration of the light bulb as an early medium of spectacle, points out that understanding new media and new technologies as they penetrate into daily social life requires a more full understanding of how the medium itself is a text.²⁸ This returns to McLuhan's notion that the medium is the message. If the medium itself is a text, then the medium itself is also a site of contestation, with its own history, its own politics, its own bias, and therefore it is also a space where meaning must be negotiated. In the context of brand name recognition, globalization, and media convergence, to be fully media literate requires more than just an exploration of one's Facebook status that is updated with a smartphone because the smartphone itself is a medium (and a message) and therefore also requires decoding.

Using critical media literacy to decode the medium as message in the Googleburg Galaxy requires an exploration of convergence. For Henry Jenkins, convergence describes „*the flow of content across multiple platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want.*“²⁹ Yet the convergence culture that Jenkins speaks of in 2006 is a precursor to the Googleburg Galaxy and thus limited as a tool for media literacy and the current media landscape. Jenkins argues that „*convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social relations with others.*“³⁰ This stands in contrast with the stricter notion that the medium is the message, which, when taken too directly, negates that the medium itself was also designed by a person or persons with biases and a world view influenced by their own social relations, and that the medium was produced and marketed by corporations with an economic agenda – this is, in short, political economy as described by Kellner and Share.³¹ Regardless of how a text gets taken up by an audience, the political economy and/or power relations cannot be divorced from meaning. To accept Jenkins' notion of convergence culture, to place an emphasis on the audience reception of a text, risks doing so at the expense of political economy, which would thereby hide the economic power and privilege of media conglomerates, such as the elite ones that Scott Galloway refers to as The Four (Google, Apple, Amazon, Facebook), effectively allowing their influence on the reception and interpretation of both text and user experience to remain camouflaged.³² In the Googleburg Galaxy this is precisely the danger: the user is led to believe that what they type into a search engine generates what they – themselves, as individuals – wish to will into existence. Furthermore, this misrepresentation of user impact upon generating meaning in the Googleburg Galaxy poses further questions for exploration. For example, in what ways does

a person's self-perception portrayed through their social media channels obfuscate their own

²⁶ For a more detailed explanation of the three-pronged approach, including a definition and brief history of political economy, textual analysis, and audience reception see: KELLNER, D.: *Towards a Critical Media/Cultural studies*. In HAMMER, R., KELLNER, D. (eds.): *Media/cultural Studies: Critical Approaches*. New York : Peter Lang, 2009, p. 5-24.

²⁷ LUKE, C.: *As Seen on TV or Was that My Phone: 'New' Media Literacy*. In HAMMER, R., KELLNER, D. (eds.): *Media/cultural Studies: Critical Approaches*. New York : Peter Lang, 2009, p. 200.

²⁸ MARVIN, C.: *Dazzling the Multitude: Original Media Spectacles*. In GIDDINGS, S., LISTER, M. (eds.): *The New Media and Technocultures Reader*. New York : Routledge, p. 32. [online]. [2011-08-10]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/2764417/The_New_Media_and_Technocultures_Reader>.

²⁹ JENKINS, H.: *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York : New York University Press, 2006, p. 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³¹ KELLNER, D., SHARE, J.: *The Critical Media Literacy Guide: Engaging Media and Transforming Education*, Vol. 2. Boston : BRILL, 2019, p. 18.

³² GALLOWAY, S.: *The Four: the Hidden DNA of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google*. New York : Portfolio/Penguin, 2017.

self-concept? How do the postings of others impact our perception of the real lived experiences of others and our own selves in comparison? And – returning to political economy – how are perceptions of our own realities and the realities of others shaped by the mediums through which individuals access social media or the social media sites themselves? Safiya Noble's 2018 work *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* is but one work that recognizes the consequences of such influence, and how they are felt disproportionately by marginalized groups.³³

Media literacy in the Googleburg Galaxy is better supported by a definition of convergence posited by Luke that sees convergence as a multipronged set of practices: convergence of function, convergence of providers, and expanded synergy in media ownership.³⁴ In stark contrast to previous media, convergence of function is uniquely central to the increased use of mobile technologies like smartphones and tablets, each of which are immeasurably complicit in the rise of social media. Convergence of function refers to the multiple roles and tasks performed by the medium, in that it simply does more. With existing mobile technology, a smartphone is more than a telephone. For many people, the smartphone is also a calendar, a camera, a home computer inside a handheld device, and even a brand marker for identity status. Media ownership has also expanded, to occupy more roles through a convergence of provider that seeks to bring together previously separate media service providers under one roof. In the previous example of Toronto, Canada and Rogers Cable – used above to contextualize the scope of new media in 2012 – that company allows subscribers to have one account for TV, Home Phone, Home Security Systems, Cell Phone, Home Internet, and Travelling Wireless Access. A merger in services provided is appealing to the consumer for the ease in billing. However, the lack of diversity and options raise media literacy questions surrounding access to information – especially given that said convergence in the case of Rogers and many other conglomerates like it result in consolidation of market power, which raises consumer cost and limits access to the media. Added to this are concerns around privacy and data sharing as a convergence of providers creates a wealth of opportunities for data extraction, surveillance and data mining, as noted by Shoshana Zuboff in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*.³⁵ Lastly, media companies have also expanded their ownership into non-media holdings through the practice of synergy. The movement of media company ownership power across previously disparate industries again demonstrates the importance of a critical media literacy that examines the medium and the message. Returning again to Rogers Cable, its scope of influence is truly daunting. Rogers owns the Major League Baseball Franchise the Toronto Blue Jays and their home stadium The Rogers Centre, which they purchased in 2004³⁶ – and which provides programming content for their newspapers, television and radio stations and magazines, in addition to providing a venue both at the stadium and via the broadcasts of games for advertising its other aforementioned media products and services.³⁷ This is just the tip of Rogers' convergence iceberg, however. In 2012, in partnership with Bell-Globe Media (the second-largest media company in Canada),

Rogers purchased Maple Leaf Sports Entertainment and all of its properties, which include

³³ NOBLE, S. U.: *Algorithms of Oppression : How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York : New York University Press, 2018.

³⁴ For Carmen Luke, the biggest difference between old technologies and new technologies is convergence, which now happens on three levels: convergence of function, convergence of provider, and synergy. See: LUKE, C.: As Seen on TV or Was that My Phone: 'New' Media Literacy. In HAMMER, R., KELLNER, D. (eds.): *Media/cultural Studies: Critical Approaches*. New York : Peter Lang, p. 197.

³⁵ ZUBOFF, S.: *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: the Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. First edition. New York : Public Affairs, 2019.

³⁶ *Rogers buys SkyDome*. [online]. [2004-11-29]. Available at: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rogers-buys-skydome/article1144212/#:~:text=The%20owners%20of%20the%20Toronto,in%20a%20news%20release%20Monday>>.

³⁷ LUKE, C.: As Seen on TV or Was that My Phone: 'New' Media Literacy. In HAMMER, R., KELLNER, D. (eds.): *Media/cultural Studies: Critical Approaches*. New York : Peter Lang, p. 197.

the NHL franchise Toronto Maple Leafs, NBA Franchise Toronto Raptors, their individual cable channels, their shared venue the ScotiaBank Arena, as well as surrounding real estate and condominium projects. This indicates a new form of convergence and synergy, what we have called „*mutated media*“ whereby competing media bodies partner to ensure a full-scale convergence of media ownership quite unfamiliar until recent times.

So far, this is an appraisal of media – a necessary precondition for critical media literacy. But before moving on to directly democratic concerns in the Googleburg Galaxy more needs to be fleshed out here in terms of pedagogy, given that literacy is seldom self-taught. In a piece entitled „*Education as a Necessity of Life*“ educational and political theorist John Dewey provides the reader with a three-fold argument: 1) that life is a continual process of renewal by transmission; 2) this transmission happens through communication, which is in itself educational (for all parties communicating); 3) that as societies become more complex, the need for a more formal structure of transmission, communication, and education increases.³⁸ In the first section, *Renewal of Life by Transmission*, Dewey sets up the reader for the larger point to follow, that education is necessary for life (and not only for life but for democracy, since Dewey was always interested in this one point). Dewey states that what allows human society to evolve is its ability to transmit – top-down, from its elders to its youngsters by way of communication – its habits, customs, and societal expectations. This process of transmission is ultimately educational, both for the elders and for the youth of the society. However, this informational renewal is not automatic, and a failure to maintain this process results in what Dewey fears most: „*the most civilized group will relapse into barbarism and into savagery.*“³⁹ Although the argument made here by Dewey is problematic today because of its racialized language and its reliance upon historical determinism and top-down hierarchal ageism, it does however illustrate that the way in which a person learns how to be a part of their family, a member of their community, and a responsible democratic citizen of their nation, all happens through a training process that is based on the transmission of symbols, signs, and the knowledge they signify. For Dewey, this process of communication is education – an education that is grounded in literacy and is the cornerstone to a democratic life.

Of course, the training of individuals on what to think or feel is also problematic. To wit, Dewey states, „*The communication which insures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions and requirements.*“⁴⁰ Democracy exists to manage the challenges of diversity; if dispositions were as homogenous across citizens as Dewey implies, governance would be a more forgone conclusion than democracy intends for. When one learns one’s culture from their community, they learn how they ought to react to all types of scenarios. For example, it is understood that death is typically met with grief, and a promotion at work with happiness. Although this is an extrapolation of Dewey, when we are trained to have pre-programmed responses to everything we encounter in life, there appears to be little space for individual autonomy.⁴¹ And yet, this is literacy. It is how users learn to unpack

³⁸ „*Education as a Necessity of Life*“ is the title of the first chapter of Dewey’s ground-breaking work: *Democracy* 1922. All citations in this chapter refer to the e-book/online version of the text. See: DEWEY, J.: *Democracy and Education*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2017. [online]. [2012-06-03]. Available at: <https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/C5921274480880CAE3A772428B7331DA/9781316492765pre_pi-iv_CBO.pdf/john_deweys_democracy_and_education.pdf>.

³⁹ DEWEY, J.: *Democracy and Education*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2017. [online]. [2012-06-03]. Available at: <https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/C5921274480880CAE3A772428B7331DA/9781316492765pre_pi-iv_CBO.pdf/john_deweys_democracy_and_education.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ This is referred to as the „*Hallmark syndrome*“ in GENNARO, S.: Purchasing the Canadian Teenage Identity: ICTs, American Media, and Brand-Name Consumption. In *International Social Science Review*, 2005, Vol. 80, No. 3 and 4, p. 119-136.

the representations of social norms and expectations from the symbols, rituals, customs, and patterns of behaviour encountered on a daily basis. When they unpack representations, they are actively relating what they see to what they know – sometimes based on cultural myth, fact, experience, or even what a text explicitly conveys. This unpacking happens sometimes in agreement with and sometimes in opposition to dominant understandings of what is considered to be normal. This is why semiotics (sign and signifier) has real value in understanding media representations.⁴² More recently, for many scholars, exploring texts within popular culture has become a valuable space for research in understanding patterns of human behaviour and in exploring how messages get encoded with social meanings and decoded through ritual practice and custom in the arena of the popular and mass-produced.

At present, this pedagogy must seem heavy on the hypothetical side, given the hostile environment of convergence, and the synergy of new media technologies detailed above. Always concerned with what is at stake, critical media literacy suffers most when there exists a detachment or tenuous relationship between user and media, and this issue thrives across time in social media if unchecked, leaving users both uninformed and highly impressionable – a combination that has dire consequences for an informed democracy. As Whitney Phillips, a professor at Syracuse who studies online disinformation, says when describing the effect that the recent trend of Trump-fueled conspiracy theories on social media has upon knowledge and a democratic society: They're not on the same epistemological grounding, they're not living in the same worlds... You cannot have a functioning democracy when people are not at the very least occupying the same solar system.⁴³

This lack of shared „*epistemological grounding*“ goes against the needs of a participatory democracy, which relies upon the duty of responsibly informed citizens maintaining engagement with the salient issues of the moment.

This expression of pedagogical frameworks used to act out critical media literacy aligns McLuhan's overall project with relationships of power within social media by matching the message of literacy with that of media. In other words, to learn a medium is to take ownership of the message, which brings power and responsibility with it. More discourse about this responsibility as a critically media literate democratic citizen is needed here to bridge „*the media is the message*“ and „*the user is the content*“ with praxis.

Another critical theorist, Jurgen Habermas, asserts that to have a free society there must be a freedom of press, a freedom to associate and dialogue, and a public sphere or space for this dialogue to take place in. The space exists outside the direct influence of organized politics, as well as the direct commercialization and monetization of the market.⁴⁴ Freedom between citizen and society is logically a two-way street: for a society to be free there must be rational and critical dialogue between citizens. Critical media literacy recognizes this, allowing citizens engaging in rational critical discourse to situate themselves within a larger community, both as participants in a virtual or imagined community of Facebook friends, Twitter followers, chat room debaters, or forum posters, and also as part of a larger global community of fellow human citizens. This does not mean that critical media literacy equals consensus and agreement. Critical media literacy is about dialoguing across multiple diverse points of view; it is about recognizing that the morning newspaper has a story to tell, an editorial bias, a host of advertisers to maintain solid relationships with, and a readership to please. Because of this network of intersecting

⁴² For a very easy to understand and quick primer on semiotics see: *Semiotics: the study of signs (Full Video)*. [online]. [2007-11-04]. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEgxTKUP_WI>.

⁴³ ALTER, C.: *How Conspiracies Are Shaping the 2020 Election – and Shaking the Foundation of American Democracy*. [online]. [2020-09-10]. Available at: <<https://time.com/5887437/conspiracy-theories-2020-election/>>.

⁴⁴ HABERMAS, J.: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge : MIT Press, 1989, p. 235.

priorities, as well as whom the paper hires to write stories, in addition to how the story gets told, along with which stories get told, media narratives are produced against a horizon of bias. This does not even account for the individual biases of the writers themselves, which is subject to a host of static and fluid variables. Twitter, Instagram and Facebook are no different here from more traditional forms of media, except that the lightning-fast speed at which tweets and status updates are received and/or sent via mobile devices at any geographical location at any time means that a user's guard is often down while they engage with the media itself. Along with this disarming immediacy there is a level of comfort as consumers of social media information because, thanks to content filters and control over friends/associations, there is an inherent level of trust in the storyteller – deserved or not. This illuminates the far-reaching scope of the map of the Googleburg Galaxy to include even perceived minutiae such as friend lists, filters and friends' and family's status updates as relevant to critical media literacy.

A new critical media literacy explores the opportunities of social media platforms to house what Henry Giroux calls performative pedagogy and the establishment of a truly democratic education.⁴⁵ According to Kellner's reflections on the work of Giroux, Giroux thus sees cultural politics as encompassing education, artistic work, and the pedagogy of social movements. His performative pedagogy attempts to demonstrate how cultural texts enact broader societal and political issues in a pedagogy that makes visible relations of power, domination, and resistance in media culture.⁴⁶

Performative pedagogy is a form of social resistance that pushes practice to match theory, or what some philosophers from Ancient Greece to Paulo Freire would term as praxis.⁴⁷ For Giroux praxis is about learning by doing, and it is about the creation of a dialogical learning community where individuals not only collect and connect but create, collaborate and share discourse. The time for alarmist-versus-technophile debates has passed; social networking sites' ability to provide these types of spaces is recognized. It is now a question about how users engage with the media texts and mediums themselves, as critical and active participants in the creation of meaning, the construction of knowledge, the legitimating of play and practice, and the protection of democratic and human rights. Democracy should imply participation, and if there is a desire to have a democratic media and to ensure that technological developments produce democratic media, then as global citizens, everyone bears a responsibility to maintain their critical media literacy. In the interests of continuing to map critical media literacy onto the Googleburg Galaxy, consider it this way: we the people must also be we the media.

4. The user is the content

As serendipity would have it, there is another convergence at this point, and that is between the responsibility of democratic citizens as critical media users, and McLuhan's notion that the user is the content – a radical twist on the notion of content, even in the face of how „*content*“ has taken on counterintuitive meaning here already. In other words, the idea that users are and/or determine content dovetails nicely with democracy's need for dutiful citizens. McLuhan is seen as a polemical thinker, and this is in large part due to his delivery of content. While he opens up so much of the world, a common critique of his work is that it verges on the opaque, or at least deeply interpretive. But there is a purpose to that style, to the point of serving

⁴⁵ GIROUX, H.: Cultural Studies as Performative Politics. In *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies*, 2001, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 5-23.

⁴⁶ KELLNER, D.: *Critical Pedagogy, Cultural Studies, and Radical Democracy at the turn of the Millennium: Reflections on the Work of Henry Giroux*. [online]. [2012-11-29]. Available at: <pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/henrygiroux.pdf>.

⁴⁷ For Freire, praxis is „*reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.*“ Through praxis, oppressed people can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition, and, with their allies, struggle for liberation. FRIERE, P.: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York : Continuum, 2000, p. 36.

as a hermeneutic positioning of authorship in that the user/reader ends up producing meaning. Those who venture into McLuhan's body of work find that there are no easy answers, no direct obvious delineation between user and intended message. (This is part of what made McLuhan so immensely popular in his time, this chimeric mode of presentation.) Instead, his ideas form a mosaic of reflections and statements – ones which tend toward the prosaic at times, due to his economy of language (or, paradoxically, lack thereof) – that can be envisioned as connected referentially by users. What's more, this sense that is made by the user will differ based on the uniqueness of their background or bias. In this way, the reader/user possesses control over production of meaning, not McLuhan, leading him to famously infer that the user is the content.⁴⁸ If this is the case, then content is inherently democratic, but this is the key: so long as users are diligent critical media readers exercising their rights as such.

To understand the Googleburg Galaxy requires an understanding of literacy, which recognizes that letters, or the alphabet, are merely a collection of symbols that get encoded and decoded by users. The process of literacy, then, is one where an individual learns to decode the symbol – here an alphabetic letter, such as a or b – through a recognition of the „*sound*“ that such a symbol makes. Of course, the process by which an individual learns the alphabet and then how to sound out letters to make words comes through an active observation of the social world around us and through practice, repetition, and the memorization of key structural elements. So, while in theory the sounds of vowels and consonants are largely recognized as static and fixed, there is a cultural relativity to speech where the geographic location and cultural patterns of the community in which an individual is learning literacy affects their understanding of how to encode and decode letters. The first step to literacy, then, is a basic understanding of the notion that letters and numbers are symbols that stand in for something else, each with its own sound and set of rules governing how it can be used to decode a message. Once a person understands the basic sounds of letters and rules of how those sounds work, the next step is to piece together letters to form words, which are also symbols, which immediately conjure up an image in the mind of the reader upon reading. Traditional literacy is therefore a process of collecting and unpacking symbols to decipher the expressed meaning of their original author. However, since context is vital both to the encoding and decoding process, things do get lost in translation. Media literacy follows a similar process. To understand the Googleburg Galaxy requires an interpretation of literacy that sees any and all texts – that is virtual space, photographic images, advertisements, television shows, film, popular music, code, Tweets, text messages, smiley-faced icons, status updates, and search engine results – as symbols which get encoded by writers and decoded by readers. The question is, how conscious are we of the processes of encoding and decoding that are happening around us, and how active are we in the translation? What cannot get lost amongst all of this theorizing – because it is so often lost this way – is that uninformed choices lead down dangerous paths, and that those choices dishonour the modern individual's democratic duty to help new technologies make possible the discursive space within which a better world can occur.

When all that is solid melts to air, time's relativity distorts. Pair that with humanity's immense ability to adapt and it is all too easy to forget that as recently as 2007 there were no smart phones at all. Now more popular among younger demographics than its parent company Facebook, Instagram has not existed for a decade yet. While these technologies increasingly take hold over the attention and time of almost everyone on earth, it would behoove individuals to learn how to read the space(s) better. Otherwise, without critical media literacy, the modern democratic citizen is disadvantaging themselves in a manner eerily similar to subjects of the pre-industrial age trying to learn the ways of their ruling states without anything to read at all.

⁴⁸ WOLF, G.: *The Wisdom of Saint Marshall, the Holy Fool*. [online]. [1996-01-01]. Available at: <<https://www.wired.com/1996/01/saint-marshal/>>.

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Erika Moravčíková

Media Manipulation And Propaganda In The Post-Truth Era

ABSTRACT

The birth of the post-truth era, i.e. the advent of alternative media and internet social networks, has brought along a great deal of demagoguery, nonsense, lies, hoaxes, disinformation (a trendier term being 'fake news') and conspiracy theories, with propaganda and manipulation being the key features here. Dissemination of disinformation and its effects on individuals, society and politics are among the most debated topics of our day, although, frankly, it is in fact a very old phenomenon. The advent of digital media has brought, apart from other things, a decline of public trust in traditional (mainstream) media, and conversely a boom in alternative information sources. Meanwhile, it is not entirely clear what the term *alternative* with respect to mass media should actually mean. Perhaps free media? Independent media? Attempts to define alternative media against the background of mainstream media contain quite a few options to grasp the *alternateness*. In our contribution we endeavour to find the causes of the strongly negative connotations surrounding the term alternative media. This term is not infrequently linked to an unprecedented rise of media with disinformation and conspiracy agenda. Nevertheless, we point out why it perhaps should be more appropriate to grasp this term in a more neutral way, not only in academia, considering that such sources in many cases provide scope for different interpretation of the dominant ideology in society and information disseminated under its aegis.

KEY WORDS

Media manipulation. Propaganda. Post-truth era. Alternative media. Mainstream media. Ideological truth plays.

1. Introduction

Digital media are becoming ever more dominant in the present post-television era, with media contents, their effects, systems and audiences being adjusted to this fact. The new media are being discussed by media theorists as part of the digital revolution and the onset of the digital age. When it comes to preferences of online audiences, the most important determining factor is their desire of having democratic relations with content producers. Debates of both academia and the general public on the so-called new (digital, network) media make it evident that a dramatic transformation of society and a shift in thinking catalysed by digital technology is underway. The discourse of media studies features ever more frequently individual elements of the post-truth era, such as an unhinged spread of hoaxes, misinformation and conspiracy theories. Techniques of media manipulation in the digital age are taking on new forms, which have now become the subject of intense scientific research by media theorists, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists and, last but not least, culturologists, semioticians and linguists. Individual methods and techniques of manipulation and propaganda on the internet and social networks have their specifics and we will address them in this paper. We believe that it will be difficult to grasp these phenomena properly, including in terms of methodology, without tracing their actual roots.

Without going into much detail about specific forms, tools and techniques, we will outline a broader context immediately related to post-truth that needs due attention. We maintain that it is important to understand in the broadest possible sense how the media work in the post-truth era – and the closely related issues of truth and truthfulness –, as well as the somewhat lax and inaccurate use of the term ‘alternative media’ in Slovak media discourse.

2. Methodology of research

When discussing the post-truth era, we consider it important to define our research strategy. Our study has a theoretical-empirical character and in addition to a critical reflection on propaganda and media manipulation in the post-truth era, it also outlines some secondary problems, including the need to develop media literacy and critical thinking vis-à-vis information overload.

In the introductory section, we acquaint the reader with the key conceptual apparatus related to propaganda and media manipulation.

In the following part of the study, we chose description as one of the fundamental research methods. Among other things, it can help us in the process of identifying specific phenomena related to the post-truth era. Our point of departure is an opinion embedment, within which we use the method of comparison to deal with individual issues related to the rise of digital media and alternative information sources.

There is no consensus in the professional and general public on alternative media, so we believe that it was necessary to evaluate their essence impartially and without bias. A comparison of views held by media theorists serves as a basic template for a closer examination of the phenomenon of alternative media. When it comes to research of these media, we use analysis to define the quality of the term ‘alternative media’, as well as their possible coexistence with mainstream media (which is rather problematic in the Slovak media environment, however). In Slovakia, we mostly see mutual rejection, aversion and conflicts between these two types of media. We also noticed the fact that alternative media are automatically labelled as conspiracy and disinformation outlets, and they are thus considered illegitimate by the mainstream media and most of the general public.

3. Postmodern Variants of Media Manipulation in Post-truth Era

The birth of the post-truth era, i.e. the advent of alternative media and social networks, has brought along a great deal of demagoguery, nonsense, lies, hoaxes, disinformation¹ (a trendier term being ‘fake news’) and conspiracy theories, with propaganda and manipulation being the key features here. Dissemination of disinformation and its effects on individuals, society and politics are among the most debated topics of our day, although, frankly, it is in fact a very old phenomenon. Propaganda, as a set of desired and deliberate actions towards others with the aim to subordinate them to the agent and/or their idea, is perhaps as old as humankind, as it forms part of communication as such. It is not possible to define the term ‘propaganda’ exactly enough in a single sentence or two. Although there are currently some widely accepted definitions, none has been accepted as universal.

The Dictionary of Media Communication defines propaganda as a form of persuasive communication, featuring „*deliberate and systematic efforts to mould ideas, influence and steer feelings, wills, attitudes, opinions and behaviours in order to achieve a response that would be consistent with the propagandist’s goals and needs.*“² The meaning of the word ‘propaganda’ has largely ceased to be neutral, and it has instead become rather pejorative (in order to label half-truths, lies, defamation etc.). From the etymological point of view, however, ‘propaganda’ comes from the quite neutral Latin verb ‘propagare’, meaning to ‘spread’ or ‘propagate’ ideas and opinions.

Nonetheless, most current definitions depict propaganda as a negative phenomenon. This does not mean that these definitions are wrong, however. Simply put, this term has acquired rather negative connotations over time, especially after the experience of the two world wars. Propaganda is a deliberate and systematic effort to shape understanding and manipulate thinking and immediate behaviour with the intention of achieving responses that would be consistent with the propagandist’s intentions. Propaganda means control of information flow, public opinion management and manipulation of behaviour.

In general, propaganda consists of several minor measures meant to act individually, jointly or in a complementary manner. In short, the most common propaganda tools include black-and-white depictions of reality, selections of facts to be published, non-disclosure of essential information, use of well-known experts or popular figures to persuade or attract potential followers, attempts to demonise the enemy and idealise one’s own system, use of the double standard when dealing with friends and foes, ‘we and them’ rhetoric, dissemination of disinformation and rumours, the staging of media campaigns, presentation of half-truths and assumptions as facts, the turning of a blind eye to inconvenient information, deliberate attempts to mislead and deceive others, obfuscation and ambiguity in key statements, oversimplification of complex issues, use of quotes taken out of context, throwing labels³ around, scapegoating, use of easy-to-remember slogans and symbols, stereotypes, attempts to stir up emotion, misuse of history in order to fan negative passions, presentation of unsubstantiated assumptions, control and censorship of the media, public pressure, creation of idols and taboos, presentation

¹ For more information about disinformation see also: KAČINOVÁ, V.: The topic of media-disseminated mis-information and dis-information as an integral part of general education in Slovakia. In *Media literacy and academic research*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 18 – 31.

² REIFOVÁ, I. et al.: *Slovník mediální komunikace*. Praha : Portál, 2004, p. 192.

³ For example, some people are condemned politically or socially and sometimes they are even publicly discriminated against on the basis of their current or past affiliation to a political party, group, race, person, institution, organisation etc., which is presently considered as politically discredited, socially unacceptable or it is at least widely viewed with derision. We pay more attention to this issue when discussing media manipulation techniques.

of a narrow range of 'experts' to comment on individual issues, ignorance of dissenting views, deliberate mixing of the real course of events etc.

All these instruments can be used alone, all together, as well as in various combinations, both during war and peacetime. Employed by propaganda, they all serve, to a greater or lesser extent, to influence and control the opinions and behaviour of the population, often without the latter even realising it.

Propaganda is currently most frequently viewed and generally defined as media manipulation aimed at achieving social control, especially in the context of politics. It is associated with efforts of political parties, organisations and governments. Manipulation can be understood as a way of influencing an individual, a group or entire society in order to significantly change opinions and attitudes of the target group, which ends up believing that it is the true initiator of a specific action and this decision is an expression of its own free will. In reality, however, it is behaving in line with the manipulator's script.⁴

Debates concerning the deficit of truth in the internet era and the issue of post-truth have become ubiquitous in the search for possible causes and consequences of the aforementioned phenomena and processes (demagoguery, rumours, disinformation, hoaxes and conspiracy theories). Philosopher M. Paleček,⁵ when discussing *fake news*, notes that although their presence is being portrayed as a novelty, it is in fact a very old phenomenon. Dissemination of false news and disregard for true and verifiable information is neither new, nor experiencing its heyday in our times. In fact, it can be seen continuously since the invention of the printing press. Attempts to push through claims that would not aspire to verification date back to these very times and they reached their peak with the propaganda activities of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. *Joseph Goebbels'* Reich Ministry of Propaganda regularly used the mass media as the most effective channels for propaganda. They included the weekly tabloid-format newspaper *Der Stürmer*, propaganda films promoting intolerance⁶, German radio and film weeklies with domestic and international news screened in cinemas throughout Germany. They were all loaded with disinformation, purposeful interpretations of events, manipulated and distorted facts, which were often presented as scientific conclusions, and even open lies. All information to be published was carefully examined in advance and censored, if deemed necessary. This propaganda included both glorification of the Nazi regime and slander of all possible enemies. The propaganda machinery in wartime Germany was built with high precision, so that it was almost impossible to find alternative information. The ruling party thus easily maintained a semblance of truthfulness and credibility in the eyes of the public, which was fed on a daily basis with purposeful and targeted information, aimed at the subconscious with the goal of enforcing obedience.

The philosopher Hannah Arendt⁷ distinguishes – mainly based on the example of Nazi Germany – between classic and totalitarian propaganda, with the latter having no opposition, while being chiefly backed by the movement that created it. According to Arendt, Nazi Germany represented an example of totalitarian propaganda, as persuasion was not its real goal, but it was instead aimed at the building up of power without the necessity of using violence. The totalitarian propaganda in Nazi Germany prevailed over the propaganda of other parties mainly because its content became indisputable, like the rules of arithmetic. One's own opinions were

⁴ FTOREK, J.: *Manipulace a propaganda na pozadí současné informační války*. Praha : Grada, 2017.

⁵ PALEČEK, M. *Strach v kultuře: fámy a falešné zprávy*. Presented at a scientific conference entitled 'Hradec Philosophical Days-Man in a Post-truth Society', Hradec Králové October 4-5, 2018.

⁶ There are four basic categories of Nazi propaganda films according to social groups against which they were supposed to incite intolerance: anti-Bolshevik („*The Soviet Paradise*“), anti-Semitic („*The Eternal Jew*“ and „*Jew Süß*“), anti-democratic („*Rothschilds*“, „*The Heart of the Queen*“) and those promoting Nazism and German chauvinism („*Triumph of the Will*“, „*Olympia*“, „*The Victory of Faith*“, „*Day of Freedom*“, „*Theresienstadt (The Führer Gives a City to the Jews)*“ and „*Festive Nuremberg*“).

⁷ ARENDT, H.: *Původ totalitarismu I. – III*. Prague : OIKOYMENH, 1996.

ruled out, while they were being steered by iron-like unquestionable rules. So it became very difficult to fight such propaganda.

Czech political scientist Oskar Krejčí states that Fascist propaganda elaborated „very effective principles for winning over people’s minds, with these methods being frequently used to this day: (a) bypassing abstract ideas and appealing to emotions instead; (b) constant repetition of a limited number of ideas, use of certain phrases following a single template; (c) exclusive use of supporting arguments only, while excluding opposing arguments; (d) constant criticism of the nation’s enemy; (e) identifying a specific enemy and developing special strategies to combat it.“⁸

Manipulation and propaganda in the post-truth era differ from the past especially in how quickly individual contents are distributed. The information boom, brought about by the internet and new information technologies, has allowed unverified, false and half-true information to spread like cancer.

Philosopher and media theorist Lee McIntyre emphasizes that „especially in the past two decades, there has been an explosion in the denial of science on topics such as climate change, vaccination and evolution, which attests to the existence of a number of tactics used in post-truth society.“⁹ According to him, it is a characteristic feature of the post-truth era that ‘alternative facts’ and feelings replace real facts in order to make reality politically subordinate [to one’s will] (ibid.). The internet and social networks have created an environment that facilitates these messages to be spread at unprecedented speeds. The whole situation is exacerbated by the fact that the importance of content in the online environment depends on the number of clicks. The advertising system on the internet has turned into a money machine, creating a contest for obtaining as many clicks as possible, while the alternative media with their arsenal of disinformation and hoaxes get the upper hand over traditional media and serious news. „We live in a time of ‘sensationalist’ media narratives and decentralised events, which are devoid of spatiotemporal context. The new media have created conditions for the emergence of a virtual panopticon, where everyone is under constant supervision of all. Formerly fixed lines have become fluid, with everything requiring immediate attention, although it immediately gets forgotten amid an unstoppable information flurry.“¹⁰

According to Martin Paleček,¹¹ culturally moulded fears reappear periodically (such as in stereotyped fears of invasion by infidels, of contagion and extinction of civilisation as such). Playing with fear is one of the most widespread appeals to emotions, especially when society finds itself in an atmosphere of danger. Since 2001, when the so-called war on terror was announced, fear has become almost a commodity to be traded by the media and political elites and used to influence public opinion, frequently quite effectively. With the help of emotion-laden, disturbing and even frightening messages, in conjunction with the anxiety, weaknesses and fears of the audience, panic stories are being spread, e.g. about the imminent threat of a Third World War or a clash of civilisations.¹²

Of course, fear is being fomented by showing scenes of violence and aggression in news, films and other programmes, but it is a different kind of fear that concerns this manipulation technique: it involves the transmission and dissemination of information on threats related to changes in society (reforms and reshuffles, for example). The postmodern man thus feels permanent danger posed by terrorism, environmental threats, migrants and pandemic diseases.

⁸ KREJČÍ, O.: *Mezinárodní politika*. Praha : EKOPRESS, 2001, p. 397.

⁹ MCINTYRE, L.: *Post-truth*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2018, p. 14.

¹⁰ OLEJÁROVÁ, A.: Štyri poznámky k diskurzívnym aspektom skupinovej polarizácie v dôsledku pôsobenia nových médií. In BUČKOVÁ, Z., KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, A. et al. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá 2019 – Digital Universe*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2019, p. 323.

¹¹ PALEČEK, M.: *Strach v kultuře: fámy a falešné zprávy*. Presented at a scientific conference entitled ‘Hradec Philosophical Days-Man in a Post-truth Society’, Hradec Králové October 4-5, 2018.

¹² GREGOR, M., VEJVODOVÁ, P. et al.: *Nejlepší kniha o fake news, dezinformacích a manipulacích*. Brno : CPress, 2018.

The post-truth era is generally considered as a transformation of the world for the worse, with the information age placing high demands on man when it comes to distinguishing between truth and untruth. Media expert Alexander Sänglerlaub from German foundation Neue Verantwortung told Czech Radio in an interview that he often meets people who feel intense pressure from the presence of fake news and do not know how to deal with it. He replies: „*And do you pay for journalism? This is a huge problem that needs to be discussed: people want reliable news, but they are not willing to pay for it.*“¹³

An undeniably interesting view was also offered by Michal Ivan, who claimed that people have never been factual, as the emergence of facts has always been accompanied by the appearance of non-facts. According to him, those involved in the post-truth language game seem to forget that they assume facts as being neutral and non-political.¹⁴ He notes that due to excessive emphasis on the purification of facts, one essential point is being missed, namely that those with a certain established notion tend to feed it by the selection of certain facts. „*The picture enforces its own facts,*“ he says. „*And it is not only the lack of facts that irritates us and forces us to call this age as one of post-truth. Just having the facts does not necessarily mean being rational, but merely having a long list of facts. Only their classification, the creation of a big picture and the possibility of its use to describe the world as a whole make a linguistic game of rationality possible.*“¹⁵

We observe that in today's world, which is being dominated by the digital media, the issue of truth is becoming increasingly complex and ambiguous, with events and facts rarely having a single and univocal interpretation. The necessity of distinguishing the truth from falsehood has become the number one issue of media culture, while the truth is commonly understood as agreement of a statement and belief with the state of affairs. „*It needs to be discovered, however,*“ says philosopher Sabína Gáliková-Tolnaiová in reference to the truth, adding that this is far from being a simple process: „*The 'online truth' embodies the modern phenomenon of mass in a fluid present. It cannot be grasped, regulated, corrected and even less so silenced by the use of traditional tools, procedures and techniques ...*“¹⁶ When it comes to the media, it is the internet that causes fragmentation and interruption of knowledge on the axis of cognition – feeling – interpersonal understanding.

The emerging issue of hyperreality also goes hand in hand with the media, as pointed out by the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard¹⁷, with the source of reality becoming unclear. Reality as a social fact enters social communication only as its interpretation, not as reality itself. Presented facts are only images, not real things; they are simulacra speaking of themselves and preferring a certain picture of the world to the truth. The creation of reality in the mass media and their contents takes place with the participation of the audience in such a way that the mass media do not adapt their meanings to reality, which is independent of them, but on the contrary – it is the audience that adapts reality to media meanings.

Recipients insert media images of reality between themselves and reality and out of comfort and laziness they no longer deal with what is „*real*“ reality. The world thus created is being fed further by the absorption of content from photos, press, television, film and the internet. The staged reality becomes perfectly mixed with the reproduction of real events, before these two entities merge completely. Reality mediated by the media tends to be twisted,

¹³ SLEZÁKOVÁ, M.: *Potřebujeme veřejnoprávní facebook, pryč od trhu, efektů a emocí, říká průzkumník fake news.* [online]. [2020-07-02]. Available at: <https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-svet/rozhovor-fake-news-dezinformace-alex-sangerlaub-jeden-svet-media_1803080600_mls>.

¹⁴ IVAN, M.: *Nikdy jsme nebyli faktuační.* Presented at a scientific conference entitled 'Hradec Philosophical Days-Man in a Post-truth Society', Hradec Králové October 4-5, 2018.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ GÁLIKOVÁ-TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Nové médiá, pravda a realita* In BUČKOVÁ, Z., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, L., RYBANSKÝ, R., SOLÍK, M. et al. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá 2018. Realita a mediálne bubliny.* Trnava : FMK UCM, 2018, p. 10.

¹⁷ BAUDRILLARD, J.: *Praecessio Simulacrorum.* In *Host*, 1996, No. 6, p. 3-28. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://www.egs.edu/faculty/ baudrillard/ baudrillard-simulacra-and-simulations.html>>.

as the media favour dazzling and unrealistic images – with sensationalism eventually becoming the equivalent of reality. In the relatively short history of electronic and digital media, this symbolic representation of reality has too often been presented as reality itself.

Many popular myths and dogmas representing societal norms and desires originate from commercials and entertainment programmes. They are closely related to political and information images presented on TV, thereby creating a coherent and comprehensive environment of symbols. These are, of course, being interpreted from quite different perspectives. In addition, it should be borne in mind that all these interpretations come from media outlets that act in a selective manner and their nature is one of interpreting facts. The reproduced form of the event then gains more social importance than the original itself, and what is real essentially becomes an image of its images. The real thus must adapt and transform itself to its reproduction.

Last but not least, the way in which the audience approaches individual codes presented by media content creators is also important for the interpretation of journalistic texts. Prominent media theorist Brian McNair includes here both linguistic and ideological codes. Ideological coding contains, in addition to facts and values, and apart from information, also a framework for interpretation of these elements. McNair points out that the level of knowledge on a mediated topic and its decoding depend on the availability of alternative sources of information, including word of mouth and stories heard in daily contact with relatives or colleagues, but also personal experience with reported events.¹⁸

However, in addition to empirical experience, knowledge, intelligence level and algorithms, emotions also come into play. Meanwhile, emotions in the post-truth era are increasingly winning over common sense. „Where an individual is exposed to a tremendous amount of information and a plurality of equal views, emotions become his compass. At the same time, they are an obvious source of identification for a group that feels to be threatened. In a complex, complicated and chaotic world, in which pillars of support for trust are difficult to find, over-simplifications presenting easy-to-grasp models of how society works have provided the answer,“¹⁹ says Andrea Olejárová, a cultural scientist researching the new media.

The advent of the internet and digital technologies has fundamentally changed the way recipients consume media content. In addition to the removal of spatiotemporal barriers, the way in which content is regulated by media owners has also changed. This has made it more difficult for the power elites to control the nature and quality of information in the public arena. Alternative sources of information represent a stumbling block and a subject of disputes, dilemmas, criticism and controversy, as well as an opposition to the traditional ‘mainstream’ media. Media theorist Henry Jenkins in his study *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* discusses a ‘convergent culture’, in which old and new media collide, local and corporate media meet, and where the power of media producers and the power of media recipients is exerted in unpredictable interactions.²⁰ This results in a range of convergent media combining information and communication technologies in innovative ways.

Alternative media and sources of information are often labelled en bloc as disinformation and conspiracy outlets – a label that we consider to be misleading and biased. So we can see manipulative practices being applied also when dealing with the term ‘alternative media’ in the media discourse and beyond. We believe that this is due to insufficient critical reflection and a lack of interest on part of the professional public active in our socio-cultural environment. The following part of the paper will therefore represent a modest attempt to produce a terminological delineation of alternative media.

¹⁸ MCNAIR, B.: *Sociologie žurnalistiky*. Praha : Portál, 2004.

¹⁹ OLEJÁROVÁ, A.: Štyri poznámky k diskurzívnym aspektom skupinovej polarizácie v dôsledku pôsobenia nových médií. In BUČKOVÁ, Z., KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, A. et al. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá 2019 – Digital Universe*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2019, p. 323.

²⁰ JENKINS, H.: *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York : New York University press, 2006.

4. Mainstream vs. Alternative

Ever newer alternatives in the internet environment allow the audience to gain new perspectives on domestic and global events beyond those presented by the mainstream media for decades. In the following part of the paper, we will take a closer look at the term 'alternative media' as understood in Slovakia. The trends of media culture evolution after 1989 largely correspond to globalisation effects brought about by the loosening of the borders between the West and the East.

Global media culture is characterised by a number of features typical of Western capitalism, including individualism and consumerism, hedonism and commercialism. For the media of the 21st century, it holds that they are becoming ever more globalised; they are primarily concerned with profit, with this environment being dominated by mass media corporations, which pursue their interests.

The most important phenomena and tendencies of globalisation in media culture can be summarised as follows: preference for visual culture, commercialisation – currently reaching also the public-service media –, displacement of art of value, rise of low-level entertainment in all media, vulgarisation of language, mutual disrespect of the media and their audience, the influence of advertising on viewers' interests, the search for entertainment instead of experience, low professional reflection of media culture, stereotyping, commercialisation, uniformisation and homogenisation of media content.

The issues of objectivity, independence, freedom and diversity of the media in Slovakia must be seen in the context of the globalisation of the media and shifts in the information ecosystem with an emphasis on fragmentation, decentralisation and the levelling of information sources. In addition, other contexts need attention, such as the oligarchisation of the media, attempts to interfere with the content of newspapers, politicians' scorn for the work of journalists, threats to journalists' freedom and even lives, etc. A structural transformation of the public is taking place as we speak (as Jürgen Habermas has put it): communication is changing, the private and public spheres merge, bringing along a great deal of uncertainty.

The rapid rise of digital media has brought, among other things, a decline of trust in the traditional (mainstream) media and a boom in alternative information sources. Meanwhile, it is not entirely clear what one should imagine under the term 'alternative' when applied to the sphere of media. Perhaps free media? Or independent media? There are quite a few options to delineate alternative/independent media as opposed to the mainstream media. In this part of the paper, we will focus on why the term 'alternative media' has taken on significantly negative connotations, often referring to an unprecedented expansion of disinformation and conspiracy theories. Subsequently, we will point out why we hold it as more appropriate to adopt a more neutral understanding of this term (not only) on academic grounds, as alternative sources of information can be seen as providing space for different (independent) ways of how the dominant social ideology and mediated information are interpreted.

In contemporary society, the *homo medialis* of the 21st century can hardly imagine a life with a single unquestionable truth and without alternative interpretations of reality, including reality as presented by the media. Alternatives can exist to virtually anything – be it lifestyle or arts. So, alternative media make an important part of the media sphere when it comes to dissemination of information and diverse content. Alternative interpretations of the world represent a significant opposition platform to dominant opinion currents presented in the mainstream media. A diversified media scene is of key importance for the functioning of democracy, as it can be a catalyst for social change.²¹ J. D. H. Downing has defined the term 'radical media', as generally small-scale media, which have various forms and present

²¹ ATTON, CH.: *Alternative Media*. London : Sage, 2002.; DOWNING, W. J.: *Radical Media. Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*. London : Sage Publications, Inc., 2001.

alternative views to political and cultural hegemony, their priorities and opinions.²² It follows that one of the factors contributing to the emergence of alternative media may be the general dissatisfaction and radicalisation of society. Alternative media are the voice of those who are not given enough space in the mainstream media. „Societal groups that are represented one-sidedly, disadvantaged, stigmatized, or even repressed can especially benefit from using the channels of communication opened by alternative media.”²³ A large number of ‘alternative’ online sources have still not been recognized and legitimized in our environment, either by those holding official power or by the mainstream media. The degree of freedom of speech and media independence (which should actually be inherent to the media) varies in individual countries, but financial and political interests are to be seen everywhere. According to media theorists Maciej Iłowiecki and Tadeusz Zasepa,²⁴ it is possible to boast of freedom of speech, but it is difficult to recognise that the media are also independent. Their independence is greater, the greater their political pluralism and the higher the level of ethics of the journalistic environment. Let us add, however, that not only political but also media pluralism is important.

Individual definitions of alternative media vary depending on several factors and criteria, e.g. concerning their attributes, their standing within the media system, and their position vis-à-vis the mainstream media. As for the latter comparison, alternative media claim to be independent, incorruptible and not seeking profit. The designation for the traditional, mainstream media is based on the term ‘mainstream/mainstreaming’. *Slovník mediální komunikace* [Dictionary of Media Communication] understands this term as a process in which intense reception of relatively homogenised and stereotyped contents from the media leads to a unification of opinions and values held by recipients from varying social and cultural backgrounds.²⁵ The mainstream media (MSM) are defined as presenting the preferred view of reality. Linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky, with a dose of criticism, likens the MSM to corporate institutions and ideological tools.²⁶ Organisational structures of such media are essentially the same as in any other business company, including hierarchy, division of labour, specified procedures, goal-setting, supervision tools, with the main motive of their activities being the seeking of profit. The authors of *Understanding Alternative Media* state that the mainstream media are involved in creating ‘core’ societal values by their „permanent exposure to the audience.”²⁷ This produces a cultural hegemony, which most people may not even realise.

In any case, attempts to define alternative media have stirred up a lot of controversy. For example, Chris Atton²⁸ in his book *Alternative Media* asks whether anything that is not available in regular newsstands should be called an alternative – is it perhaps a synonym for underground, radical, opposition or samizdat press?

The authors of the entry ‘alternative media’²⁹ in an Oxford dictionary entitled *A Dictionary of Media and Communication* explain this term in three ways: 1. as one including both community and ‘underground’ media; 2. or denoting radical media and press; 3. or media that serve as alternatives in the areas of marketing and arts.

²² DOWNING, W. J.: *Radical Media. Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*. London : Sage Publications, Inc., 2001.

²³ BAILEY, G. O., CARPENTIER, N., CAMMAERTS, B.: *Understanding Alternative Media*. Berkshire : Open University Press, 2007, p. 14.

²⁴ IŁOWIECKI, M., ZASEPA, T.: *Moc a nemoc médií*. Bratislava : TYPI UNIVERSITATIS TYRNAVIENSIS, 2003.

²⁵ REIFOVÁ, I. et al.: *Slovník mediální komunikace*. Praha : Portál, 2004, p. 126.

²⁶ CHOMSKY, N.: *What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream*. [online]. [2020-09-11]. Available at: <https://chomsky.info/199710__/>.

²⁷ BAILEY, G. O., CARPENTIER, N., CAMMAERTS, B.: *Understanding Alternative Media*. Berkshire : Open University Press, 2007.

²⁸ ATTON, CH.: *Alternative Media*. London : Sage, 2002.

²⁹ CHANDLER, D., MUNDAY, R.: *Dictionary of Media and Communication*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2011. [online]. [2020-07-14]. Available at: <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758-e-0078?rskey=E6JkId&result=155>>.

Mitzi Waltz, an activist involved in research of alternative media, presents another possible view of this term in her book *Alternative and Activist Media*: she uses it to describe media that serve as alternatives to widely available products of the mass media. As an example, she cites American news-based TV channel CNN, which could be viewed as an 'alternative' to a repressive regime, which prohibits activities of all foreign media, such as the regime in North Korea.³⁰

M. Waltz³¹ cites some specific examples, including bulletins issued by various fellowships, low-budget literary magazines, digital radio stations targeting audiences interested in marginal music styles, as well as newspapers of radical political parties. Also included could be websites of environmental activists, home-made punk fanzines and feminist radio shows aired by community broadcasters. All of them represent 'alternatives' by covering issues that do not receive enough attention in the mainstream media.

In the aforementioned publication, M. Waltz further conceptualised the so-called activist media, which directly call on their audiences to take action that should lead to social change. According to M. Waltz, a common denominator for alternative and activist media is their potential to influence society in terms of economic and social changes.³²

Theory as found in literature frequently delineates the alternative media as an opposite to the mainstream media, which present contents widely accessible by the general public. Alternative media, mainly those presenting disinformation, are pointed out as actively resisting the dominant culture. „*They have the function of a binary opposition to the mainstream. We are discussing here an opinion 'alternative' and the dissemination of information described by its creators as intentionally concealed by the 'mainstream media'. (...) These are media that, in addition to publishing news produced by news agencies, make extensive use of fake news in various forms, most often as disinformation, conspiracy theories and hoaxes.*“³³

Alternative media in the Slovak media environment tend to be automatically labelled as ones spreading disinformation and conspiracy theories, as evidenced, for example, by the antipropaganda.sk website, operated by the Slovak Security Policy Institute. This website presents 'alternative' media as agents of purposeful disinformation and fact distortion.³⁴ We believe that such biased attitudes result in all alternative information sources in the Slovak context being put automatically into a single basket with disinformation sources and subsequently labelled as illegitimate, without any effort to verify whether they publish true information or not.

According to journalist Jaroslav Bublinec³⁵, it is not difficult to make the right guess about the agenda of alternative media: it is largely about presenting alternative views to everything and at any cost. This especially holds if the mainstream media – with their main agenda being the moulding of society according to the liberal worldview – have been convicted by the audience of long-term lies on some key issues.³⁶ Their missteps thus significantly contribute to inclinations of the public to alternative information channels, including those spreading disinformation and conspiracy theories. Concerns arising from the flooding of public space with deliberate distortions of facts, manipulations and lies often lead to people with a lack

³⁰ WALTZ, M.: *Alternative and Activist Media*. Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2005.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ KAPEC, M.: Mainstreamové a alternatívne médiá v slovenskom mediálnom priestore. In BUČKOVÁ, Z., KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, L. et al. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá 2019 – Digital Universe*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2019, p. 96.

³⁴ *Ako pracujú tradičné a „alternatívne“ médiá*. [online]. [2020-09-09]. Available at: <<https://www.antipropaganda.sk/ako-pracuju-tradicne-a-alternativne-media>>.

³⁵ MORAVČÍKOVÁ, E.: Interview with Jaroslav Bublinec. [2019-03-04]. [cit. 2020-09-02]. Personal communication.

³⁶ For example, this was evident after the public learned that „...some media have not been critical, but rather propagandistic (as in the wars in Iraq and Syria, when they echoed the establishment's lies)“ See DANIŠ, D.: *Komentár Daga Daniša: Prečo ľudia neveria systému a médiám*. [Commentary by Dag Daniš: Why People Don't Trust the System and Media]. Published on January 17, 2017. [online]. [2019-04-14]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/407272/komentar-daga-danisa-preco-ludia-neveria-systemu-a-mediám/>>.

of critical thinking and without elementary media literacy opting for the alternative media. „*Distrust in the mainstream media and preference for alternative information sources (including those working with hoaxes and conspiracy theories) could be associated with uncertainty experienced by individual members of society. This uncertainty could have its source both in everyday and wider political and economic contexts and could be recursively reinforced by the reception of content from specific media sources.*“³⁷ According to Jakub Macek, who is a renowned Czech expert focusing on the new media, it is necessary to examine the relationship between: a) trust (or its lack) of members of society in specific information/news sources, b) attitudes of these members of the public to politics, and c) their experience of attaining control and their feeling of ontological security (Giddens, 1991).³⁸ Similar conclusions were made by researchers Václav Moravec, Marína Urbániková and Jaromír Volek in a study demonstrating a relationship between the decline in trust (as seen in the Czech media environment) and responsibility attributed by media consumers to journalists for their share in legitimising the transformation process after the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and related social problems.³⁹

The roots of distrust in authorities can therefore be found in an erosion of social justice, globalisation processes, migration, corruption and people’s awakening vis-à-vis values. As a result, we see the emergence of the post-truth era, including its deficit of truth and facts. This implies another important consequence for life in post-truth society, namely a growing pressure from the public for the regulation of media contents spread especially in the environment of new media, chiefly social networks, as well as for the ethical and legal accountability of those running these information channels. However, state regulations and the imposition of fines for the dissemination of disinformation could obviously be misused: for example, they would provide legitimate means for punishing only those with inconvenient or ‘seditious’ views. Regulation is always a sensitive issue and there can be a fine line between freedom and its violation. In our opinion, monopolised control over the process of distributing media contents is not possible without restricting the freedom of speech – which would be contrary to some of the fundamental pillars of democracy.

But how are we to understand the world of media, with which we do not live, but – as media theorist Mark Deuze⁴⁰ puts it – in which we live? How should we discern these manipulation techniques? How are we supposed to find the truth in an information jungle? And can we even distinguish essential information from irrelevant information?

McNair⁴¹ writes that the extent to which journalism produces a „*trusting*“ subject depends on many circumstances, including whether the latter uses critical thinking in assessing journalistic outputs. Tired, lazy or uneducated audiences can be so intoxicated by fluent and gleaming streams of television news, modern looks and technology that they fail to see that such reporting is as fabricated as products of the yellow press (and, let us add, of disinformation and conspiracy journalists).

Petr Nutil, an independent journalist and author of a book entitled *Media, Lies and a Too Fast Brain*, writes that one fundamental and meaningful task that a responsible state should take on concerning the media would be education of its citizens in media literacy and critical, independent and analytical thinking. Critical thinking is a conscious, rational process that leads to certain conclusions, he says, adding that anyone should be intelligent enough to be allowed to examine even nonsense. „*Individuals should be aware of how the media work, who controls*

³⁷ MACEK, J.: *Média v pohybu. K proměně současných českých publik*. Brno : Masaryk University, 2015, p. 120.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 120.

³⁹ MORAVEC, V., URBÁNIKOVÁ, M., VOLEK, J.: Žurnalisté ve stínu nedůvěry: K některým příčinám klesající důvěryhodnosti českých novinářů. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MINÁRIKOVÁ, J., MENDELOVÁ, D. et al. (eds.): *Megatrendy & médiá 2016. Kritika v médiích, kritika médií II*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2016, p. 82-123.

⁴⁰ DEUZE, M.: *Media life. Život v médiích*. Praha : Karolinum, 2015.

⁴¹ MCNAIR, B.: *Sociologie žurnalistiky*. Praha : Portál, 2004.

them and what their agenda is. They also understand key principles of the information war, propaganda and how it works. Critical encounters with sensationalist aspects of the media, fake news and disinformation websites could serve as great intellectual vaccination for media-literate persons.⁴²

When discussing the media and their content, we consider it necessary to draw attention also to another important and often unnoticed aspect of the presence of fake news in post-truth society, namely that fake news makes part of the so-called *hybrid war*, as pointed out by journalist J. Bublinec.⁴³ In this war, according to him, perhaps a stronger weapon than fake news itself is the ability of effectively slamming the opponent for allegedly spreading disinformation: „A question emerges: is this slamming of opponents a display of hysteria or part of a deliberate strategy? These alternatives are not mutually exclusive, however – both hysteria and strategy are at work here, albeit each in different agents, and these two approaches feed each other. With this in mind, it is not primarily a question of being well-versed in journalism, but rather of being able to find one’s bearings in propaganda as part of war machineries run by several stakeholders in parallel. This also demonstrates: a) how easy it is, in technical terms, to create a reputation of fake-news spreader about anyone; b) how this phenomenon has become a ready-to-use weapon in political struggle. The formerly used label ‘enemy of progress’ is a blood relative to this new one in addressing the recipient’s rationality, reading: ‘fake news!’⁴⁴ So we consider the general term ‘fake news’ as too simplistic and superficial, when it comes to placing individual statements in the category of misleading and fake content.

Also, we view attempts to squeeze alternative media into a box labelled as ‘conspiracy and disinformation agenda’ to be misleading and far too little conceptual. For the purposes of our research, we agree with definitions of the term ‘alternative media’ as presented by Jiří Ftorek⁴⁵ and Petr Nutil⁴⁶ as the most appropriate for our theoretical research of the post-truth era. We understand alternative media and their contents as standing in opposition to dominant elements present in the public space and providing different interpretations of the dominant social ideology and mediated information. Alternative media and media linked to individual social movements offer the possibility of different (alternative) sources of information in the media environment. They have been disturbing the information monopoly and challenging the credibility of traditional media (press, radio and television) on the internet. „The possibility of comparing the formulation of one’s own opinion on the basis of alternative information, the credibility of which is confirmed over time, then boosts the popularity and relevance of the online media alternative at the expense of the traditional mainstream media (press, radio, television).⁴⁷

Alternative media undermine – at least implicitly – the current concentration of media power. It can be alternative information channels that eventually point to the unfortunate fact that the media and journalists, instead of serving as watchdogs of democracy, often become obedient and complaisant servants to their masters.

5. Conclusion

The media have become an arena in which a whole range of public life events take place; they are a source of power, a potential means of influencing the masses and of control, and an instrument allowing the promotion of one’s interests. They work like any production factory – they produce their own messages, media personages, opinion leaders and pseudo-experts.

⁴² NUTIL, P.: *Média, lži a příliš rychlý mozek. Průvodce postpravdivým světem*. Praha : Grada, 2018, p. 92.

⁴³ MORAVČÍKOVÁ, E.: Interview with Jaroslav Bublinec. 2019-03-04. Personal communication.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ FTOREK, J.: *Manipulace a propaganda na pozadí současné informační války*. Praha : Grada, 2017.

⁴⁶ NUTIL, P.: *Média, lži a příliš rychlý mozek. Průvodce postpravdivým světem*. Praha : Grada, 2018.

⁴⁷ FTOREK, J.: *Manipulace a propaganda na pozadí současné informační války*. Praha : Grada, 2017, p. 75.

This is a key problem of the entire media industry: there are unlimited opportunities for the (uncensored) manipulation of recipients.

Of course, a positive role of the media must also be admitted. First of all, they create a space for the presentation of opinions and they inform (either truthfully or in a distorted manner) about events from other parts of the globe, thus allowing the public to reach, effectively, the whole world. Almost any part of human knowledge is just a few clicks away on the internet. The media create pressure on politicians and public figures, and their reach allows them to serve as regulators of political life. They examine individual problems, including by way of investigative journalism, and help to detect and solve social problems. It is indisputable that the media a priori support social values, including literacy and education, but their interest in ordinary people can easily be only a cover for their own interest in profit, as admitted (self-critically and with a smile) by Vladimír Železný, former director of the Czech private TV broadcaster NOVA. He said that it was not programmes that he used to sell on the screen, but viewers – especially to advertising agencies and other customers. Viewers are nothing else than wrapped goods tied with a bow, while there are thousands of them...

We can observe that explicit efforts on part of the media to persuade the public about the veracity of their messages cannot be denied. Nevertheless, plurality of the media scene, unfortunately, does not automatically secure plurality of opinions, as the media instead frequently assault people's minds with distorted, manipulated, tendentious and superfluous information and a torrent of artificial entertainment.

In conclusion, we would like to make a strong appeal aimed at the development of critical thinking and media literacy. Critical thinking means independent, analytical, conscious and rational thinking. Petr Nutil, an independent journalist and author of *Media, Lies and a Too Fast Brain*,⁴⁸ relies primarily on the individual and his or her intelligence, which allows the person to freely examine even the greatest nonsense. The solution also consists of the systematic strengthening of information literacy⁴⁹ and critical thinking in schools and outside them, ie in the support of a critical-reflective approach to the media in formal and non-formal education.

Ideological manipulation can only be defeated if people educate themselves and actively work with information and information sources. We believe that the most potent weapon in this unequal struggle will be sceptical and critical views, verification of information and active thinking. This requires one's own effort to be transformed from being a passive, yea-saying consumer of media messages to a critical evaluator. As Aristotle put it, he who tries to teach others must above all be able to doubt. It is because doubts of the spirit lead to revelation of the truth.

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⁴⁸ NUTIL, P.: *Média, lži a příliš rychlý mozek. Průvodce postpravdivým světem*. Praha : Grada, 2018.

⁴⁹ See more: AROLDI, P., MARIÑO, M. V., VRABEC, N.: Evaluation and funding of media and information literacy. In FRAU-MEIGS, D., VELEZ, I., MICHEL, J. F. (eds.): *Public policies in media and information literacy in Europe: cross-country comparisons*. Abingdon : Routledge, 2017.

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Jos van Helvoort, Marianne Hermans

Effectiveness Of Educational Approaches To Elementary School Pupils (11 Or 12 Years Old) To Combat Fake News

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this literature study is to obtain information about educational approaches to teaching 11 to 12 years old children focusing on how to distinguish between real news and fake news. With this purpose we studied 16 academic papers about learning activities to make primary school children media-literate and able to recognise fake news. What we found is that having children create their own news messages seems to be the most effective approach. News messages that they create can be text messages as well as videos, audios, pictures and animations. Based on this conclusion, students from The Hague University of Applied Sciences Teacher Training Institute (PABO) have been asked to develop a set of learning materials that can be used for instruction in primary schools. The effectiveness of those materials is currently being tested at an elementary school in Rijswijk. The results of the literature and the field study will be shared in the Dutch centre of expertise for media literacy education, Mediawijzer.net.

KEY WORDS

Media education. News literacy. Primary education. Literature review.

1. Introduction

As in other European countries, primary education in the Netherlands has a demand for instructional materials that teach 10 to 12 years old children how to distinguish fake news from real news.^{1,2} Teaching pupils how to develop a critical attitude towards news messages on the internet and social media is important at this young age because most children already use mobile telephones with access to the internet and social media³ and because teaching of media literacy skills is most effective at this age.⁴ The ability to identify false messages is even more important for young people because they are relatively inexperienced in life.⁵

The spread of fake news is considered a threat for democracy and civic participation in a lot of European countries. Although the Netherlands is assumed to be one of the most 'fake news-resistant' countries in Europe,^{6,7} the Dutch government still holds the opinion that it should take measures against it to warrant societal stability. Fake news is not a new phenomenon but the rapid spread of false information through the internet and social media worsens the problem, especially because social media are the main sources of news messages for young people.⁸

Measures to combat fake news

The literature on the combat of information disorder (for instance^{9,10}) distinguishes at least four types of measures: technological approaches, stronger journalism, regulation by the government and educational programs. Technological approaches imply, for instance, the automated identification and blocking of spoof sites and advertisements that obviously contain nonsense or illegal information (clickbait).¹¹ One of the problems with these types of measures is that the creators of information disorders will always find ways to avoid those algorithms, thereby creating an „arms race“ between content creators and technological platforms.¹²

Factchecking by neutral third parties is an example of strengthening journalism practices. It is sometimes practised in cooperation with technological partners. Facebook, for instance, cooperates in the discovery and flagging of fake news with fact-checking organisations

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- ¹ NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST: *NewsWise: Pilot Report*. London : National Literacy Trust, 2018. [online]. [2020-10-05]. Available at: <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED588802.pdf>>.
- ² WALRAVEN, A., PAAS, T., SCHOUWENAARS, I.: *Mediawijsheid in het Primair Onderwijs: Achtergronden en Percepties*. Hilversum; Nijmegen : Mediawijzer.net; ITS, Radboud Universiteit, 2013, p. 21.
- ³ KENNISNET : *Monitor Jeugd en Media 2017*. [online]. [2020-10-06]. Available at: <https://www.kennisnet.nl/app/uploads/kennisnet/publicatie/jeugd_media/Kennisnet_Monitor_Jeugd_en_Media_2017.pdf>.
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- ⁵ BALČYTIENĖ, A., WADBRING, I.: News Literacy: Reinventing the Ideals of Journalism and Citizenry in the 21st Century. In WADBRING, I., PEKKALA, L. (eds.): *Citizens in a Mediated World: A Nordic-Baltic Perspective on Media and Information Literacy*. Göteborg : Nordicom, 2017, p. 40.
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- ⁷ LAUF, E., SIERHUIS, R., WEGGEMANS, V.: *Mediamonitor 2018*. [online]. [2020-10-06]. Available at: <<https://www.mediamonitor.nl/wp-content/uploads/Mediamonitor-2018-Reuters-Institute-Digital-News-Report-Nederland-2018.pdf>>.
- ⁸ LOOS, E., IVAN, L., LEU, D.: „Save the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus“: A Hoax Revisited. Or: How Vulnerable Are School Children to Fake News? In *Information and Learning Science*, 2018, Vol. 119, No. 9, p. 521.
- ⁹ WARDLE, C., DERAKHSHAN, H.: *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2017 (DGI(2017) nr. 09), p. 57-74.
- ¹⁰ MARDA, V., MILAN, S.: *Wisdom of the Crowd: Multistakeholder Perspectives on the Fake News Debate*. Philadelphia, PA : Internet Policy Observatory, Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 2018, p. 1, 10-14.
- ¹¹ WARDLE, C., DERAKHSHAN, H.: *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2017 (DGI(2017) nr. 09), p. 58-59.
- ¹² O'CONNOR, C., WEATHERALL, J. O.: *Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread*. New Haven; London : Yale University Press, 2019, p. 175.

in different countries, although it makes an exception for utterances by politicians, which are not fact-checked. Since June 2020, Facebook offers an opportunity to turn off political ads.¹³ Fact-checking organisations are supposed to bring extra accuracy to the public debate¹⁴, but it is also believed that arguments based on facts will not convince people if that information is contrary to a person's world view.¹⁵

One of the main objections to technological solutions to combat false information is that they restrict freedom of speech. This is, of course, true for all regulative measures by governments. Marda and Milan discuss, amongst other topics, the German Network Enforcement Act, which „promises to fine social media companies that fail to take down from their platforms hate speech or fake news within 24 hours.“¹⁶ It is not surprising that this has caused objections by many human rights organisations in Germany as well as worldwide, which hold the opinion that the law threatens freedom of speech.

All described disadvantages of technological and regulative solutions to combat fake news and other types of information disorder lead to the broadly accepted conclusion that false information is best opposed by educational programs.^{17,18,19,20} Making young children critical thinkers is a particularly long term solution to combat fake news and is therefore encouraged by many experts.²¹ This is also the view of the Dutch government.²² In this paper we will therefore focus on educational approaches aiming to develop children's ability to handle disinformation.

Types of information disorder

There are various words for what can be considered 'undesired information': fake or false news, misinformation, disinformation, information disorder, hate speech, and so forth. Information disorder is the most general term for all of these types of content. In this research we follow largely the Wardle and Derakshan's distinction of three types of information disorder:²³

- Misinformation is information that is false but is not created with false intentions. It is often found in publications that can be characterised as bad journalism.
- Disinformation is information that is false *and* created to deliberately harm a person, social group, organisation or country. In our view, disinformation includes false content that is

¹³ RODRIGUEZ, S.: *Mark Zuckerberg Says Facebook Will Allow Users to Turn Off Political Ads*. [online]. [2020-06-17]. Available at: <<https://www.cnn.com/amp/2020/06/17/facebook-will-allow-users-to-turn-off-political-ads-mark-zuckerberg.html>>.

¹⁴ KANIŽAJ, I., LECHPAMMER, S.: *The Role of Organisations of Journalists in Promoting Media Literacy: Building Credibility and Trust*. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 30.

¹⁵ COOK, J., LEWANDOWSKY, S., ECKER, U.: *Neutralizing Misinformation through Inoculation: Exposing Misleading Argumentation Techniques Reduces their Influence*. In *PloS One*, 2017, Vol. 12, No. 5, p. 3.

¹⁶ MARDA, V., MILAN, S.: *Wisdom of the Crowd: Multistakeholder Perspectives on the Fake News Debate*. Philadelphia, PA : Internet Policy Observatory, Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 2018, p. 1.

¹⁷ WARDLE, C., DERAKHSHAN, H.: *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2017 (DGI(2017) nr. 09), p. 68-70.

¹⁸ MARDA, V., MILAN, S.: *Wisdom of the Crowd: Multistakeholder Perspectives on the Fake News Debate*. Philadelphia, PA : Internet Policy Observatory, Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 2018, p.16.

¹⁹ STANFORD HISTORY EDUCATION GROUP: *Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning: Executive Summary*. Stanford (CA) : Stanford History Education Group, 2016, p. 4-7.

²⁰ SCHMITT, J. B. et al.: *Critical Media Literacy and Islamist Online Propaganda: The Feasibility, Applicability and Impact of Three Learning Arrangements*. In *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 2018, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 4.

²¹ MARDA, V., MILAN, S.: *Wisdom of the Crowd: Multistakeholder Perspectives on the Fake News Debate*. Philadelphia, PA : Internet Policy Observatory, Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 2018, p.12.

²² RIJKSOVERHEID, N. L.: *Desinformatie en Nepnieuws*. [online]. [2020-05-10]. Available at: <<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/desinformatie-nepnieuws>>.

²³ WARDLE, C., DERAKHSHAN, H.: *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2017 (DGI(2017) nr. 09), p. 20-22.

created with the intention to generate clicks on paid content on internet websites (clickbait) or simply to attract attention. The difference from misinformation is that disinformation is consciously created with the intention to mislead people.

- Mal-information is information that is based on reality but is used to inflict harm on a person, organisation or country. Examples of mal-information are hate speech, leaks and harassment.

These different types of information disorders can be plotted in a matrix with four quadrants in which the x-axis expresses the question as to whether false information is deliberately false (the information producer is a liar) or not (the information producer is poorly informed himself/herself). The y-axis presents the intention to mislead on the one side and the intention to harm on the other side. The three types of information disorders identified by Wardle and Derakshan are presented in the matrix in Figure 1.

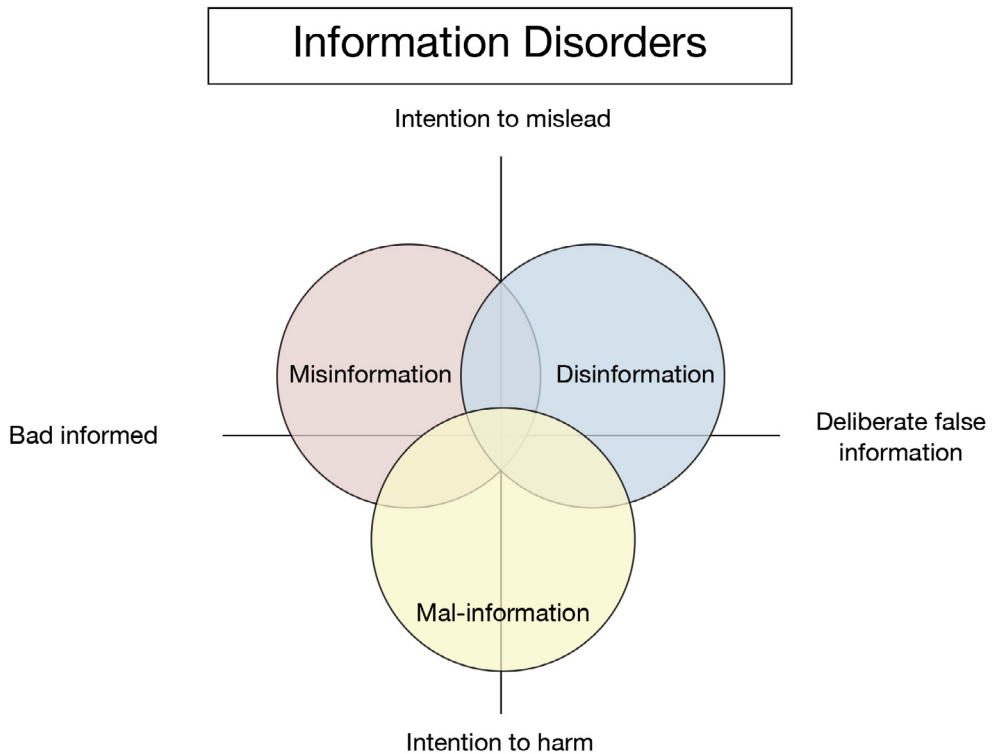


FIGURE 1: The three types of information disorders (Wardle and Derakshan 2017) presented in a matrix with two axes

Source: own processing

In our research on educational materials for primary school children, we will use the definition of 'fake news' by Myhre,²⁴ which means that we will focus on information that is 'not reliable'. We will focus on 'real fake news' (disinformation), but sources with untrustworthy content (misinformation) are also part of our research. Types of mal-information are not included in our research, although the spread of mal-information is a serious problem in groups of young adolescents.

²⁴ MYHRE, E.: *Supranational or Compartmental: Applying the Question of European Union Identity to the Topic of Disinformation*. Harrisonburg, VA : James Madison University, 2019, p. 3.

Content types

Fake news has various content types. A content analysis of fake messages discovered by the Turkish factchecking organization Teyit.org resulted in the conclusion that most fake news consist of videos and photographs.²⁵ A relatively recent development is the rise of ‘deepfakes’, that is, videos that are created with artificial intelligence that can hardly be identified as ‘fake’.²⁶ Due to the popularity of images amongst young adolescents, this observation is very important for our own research on educational materials to combat fake news.

A third distinction that can be made is that of different types of genres. Tandoc, Lim and Ling²⁷ discern political fake news (propaganda) from other genres such as photo manipulation, fabricated news articles, advertisements and satire and parody news. The latter categories can be considered as examples of disinformation whose purpose is to entertain or attract attention.

Research questions

The main question that will be answered in this literature study is: what are the most promising learning activities to make 11 and 12 years old pupils skilled in distinguishing real news from fake news?

The sub-questions are:

- RQ1 What types of educational approaches can be used to make children resistant to fake information?
 RQ2 What does the literature reveal about the effectiveness of those approaches?

2. Procedure

Keywords that we used to find relevant information in Google Scholar are reported in table 1.

| Major subject | Modifier | Sphere |
|--|---------------|---|
| „news literacy“ OR („media education“ AND „fake news“) | effectiveness | („primary education“ OR „elementary education“ NOT „higher education“) |

TABLE 1: Keywords to find relevant information

Source: own processing

Papers that were found with these search terms were rated on relevance for answering the research questions based on the abstracts and quick searches with Ctrl-F. References listed in those papers were checked for relevance in the same way (backward chaining). The time filter was set on 2010-2019.

Using this search strategy we found 16 relevant papers. Those papers were read in detail and relevant paragraphs were coded with the qualitative research tool Atlas.ti. The reports from Atlas.ti were used to answer the research questions.

²⁵ ÜNAL, R., ÇIÇEKLIOĞLU, A.: The Function and Importance of Fact-Checking Organizations in the Era of Fake News: Teyit.org, an Example from Turkey. In *Media Studies*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 19, p. 156.

²⁶ KNIGHT, E., MOHAMMADI, R., LE BOMIN, L.: *Game of Fakes: An Entertaining Approach to Analyzing How Awareness of Fake News Affects Trust in News Media*. [online]. [2018-10-20]. Available at: <<https://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/blog/2018/10/20/game-of-fakes/>>.

²⁷ TANDOC, E., LIM, Z. W., LING, R.: Defining „Fake News“. In *Digital Journalism*, 2018, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 141-147.

3. Results

RQ1 What types of educational approaches can be used to make children resistant to fake information?

One of the fundamental distinctions in approaches to counter fake news is the difference between debunking and prebunking.²⁸ Debunking means that false information is corrected by providing counterarguments, alternative facts and so forth. The educational actions consist in those cases of 'interventions' at the moment that pupils meet fake information.²⁹ Prebunking means that people are pre-emptively confronted with fake news to make them resistant at the moment that they will meet fake information in reality. The prebunking approach parallels the metaphor of the inoculation theory that implies that people become resistant to fake news if they are exposed to a softer version of fake information beforehand. „Just as vaccines generate antibodies to resist future viruses, inoculation messages equip people with counterarguments that potentially convey resistance to future misinformation, even if the misinformation is congruent with pre-existing attitudes.“³⁰

The inoculation approach itself can be applied passively (by reading and recognition) or more actively (by experience and generating one's own pro- and counterarguments). Roozenbeek and Van der Linden³¹ hold the opinion that active inoculation is more effective because it implies a more involved cognitive process. They developed a game ('Bad News') in which participants from different age groups and different educational backgrounds created their own fake news using six different strategies: impersonation, emotion, polarisation, conspiracy, discredit and trolling. The conclusion of their research was that all types of participants had improved their „ability to spot and resist misinformation“ after playing the game.³²

Other types of active inoculation that are mentioned in the literature entail children creating their own news items,^{33,34,35} reflection assignments^{36,37} and discussions in peer groups.³⁷ Another example of active construction of knowledge about misinformation is fact-checking by student groups at universities (for instance, Nieuwscheckers at Leiden University in the Netherlands). Although fact-checking itself and the output of fact-checking centres are typically the examples of debunking fake news,³⁸ it can be maintained that fact-checking activities by students generate learning processes for themselves that are typically associated with prebunking approaches.

²⁸ ROOZENBEEK, J., VAN DER LINDEN, S.: Fake News Game Confers Psychological Resistance Against Online Misinformation. In *Palgrave Communications*, 2019, Vol. 5, No. 65, p. 2.

²⁹ STAUSS, C.: *Critical Constraints in the Classroom: Assessing How Teachers Approach Media Literacy in Middle and Secondary Schools*. [Master Thesis]. Oregon : University of Oregon, 2012, p. 40.

³⁰ COOK, J., LEWANDOWSKY, S., ECKER, U.: Neutralizing Misinformation through Inoculation: Exposing Misleading Argumentation Techniques Reduces their Influence. In *PLoS One*, 2017, Vol. 12, No. 5, p. 4.

³¹ ROOZENBEEK, J., VAN DER LINDEN, S.: Fake News Game Confers Psychological Resistance Against Online Misinformation. In *Palgrave Communications*, 2019, Vol. 5, No. 65, p. 2-3.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³³ WALRAVEN, A., PAAS, T., SCHOUWENAARS, I.: *Mediawijsheid in het Primair Onderwijs: Achtergronden en Percepties*. Hilversum; Nijmegen : Mediawijzer.net; ITS, Radboud Universiteit, 2013, p. 17.

³⁴ ZEZULKOVA, M.: *Whole Person Hermeneutic Media Learning in the Primary Classroom: An Intercultural Grounded Philosophy* [Doctoral Dissertation]. Bournemouth, Dorset, England : Bournemouth University, 2015, p. 17.

³⁵ KLEEMANS, M., EGGINK, G.: Understanding News: The Impact of Media Literacy Education on Teenagers' News Literacy. In *Journalism Education*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 75.

³⁶ WARDLE, C., DERA KHSHAN, H.: *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2017 (DGI(2017) nr. 09), p. 69.

³⁷ SCHMITT, J. B. et al.: Critical Media Literacy and Islamist Online Propaganda: The Feasibility, Applicability and Impact of Three Learning Arrangements. In *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 2018, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 6.

³⁸ WARDLE, C., DERA KHSHAN, H.: *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2017 (DGI(2017) nr. 09), p. 6.

A more passive prebunking approach that is, nevertheless, often mentioned as a promising method to make children resistant to false information is the analysis and evaluation of existing cases with news stories.^{39,40,41} Katsaounidou a.o. mentions the online game *Factitious*, „in which the players should read the containing articles, swipe to the right if they think that it is a real story, and swipe left if they think that it is a fake story.“⁴²

As a last remark it is to be pointed out that fake news or media literacy should preferably not be instructed at school as a subject in itself. Media literacy skills and knowledge are related to other subjects.⁴³ The ability to critically examine news, photographs and videos is typically a competency that can be indicated as a 21st century skill. Experts on educational science indicate that such broad skills are best integrated in other subject fields that are taught at school, like history, geography or social studies (see for instance⁴⁴).

RQ2 What does the literature reveal about the effectiveness of those approaches?

Hardly any information was found on the effectiveness of instructions on fake news. Existing studies on effectiveness mostly investigate games as a learning tool.^{45,46} The results of these studies suggest that there is a positive correlation between playing fake news games and participants' abilities to resist fake news. These positive results, however, do not prove that playing games is the *most* effective approach to make young people resistant to fake news. However, because of their experimental setting, these games give the opportunity to investigate the effects of the inoculation with fake news in a quantitative way.

Research on prebunking and fake news games shows that creating your own news is a promising approach to make people news-literate. This might be executed in a game but also in a 'newsroom' or a lab at school.^{47,48,49} News messages should not be restricted to texts. On the contrary, young children are intrinsically motivated to make pictures, videos or podcasts rather than to write texts.

From an educational science point of view, it is important to emphasise that a detailed description of learning outcomes is required if we want to assess the effectiveness of learning materials.⁵⁰ In the current research project, the desired learning outcome will be the *recognition* of real and fake news, even if the children's learning activities are more focused upon creating their own news. A set of true/false questions like the online quiz *Factitious* seems to be an adequate instrument to assess these learning outcomes.

³⁹ LOOS, E., IVAN, L., LEU, D.: „Save the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus“: A Hoax Revisited. Or: How Vulnerable Are School Children to Fake News? In *Information and Learning Science*, 2018, Vol. 119, No. 9, p. 515.

⁴⁰ WARDLE, C., DERAKHSHAN, H.: *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2017 (DGI(2017) nr. 09), p. 69.

⁴¹ ZENG, X.: *Chinese Young People's Engagement with Journalism: Perspectives and Attitudes towards the News*. [Doctoral Dissertation]. Bournemouth, Dorset, England : Bournemouth University, 2014, p. 225.

⁴² KATSAOUNIDOU, A. et al.: *MathE the Game: A Serious Game for Education and Training in News Verification*. In *Education Sciences*, 2019, Vol. 9, No. 155, p. 4.

⁴³ KLEEMANS, M., EGGINK, G.: Understanding News: The Impact of Media Literacy Education on Teenagers' News Literacy. In *Journalism Education*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 75.

⁴⁴ WALRAVEN, A., BRAND-GRUWEL, S., BOSHUIZEN, H.: Fostering Students' Evaluation Behaviour While Searching the Internet. In *Instructional Science*, 2013, Vol. 41, No. 1, p. 143.

⁴⁵ ROOZENBEEK, J., VAN DER LINDEN, S.: The Fake News Game: Actively Inoculating Against the Risk of Misinformation. In *Journal of Risk Research*, 2018, Vol. 22, No. 5, p. 3-6.

⁴⁶ ROOZENBEEK, J., VAN DER LINDEN, S.: Fake News Game Confers Psychological Resistance Against Online Misinformation. In *Palgrave Communications*, 2019, Vol. 5, No. 65, p. 1-10.

⁴⁷ NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST: *NewsWise: Pilot Report*. London : National Literacy Trust, 2018. Available at: <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED588802.pdf>>.

⁴⁸ WALRAVEN, A., PAAS, T., SCHOUWENAARS, I.: *Mediawijsheid in het Primair Onderwijs: Achtergronden en Percepties*. Hilversum; Nijmegen : Mediawijzer.net; ITS, Radboud University, 2013, p. 17.

⁴⁹ KLEEMANS, M., EGGINK, G.: Understanding News: The Impact of Media Literacy Education on Teenagers' News Literacy. In *Journalism Education*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 75.

⁵⁰ ROZENDAAL, E.: *Effectieve Mediawijsheidprogramma's: Inzichten en Aandachtspunten voor Uitvoerders, Ontwikkelaars en Onderzoekers*. [online]. [2018-04-04]. Available at <<https://www.mediawijzer.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/06/MW-effectieveinterventies-rapport.pdf>>.

Integration in other subjects that are taught in school is another condition that increases the potential success of fake news education. In answering research question 1 we mentioned subjects like history, geography and social studies but even a more recent subject like citizenship education might provide a good context in which to teach people how to identify fake news.

4. Conclusion

Summarising the results from research questions 1 and 2, it is concluded that the most promising educational approach to making children news-literate is an activating instruction in creating their own news messages. News messages may be text messages as well as videos, audios, pictures, animations and so forth. It is preferred to integrate the activating instruction with one of the other subjects taught, for instance in a course on citizenship education. To assess the children's ability to identify real and fake news, it is a good idea to keep the online game *Factitious* in mind as an example.

5. Further research

In the next step of the current research project, students from The Hague University of Applied Sciences Teacher Training Institute (PABO) have been asked to develop appropriate learning and assessment materials. Those materials are currently being tested in an elementary school in Rijswijk (near The Hague). The results will be shared in *Mediawijzer.net*, the Dutch centre of expertise for media literacy.

A question for future research is whether the experiences of the Teacher Training students will give rise to new learning goals or content for the education of primary school teachers in the field of media education.

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Comparison Of Television Broadcasting For Children And Youth In A Public Broadcaster In The Slovak And Czech Republic During The Covid-19 Pandemic

ABSTRACT

The subject of the study is a comparison of television broadcasting for school-age children and youth by public broadcasters in Slovakia and the Czech Republic during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic in spring 2020. The authors selected and researched programs which were supposed to partially replace full-time teaching in primary schools. Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) broadcast a program called *Školský klub (School Club)* and Czech Television broadcast the *UčíTelka (Teaching TV)* program. The aim of the group of authors was to analyze five parts of both programs broadcast in one week and then compare the results. In the theoretical part of the study, the authors characterize the broadcast during an emergency situation and present the examined programs. Subsequently, they are presenting an overview of television broadcasting during the mandatory quarantine in Slovakia in the children's television *JOJKO*, which they divided into two categories: broadcasting focused on coronavirus and broadcasting focused on spending free time at home. In the research part, the authors carry out a qualitative analysis of the researched lectures with a focus on several aspects: visual design, tools used in the lecture, the role of the presenter and their performance, the overall contribution of the lesson in terms of topics and curriculum and interaction with viewers. They compare the results of both lectures and deduce the results of the analysis based on the findings. The result of the study is a comparison of the level, processing and benefits of lessons aimed to partially replace the teaching process of children and youth in primary schools in Slovakia and the Czech Republic at the time of emergency measures and quarantine caused by the COVID-19 virus.

KEY WORDS

Television. Public television. Broadcasting for children. Pandemic. Coronavirus. COVID-19. Školský klub. UčíTelka.

1. Introduction

The emergency situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic was difficult to prepare for. It has hit us in many areas of human life, and there is nothing left (and still is not) only to adapt. Education is and will be a very important part. „*The outbreak of this dangerous virus across the globe has forced educational institutions to shut down to control the spread of this virus. This happening made the teaching professionals think of alternative methods of teaching during this lockdown. And thus it paves the way towards web-based learning or e-learning or online learning.*“¹ The field of education in all its layers felt this new situation mainly by closing schools and in many cases by switching to online education, or looking for other alternatives to replace full-time teaching. „*Online learning or e-learning are the buzzing words during this pandemic situation among the community of students across the world.*“² From the authors' own experience (their work at university), we can say that in higher education, the conditions for the introduction of online teaching are easier than in, for example, primary schools. Adult students of university studies are required to own technical equipment and an Internet connection. For younger students, meeting these conditions is more difficult. We start from the events in Slovakia in the first wave of the pandemic. Some schools tried to switch to online teaching, others sent tasks and assignments to students and only checked their fulfillment. The educational part remained with the parents. Undoubtedly, it was a great burden for both parents and children. According to the UK's 2013 Good Childhood Report, several conditions need to met for children's and young people's positive development, namely:

- the right conditions in which to learn and develop,
- a positive view of themselves and respect for their identity,
- enough items and experiences that matter to them,
- positive relationships with their family, friends and school,
- a safe and suitable home environment and local area and
- the opportunities to take part in positive activities which help them to thrive.³

Distance education was a big change for children. In distance education, student centered learning is the soul of the program that demands a learner to work independently. Assignments and examinations are also integral parts of this system that demands to provide some types of activities where a student must be able to get regular lectures by expert teachers to understand the lessons. Akhter's cited article was published in 2011, but his claims were confirmed in 2020. Akhter says about the role of the media in the context of distance education: „*In the situation, media play vital role in providing educational assistance to learners where no other regular interaction between teacher and student is possible. ETV, from broadcast media is an important source that is used in many countries to telecast the educational lessons for distance learners.*“⁴ Opinions on distance education vary. Some distance educators claim that distance education is the best way to learn because it allows students to acquire knowledge when it is most relevant to them.⁵ Online education also brings about an increased burden on children in terms of their increased exposure to cyberspace. „*We therefore need to learn to trust media*

¹ RADHA, R. a kol.: E-Learning during Lockdown of Covid-19 Pandemic: A Global Perspective. In *International Journal of Control and Automation*, 2020, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 1088.

² KOLLURU, V.: Students perspective on Online Learning and Contract Learning during Pandemic Situation. In *International Research Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2020, Vol. 07, No. 05, p. 7874.

³ LIVINGSTON, S.: Positive onlin content for children: Let kids create and participate. In PIJPERS, R., VAN DEN BOSCH, N. (eds.): *Positive digital content for kids*. POSCON : Mijn Kid Online, 2014, p. 12.

⁴ AKHTER, N.: Evolution of educational television programs for distane learning. In *TOJET*, 2011, Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 188.

⁵ SIMONSON, M. a kol.: *Teaching and learning at a distance. Location*. Charlotte, North Carolina Information, United States : Age Publishing Inc., 2015, p. 12.

with reserve, be critical, and spend at least part of the time we have without the influence of media, especially away from the Internet cyberspace.⁶ Challenges to reduce the time spent in cyberspace collide with objective problems caused by students being reliant on online education in the time of school closures.

At the time of the pandemic, caused by the spread of the coronavirus, newly established programs appeared in Slovakia and the Czech Republic and on their public service television, which aimed to partially fill the lack of full-time education for primary school students. The program *Školský klub* was created in Slovak public television and the program *Učiteľka* in Czech public television.

Public law has been present among the media for several decades. In the conditions of the Slovak Republic, it dates its history since 1993. With the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic, an autonomous public institution, Radio and Television of Slovakia was established. At birth, its formation was governed by generally accepted attributes of public law, but the transformation from a state broadcaster to a public one did not proceed without complications.⁷ Slovak Television merged with Slovak Radio ten years ago. RTVS as a Slovak public television is established on the basis of Act no. 532/2010⁸ and is aware of its public role. According to this Act, among other things, its program structure also consists of educational programs and programs for children and youth. In the second week of March, Radio and Television of Slovakia began with the broadcasting of works of compulsory literature, which are intended primarily for high school students and high school graduates, on the television program of the Trojka circuit.. For example, masterpieces were broadcast. Judita Gembická from the Trojka RTVS channel stated that RTVS is aware of its public role, and therefore it would bring drama, especially part of compulsory literature, and often also school leaving exam questions, especially to high school students.⁹

After this step, RTVS prepared a program for smaller children. On March 18, 2020, it started broadcasting a new interactive show for young schoolchildren. *Školský klub – a lesson from the class without chalk* was broadcast on Dvojka channel every working day from 9:15 am and lasted 45 minutes. Via it, young learners were supposed to learn in an entertaining way in 45 minutes. At the same time, children could take part in the tasks assigned to them by the teachers and were able to share their solutions via the TV screen.¹⁰ After the success of the show, the television decided to continue in its production and expanded it in time and content.

From March 30, 2020 to April 3, 2020, this program lasted twice as long and brought activities for 2nd grade students as well. The creators announced that *Školský klub* would be divided into three blocks from Monday for the 1st and 2nd year, the 3rd and 4th year and the 5th to 7th year. One broadcast week is organized as one school day – just as children have 5 lessons at school, so there would be a different subject in *Školský klub* every day. On Monday it was about science subjects, on Tuesday about computer science, on Wednesday about mathematics, on Thursday it was focused on social science subjects and on Friday it was about Slovak language and literature.¹¹

⁶ GÁLIK, S., GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Cyberspace as a New Existential Dimension of Man. In ABU-TAIEH, E., EL MOUATASIM, A., AL HADID, I. (eds.): *Cyberspace*. London : IntechOpen, 2020, p. 23.

⁷ LALUHOVÁ, J. a kol.: *Diskurzívne problémy v masmediálnych štúdiách*. Trnava : FMK UCM v Trnave : 2012, p. 25.

⁸ Zákon č. 532/2010 Z. z. *Zákon o Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov zo dňa 29.12.2010*. [online]. [2011-01-01]. Available at: <<https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2010-532>>.

⁹ *Trojka prinesie sfilmované diela povinnej literatúry*. [online]. [2020-03-13]. Available at: <<https://www.rtvsk.sk/televizia/clanky/219854/trojka-prinesie-sfilmovane-diela-povinne-literatury>>.

¹⁰ *RTVS spúšťa reláciu Školský klub pre malých školákov*. [online]. [2020-03-17]. Available at: <<https://www.rtvsk.sk/televizia/clanky/219995/rtvs-spusta-relaciju-skolsky-klub-pre-malych-skolakov>>.

¹¹ *RTVS rozšíri vysielanie školského klubu*. [online]. [2020-03-25]. Available at: <<https://www.rtvsk.sk/televizia/clanky/220761/rtvs-rozsiri-vysielanie-skolskeho-klubu>>.

The whole concept of the program was based on connecting subjects and grades, so that siblings could also collaborate and discover the curriculum at home. In terms of content, methodology and organization, *Školský klub* was supported by the educational non-profit organization *Indícia*. The teachers were from several primary schools from different Slovak cities. Apart from Slovak Radio and Television, other Slovak televisions did not prepare a program aimed at children and young people whose full-time teaching in schools had been interrupted.

The background of the establishment of Czech Television (*Česká televize* or *ČT*) is closely connected with the establishment of Slovak Television, as both could originate only after the division of Czechoslovakia. Czech Television is established by Act no. 483/1991.¹² Its main tasks include, but are not limited to, the production and broadcasting of news, journalistic, documentary, artistic, dramatic, sports, entertainment, educational and children's and youth programs. Czech Television reacted to the emergence of the extraordinary situation in the country and from 16 March 2020 began broadcasting a unique program *UčíTelka*. It was broadcast every day on the ČT2 program for primary school students. The entertainment and educational program was created with a professional guarantee from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.¹³

The aim of the project was to help children, parents and, last but not least, teachers. The selection of teachers for live broadcasting was directed by the Ministry of Education. It aired from Monday to Friday, every day from 9:00 to 12:00. Half an hour was always set aside for each stage, in between a short break filled by various forms of television programs. The information was provided by the CEO of Czech Television Petr Dvořák before the start of the broadcast. There was one subject every day. Twice a week there was Czech language, twice a week mathematics and once a week the so-called social sciences.¹⁴

In April 2020, Czech Television announced that the program would be broadcast until June 19. According to the project leader Luboš Rosi, the project addressed almost 60 percent of schoolchildren aged six to twelve.¹⁵

In October, the show returned to Czech Television in response to repeated distance learning. Both freshmen and senior students could practice the material from the spring parts of the show. Learning from home is supported and the help of parents and teachers is also offered by the educational website of the Czech Television ČT edu.¹⁶ More than 75,000 educational videos from more than thirty subjects are available on the web.

In addition to the examined programs, the children's television *Jojko* adapted to the emergency situation in the Slovak Republic by including several short videos in its program, in which it explains to its youngest viewers what coronavirus is and what it brings. In the following section, the authors of the study divide these videos into two categories and provide a brief overview.

¹² *Zákon č. 483/1991 Sb. Zákon České národní rady o České televizi ze dne 29.11.1991.* [online]. [2017-07-02]. Available at: <<https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1991-483>>.

¹³ *UčíTelka.* [online]. [2020-03-15]. Available at: <<https://nadalku.msmt.cz/cs/vzdelavaci-zdroje/pruzevove/ucitelka>>.

¹⁴ DVOŘÁK, P.: *Učitelky zastoupí UčíTelka.* [online]. [2020-03-15]. Available at: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/3062918-ucitelky-zastoupi-ucitelka-opravdovou-skolu-nenahradi-ale-pomuze-rika-reditel-ct?_ga=2.68354962.206778854.1603964559-1987481581.1603964557>.

¹⁵ *Česká televízia predlži vysielanie relácie UčíTelka do 19. júna.* [online]. [2020-27-04]. Available at: <<https://www.omeiach.com/cesko/17939-ceska-televizia-predlzi-vysielanie-relacie-ucitelka-do-19-juna>>.

¹⁶ *Česká televízia vracia do vysielania špeciálne vysielanie pre žiakov UčíTelka.* [online]. [2020-14-10]. Available at: <<https://www.omeiach.com/cesko/19037-ceska-televizia-vracia-do-vysielania-specielne-vysielanie-pre-ziakov-ucitelka>>.

2. Broadcasting of JOJKO children's television

Jojko is a Slovak television station intended for children aged 4 to 12. It brings small, entertaining and beautifully crafted series to young viewers, which are exclusively in the Slovak language. When choosing the content, we made sure that the fairy tales did not contain violence, inappropriate words and were, above all, educational and stimulate children's imagination. These are series whose creators take into account that today's children like to learn, learn new things and require new stimuli, but, at the same time, they need a good family background, stability and a calming fantasy world.¹⁷

The children's television includes in the program the broadcast of fairy tales and shows songs for children created by Slovak artists. These include, for example, Miro Jaroš, a pair of Paci Pac, Dúhalka, Sníček Hugo, Hanička and Murko, MalinyJAM. Their production, influenced by the spread of coronavirus, was divided into two groups:

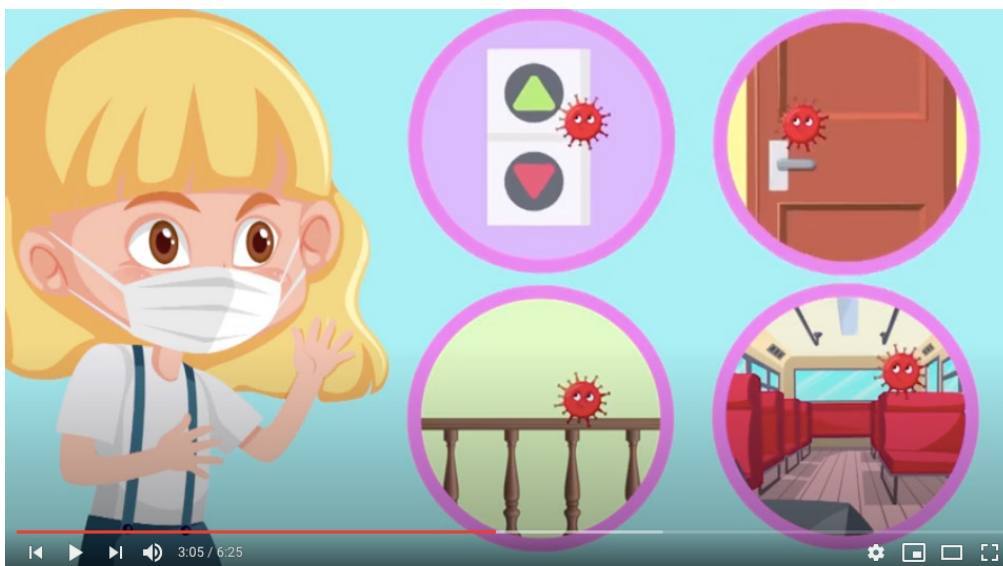
- coronavirus production,
- work aimed at spending time at home during quarantine.

2.1 Coronavirus production

As mentioned above, *Jojko* TV programs often include songs for children by Slovak composers. In the current situation, it is very common that the song is replaced by a short video from the same creators in an average length of 2-3 minutes, in which they deal with the topic of coronavirus. Technically, some of them are easier to process and at first glance you can see that the authors filmed them at home. Some are no different from others, because they are either shot outdoors and their processing is at a higher level, or they were created in the past by animations and puppets featured on a green background (for example, Hanička and Murko).

- *Hanička and Murko* – the characters who appear in the videos are puppets and the environment around them is created by animation. In our analysis, we mentioned this video first, because it deals in detail with the explanation of the emergency situation to the youngest children. In addition to the children's television broadcasting we can also find the videos on youtube.com under the title Coronavirus – a video for children on how to explain to children what Coronavirus is. The characters describe what the coronavirus is, that it is dangerous to humans, and what the symptoms of an infected person are. In the second part, they explain why we have to wear a mask and how to wash our hands properly to keep them clean. This part also features a little girl Hanka, who is known to children from several previous videos. The video is 6:25 long.

¹⁷ *Jojko*. [online]. [2019-10-10]. Available at: <<https://jojko.joj.sk/o-nas>>.



COVID-19

Získajte najnovšie informácie Úradu verejného zdravotníctva Slovenskej republiky o COVID-19.

ĎALŠIE INFORMÁCIE

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Hanička a Murko o koronavírusu

294 zhladnutí · 2. 4. 2020

1 0 ZDIELAŤ ULOŽIŤ

PICTURE 1: Video Hanička and Murko - Coronavirus - video for children

Source: Hanička a Murko o koronavírusu. [online]. [2020-03-15]. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKKsXAW7pcl>>.

- *Dúhalka* – the character of Princess Dúhalka is played by a young woman who, in this extraordinary situation, prepared a video shot at home, in which she reads a fairy tale from a book to children. The fairy tale is about the Růškovu country, where everyone wears a mask for their protection. In this way, she tries to explain to the youngest children why it is important to wear a mask on their face if they have to go out of their homes.
- *Miro Jaroš* – this creator of children’s songs appears in a short video, which is shot at home and in which the author introduces his little friend who knows how children can make a mask at home. The little girl then makes a mask together with her smaller sister, and the video ends with Miro again, who encourages the children and looks forward to meeting them in person again.
- *Paci Pac* – the couple speaks to the children in a short video, where they state that in order for the two of them to meet, they had to take certain measures so as not to endanger each other. They remind you to wear masks and keep your distance from other people. The duo was active on their YouTube channel at the time, playing three half-hour live shows in March, the first of which has 13,747 views. During the concert, the singer wears rubber gloves and, together with her guitarist, wear a masks on their faces.
- *RaspberriesJAM* – this group is not as active as the above mentioned artists. Their songs are very funny and feature small children, other sceneries and characters, animals or plants are hand-painted, so their work is original. They enter the performance during quarantine with a short speech by two main members, who are wearing masks and tell the children about the virus and the time spent at home. They mention all rescuers,

firefighters, doctors who help us overcome this period. In the video, they stand side by side and talk to the camera, the background created is similar to their video clips.¹⁸

The purpose of the mentioned videos was an explanation of the unknown situation, a reminder of the importance of the use of protective equipment and increased hygiene.

2.2 Creation aimed at spending time at home during quarantine

Other authors have focused in their short videos on the ways of spending free time and activities that can be done at home during quarantine. These include:

- *Sníček Hugo (Dream Hugo)* – in short videos, the children are introduced to the well-known character of *Jojko* television, who, in addition to songs, also has his own show. The videos are shot at home, they are very easy to process. In them, Hugo shows how he spends his free time, for example dancing, cleaning, exercising and playing with a dog. He encourages children to help at home, clean up after themselves, but also to be able to have fun and dance.
- *Knižky od stonožky (Books by the Centipede)* – among the examined short videos we also included a special part of the program *Books by the Centipede*. The presenter usually focuses on children's books which could be of interest to different age groups of children. This particular episode states that if children have already read all the books and want to have fun at home, they can download a board game, print it out and prepare it at home. *Jojko*, the television's icon, appears in the game.¹⁹

The videos in both examined categories disappeared from children's television broadcasts with the gradual release of the safety measures in the summer months. Some are still published on youtube. These videos were intended primarily for younger children in preschool age, so their processing was adapted to the target group.

3. Objective and methodology of research

The main topic of the study is television broadcasting for compulsory school children during quarantine in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, which aims to partially replace the absence of full-time teaching. The aim of the case study is to compare two programs broadcast on public televisions in both countries. Another authors' goal is to characterize the examined programs and the background of their origin and in the first part to present an overview of the broadcast intended for the smallest viewers of *Jojko* children's television in Slovakia focused on the topic of coronavirus. This television was chosen because several videos had appeared in its broadcast, which introduced children to a hitherto unknown situation. The authors divided these videos into two groups: coronavirus videos and home time videos. The presented case study mainly uses the qualitative analysis with subsequent comparison of the results.

The object of the research are five episodes of the program *Školský klub* broadcast by the public service Slovak Radio and Television of Slovakia and five episodes of the program *UčíTelka* broadcast by the public Czech Television. The examined programs were broadcast from April 20, 2020 to April 24, 2020.

¹⁸ GRACOVÁ, S.: *Vysielanie pre deti a mládež počas mimoriadnej situácie*. In HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L., KAŇUKOVÁ, N. (eds.): *Quo vadis masmedia*. Trnava : FMK UCM v Trnave, 2020, p. 52-58.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 52-58.

Before starting the qualitative analysis of the selected programs, we determined the common categories and evaluated attributes of the individual parts, while the attributes were the same for both examined programs and all ten parts. We recorded the findings in a prepared template with basic information and scaling questions. The basic information includes the name, date and the length of broadcast of each particular part, the presence of a presenter, the presence or absence of a teacher in the lecture, the presence or absence of other guests, the topic of the examined part of the program. Subsequently, we observed the attributes divided into four parts:

- *Visual design:*
 - a. Is the equipment of the studio adapted to the target group?
 - b. Are children present in the studio during the broadcast?
 - c. Is the color of the studio adequate, doesn't it interfere?
- *Lecture presenter:*
 - d. Is the presenter dominant?
 - e. Are they just an accompanying person, a program escort?
 - f. Does the presenter speak in an encouraging way to strengthen the viewer's self effectiveness?
 - g. Was the tone and tempo of the talk in the lecture appropriate for the target audience?
 - h. Does the narrator emphasize or repeat important points so as not to be missed?
- *Tools in explaining the curriculum:*
 - i. Blackboard,
 - j. TV,
 - k. Tablets,
 - l. Mobiles.
 - m. Other tools.
- *Overall rating of a specific lesson:*
 - n. Was the instruction explained when demonstrating the curriculum?
 - o. Was the information useful, stimulating and motivating learning?
 - p. Were complex concepts defined and explained to the student in a simplified way?
 - q. Was the viewer overwhelmed with too much content, did the show provide too much information at once?
 - r. Was the content presented relevant to the achievement of the objectives and helped to strengthen and support the overall objectives?
 - s. Did the lecture suggest to the student to apply their new knowledge and encourage them to use it?
 - t. Did the presenter call for interaction?
 - u. Did the lecture refer to other materials that could be found and used for the topic covered?

After marking the specific part of the lesson examined, we wrote down its broadcaster, the date of the broadcast, whether it had a specific topic, a presenter, whether a teacher or another guest was present. After this characteristic, we marked the individual attributes of the program mentioned above.

In the first group *Visual design* of the studio, we focused on the appearance of the space from which it was broadcast, the chosen color, props and especially the presence of children and their involvement in the program and teaching.

Subsequently, we followed more closely the character of the *Lecture presenter*, and their position in a particular program. We were mainly interested in whether they are only an accompanying person, i.e. they only present individual parts and topics, or are involved in the educational process. Whether their performance, tone of voice and overall rhetoric is adapted to the target group of the show, whether it encourages the viewer to activity and can explain and repeat important information for better memorization. The next part was focused on the

occurrence of tools in explaining the topic, we focused mainly on technical tools such as tablets, televisions, smartphones and whiteboards.

The main part of the observation was the fourth subgroup of questions, in which the authors were interested in how the information was presented to children, whether complex concepts were sufficiently explained, providing interesting information and stimulating learning. Whether the whole procedure and instructions were clarified in explaining the curriculum, whether the children were not overwhelmed with too much information. In the end, the authors were interested in whether the program contained references to literature or other sources that children could find, study or learn more about the topic in another interesting way. The findings from the qualitative analysis are presented in the next part of the study.

4. Results

For the purposes of this analysis, we watched five consecutive parts of *Školský klub* and *UčíTelka* broadcast in one week between April 20 and April 24, 2020. All monitored parts of the *Školský klub* program had a time allowance of an hour and a half, with approximately half devoted to first-grade students and the other half to second-grade students. All monitored parts of the *UčíTelka* show had a time allowance of three hours. Those lectures have a more complex structure. It is divided into five parts of about twenty minutes and each part is dedicated to the 1st – 5th year of primary schools. Among these are pauses for, for example, physical education, music education, educational videos, etc.

Within the initial characteristics of both examined programs, the following information came from the analysis:

- both shows have a presenter, one was always present in one part, but several took turns during the week,
- guests were present in all ten selected programs, mostly teachers of given grades and other guests representing some of the topics examined (e.g. a sign language translator, an Olympic athlete),
- the topics of the lectures were:
 - o in *Školský klub*: Slovak Language, Mathematics, Informatics, Physics, one lecture was dedicated to Earth Day.
 - o In *UčíTelka*, the schedule for the week was given in advance: twice Czech language, twice Mathematics, one program was devoted to the topic of Earth Day, similarly to Slovakia.

Subsequently, we monitored the selected attributes in the program in four parts. The first was the **visual design**. Based on the analysis, the authors agreed that in both examined types of programs the equipment of the study is adapted to the target group, i.e. primary school students. The studio of the *UčíTelka* show was bigger. In both cases, part of the studio evoked the school, it contained props from the school environment (benches, blackboards, globe, gym equipment), part of the studio resembled a children's room (toys, puzzles), or the two parts intertwined.

In terms of color, the analysis showed differences. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means that the color of the studio was very disruptive, the number 2 was marked in all five programs of *Školský klub*, i.e. the color, according to the evaluators, was rather disruptive. The scenery, props, and studio equipment contained many colors, which attracted a lot of attention and disturbed the curriculum. As for the *UčíTelka* show, we can state that the color of the studio does not interfere. The colors in the studio, on the equipment and props are not so distinctive and diverse. The studio looks more harmonious. The big difference between the two examined programs is the fact that the Slovak program did not work with children present in the studio.

The Czech program had children present in each part and these were directly involved in explaining the topics covered.

The second part of the analysis was the role of the **presenter** of the program. The authors focused on their way of acting, whether they were incorporated into the show and its course, or served only to present topics and guests, and whether their speech was adapted to the target group. The analyses show that in all five examined parts of *Školský klub*, the presenter acted dominantly. Their presence was a benefit. We must add that during the week the presenters changed, the authors of the study identified everyone as the dominant character of each show.

A different situation occurred during the analysis of selected five parts of the *Učitelka* show, where in three out of five cases the presenter did not act dominantly. In this show, the presenters also changed during the week. Based on this fact, we cannot generalize about the statement that the Slovak program has more dominant presenters than the Czech one, as it could depend on specific persons presenting on individual days.

We can say with certainty that the presenters of the Slovak show were mainly the accompanying persons in the show and did not explain the subject matter themselves. They entered the course of the teaching and the program only marginally. In the selected Czech programs, we met with both types of presenters, i.e. some of them directly participated in the explanation (in two cases) and some only accompanied the viewer throughout the program.

We see equal results of the analysis in both examined programs in the focus on the moderator's performance in relation to the target group. In all ten parts of the programs, the evaluators agreed that the presenters were acting in an encouraging way so as to strengthen the audience's self-efficacy. Their tone and tempo were adapted to the target audience. In all cases, they tried to repeat the essential facts and information so that the viewers could remember them better and more easily. The same applies to teachers and guests who were largely devoted to explaining the topics covered.

In addition to one part of the show, *Školský klub* invited the presenter/teacher to interact with the audience. The children were approached through the screens to solve tasks with them, do experiments and send their results, for example via e-mail.

The third part was the **use of tools** in explaining the curriculum and the topics covered. The authors focused on the use of whiteboards, televisions, tablets, mobile phones and other tools. In all ten researched shows, the blackboard to which children are accustomed from the normal school teaching process was actively used. The Czech show *Učitelka* actively used a television/monitor, the Slovak show did not have it in any of the examined parts of the show. Tablets, mobile phones and other equipment were not used in any part. Various other props were used, such as pictures, objects for experiments, stationery, etc., with which all teachers in both programs worked to explain the individual topics to the children.

In the Czech program, short videos were presented as part of the „break“, which served as divisions between individual years. The videos covered various topics processed in the form of a series. The broadcast from the studio was not interrupted in the Slovak program.

In the last evaluated part focused on the overall **evaluation of the program**, it was possible to choose from a scale from one to five for individual statements, depending on whether the evaluators agreed with the statement or not. The value of one represented a complete agreement with the statement and the value of 5 did not agree with it at all.

Based on the analysis, we can say that in the *Učitelka* program, the instructions were explained in all examined cases of demonstrating the curriculum. The viewer saw the exact process of how the teachers came to a particular result. In *Školský klub*, the answers were not so clear-cut. In two parts, the authors concluded that the explanation of the instructions in a particular case was not sufficient. This has been the case in the last three parts. The same situation occurred when claiming that the information in a particular section was useful, stimulating and motivating enough to teach the viewer. We can therefore say that in two parts of the *Školský klub* program, the subject matter was not explained and presented as interestingly

and thoroughly as in the others. In the case of *UčíTelka*, the results of the analysis showed that in each of the examined parts, the information was interesting and stimulating.

When evaluating whether both shows involved the viewer with too much content and a lot of information, the evaluators determined that this was not the case in either of the shows. The amount of information shared was appropriate to the subject matter and the target group. The findings differed when considering the further claim. In the *UčíTelka* program, the authors agreed with the statement that the presented content was relevant to the achievement of goals and helped to strengthen and support the overall goals, in all five examined parts. In the *Školský klub* show, this was again the case only in the three parts examined. In two parts the authors concluded that the specific content of teaching had not been chosen appropriately for the topic dealt with.

At the end of the analysis, the authors also monitored whether the presenters and teachers called on viewers to apply the newly acquired knowledge and use it in their lives. In the case of the Czech program, this was the case in all five studied works of the program, and in the case of the Slovak program in four out of five.

A large difference between *Školský klub UčíTelka* was noted in the last step examined: whether the programs contained links to other materials that viewers can search for, study, and use to further exploit the topic. This was not the case in the *Školský klub* show, and the only interaction with the audience was in the invitation to send the elaborated assignments from a specific show to an e-mail address. On the contrary, in the *UčíTelka* program and on its website, the viewers can find many links to materials related to the subject matter. A complete comparison is given in the conclusions of this study.

5. Conclusions

Over the last two or three decades, we have experienced great cultural and social changes that have significantly affected the field of education.²⁰ A wide range of empirical research focuses on the question of the extent to which and how media education contributes to increasing key competences at the level of individuals as well as social groups.²¹ Online media play an important role in this context, but a significant part of the responsibility also remains with television broadcasters which can reduce the digital divide, especially in social groups with limited internet access. Modern mass media are looking for effective strategies to help disseminate media texts to promote sustainable cultural significance and effectively evoke a mass response from the target group.²²

Based on the analysis of selected parts of Slovak and Czech public television programs carried out within this research, large differences are visible in the way the programs were processed, attempting to complete the task of partially replacing and supplementing full-time teaching at primary schools in the pandemic period. In the conclusions of this study we present the biggest differences found, as well as the positives and negatives of both examined programs.

The structure of the Slovak and Czech programs was not the same. Similar features of both programs are noticeable. Both shows had a presenter and guests, most of them teachers who explained specific topics, phenomena and objects to the audience. The studio was adapted

²⁰ Compare to: GÁLIK, S.: Philosophical Reflection of the Influence of Digital Media on Current Education. In: *Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)*, 2020, Vol. 60, No. 1, p.100-106. ISSN 1994-4160.

²¹ Compare to: AROLDI, P., MARIÑO, M. V., VRABEC, N.: Evaluation and funding of media and information literacy. In FRAU-MEIGS, D., VELEZ, I., MICHEL, J. F. (eds.): *Public policies in media and information literacy in Europe: cross-country comparisons*. Abingdon : Routledge, 2017, p.194-224. ISBN 978-1-138-64437-3.

²² Compare to: STASHKO, H. , PRYKHODCHENKO, O., ČÁBYOVÁ, L., VRABEC, N.: Media images of Slovak and Ukrainian presidents: ‚I/We‘ binary pronominal opposition in political speeches. In: *Lege Artis : Language yesterday, today, tomorrow*, 2020, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 352. ISSN 2453-8035.

to the target audience, it contained props reminiscent of the school and the home environment close to children. The teaching did not take place as a classic full-time teaching in schools, but in both cases the creators and presenters tried to present the information in an interesting, engaging way to involve the viewer in the problem-solving process.

Found differences of the examined programs:

1. Time allowance for one part:
 - a. *Školský klub* – 1,5 hour.
 - b. *Učitelka* – 3 hours.
2. Division of the program according to the target audience:
 - a. *Školský klub* – approximately half of the broadcasting time was devoted to the first stage of primary schools, the second half devoted to the second stage of primary schools.
 - b. *Učitelka* – exact schedule: 20 minutes for 1st-5th primary school level, between these „lectures“ there were breaks filled with thematic videos to be continued (for example Exercise with the Olympian part 1, exercise with the Olympian part 2, etc.).
3. Presence of children in the studio:
 - a. *Školský klub* – no.
 - b. *Učitelka* – yes. Children were involved in teaching process.
4. Use of teaching tools:
 - a. *Školský klub* – The program mainly used whiteboards and other props related to the discussed topic.
 - b. *Učitelka* – TV/monitor is also used. Other things were similar to those in *Školský klub*.
5. Links to supplementary materials to the topics covered:
 - a. *Školský klub* – There were no additional materials.
 - b. *Učitelka* – Materials for all years were available for each part of the program, and links to them could be found on the television website and on social networks.

Based on the results of the analysis, the authors came to the conclusion that the Czech program *Učitelka* was processed qualitatively better and at a higher level. This is indicated in particular by a more precise division of individual parts for several classes of primary schools, each part had a predetermined „schedule“ with precise topics for each year, each of them had assigned materials to study the topic and work after the broadcast. The schedule of individual parts also contained the themes of the partitions, and each individual part of the work can be viewed separately on the television page. As part of the supplementary materials, it was also stated for each year what tools would be needed for a given lesson. Czech Television later prepared a related program, *Učitelka kabinet*, in which experts address the issues of parents and teachers.



PICTURE 2: Example of the *Učitelka* Facebook group

Source: Facebook Učitelka. [online]. [2020-03-15]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/CTucitelka>>.

The *Školský klub* program has a separate website, where we can find a description of individual topics for each program and a list of tools used in the broadcast. The page does not link to additional materials. After the analysis, we must state that in both programs the presenters, teachers and guests were selected appropriately, adapting their speech to the target audience. They tried to involve the viewer in the story, the topics, called for interaction, repeated important information as needed and explained it thoroughly. Teaching itself was original, interesting and stimulating.

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Petra Polievková

Family Socioeconomic Status And Parents' Education As Indicators Of The Primary Use Of Digital Media By Children

ABSTRACT

This paper is a response to studies conducted in other countries on how the socioeconomic status of families affects the media use patterns and media education strategies imposed by parents on their children. Admittedly, research on the subject in Slovakia is largely lacking. Our study is based on an assumption of a close relation between the level of education, household income and parents' preference for the purpose to which children are allowed to use digital media. Our research was conducted on a sample of 572 parents with children aged between 3 and 8 living in the Žilina self-governing region. Based on the analysis, a mild correlation was observed between household income and the preference to allow children to use digital media to avoid boredom and fill in the time without parental attention. The correlation between the level of education and preference for digital content was not confirmed. The research has led to a conclusion that most parents tend to prefer exploiting the entertainment potential of digital technologies while minimizing screen time. The conclusions of this research are compatible with similar studies pointing to the prevalence of restrictive (quantitative) mediation present in Slovak families.

KEY WORDS

Digital media. Functionality of digital media. Level of education. Restrictive mediation. Socioeconomic status.

1. Introduction

The massive impact of media on family life augmented by a more recent emergence of digital technologies has been of concern to both scholars and general public for a long time. Digital media are regarded as one of the drivers of significant changes – or sometimes even crises – affecting families today. One of the primary concerns is that the use of media leads to isolation of family members, which in turn results in less time spent together as a family. Nevertheless, paradoxical as it may seem, media are generally regarded as instruments of socialization.

The use of media by children and adolescents is a separate research topic. Undoubtedly, media and latest technologies are not the only factor which affects families today. Scholarly discourse cannot ignore other factors which have a significant impact on the daily lives of families in addition to traditional media and digital technologies. The actual quality of the family itself, along with the values of the family members as well as the economic background also play a role and add up to the partial effect of media present in the lives of families. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of household income and the level of education on parents' decision to allow their children to use digital technologies.

2. Literature Review and Research

Undoubtedly, recent technological advances have led to an increase in the number of households equipped with digital technologies. According to an Australian research carried out in 2012 on a large sample of children aged 5 – 14 years, children spend more time on media than on any other leisure activity. The study also confirmed an increase in the number of children with internet access.¹ According to another study conducted in the USA, even children or adolescents themselves acknowledge they spend unreasonable amount of time using technologies.² The trend of excessive use of media is also supported by another study conducted in 2019³, which suggests children aged 8 – 12 years spend 5 hours a day in front of the TV screen, and 2.5 hours more in older age groups. The EU Kids Online research conducted in Slovakia⁴ shows that every fifth child or adolescent aged 9–17 years spends more than 4 hours on the internet during schooldays and even more time during weekends. Restrictive (quantitative) mediation⁵ is often suggested as one way to address excessive media consumption by children. This approach is the most frequently used strategy of media education within the context of Slovak families: as many as 40% of parents impose a limit on the time their offspring spend in virtual

¹ The author of this study has performed an extensive foreign literature research on the subject as part of her previous publication activity (Compare to: POLIEVKOVÁ, P.: Dieťa cez prizmu digitálnej zábavy [A Child Through the Lens of Digital Entertainment]. In *Digitálne detstvo [Digital Childhood]*. Catholic University in Ružomberok : VERBUM – Catholic University Press, 2019, pp. 65-92.).

² See: JIANG, J.: *How Teens and Parents Navigate Screen Time and Device Distractions*. [online]. [2020-06-09]. Available at: <<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/08/22/how-teens-and-parents-navigate-screen-time-and-device-distractions/>>.

³ RIDEOUT, V., ROBB, M. B.: *The common sense census: Media use by tweens and teens 2019*. [online]. [2020-06-10]. Available at: <<https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/uploads/research/2019-census-8-to-18-full-report-updated.pdf>>.

⁴ IZRAEL, P., HOLDOŠ, J., ĐURKA, R., HASÁK, M.: *Slovenské deti a dospievajúci na internete: Záverečná správa z výskumu EU Kids Online IV – Slovenská republika [Slovak Children and Adolescents on the Internet: Final Report from the EU Kids Online IV Research – Slovak Republic]*. Ružomberok : Catholic University in Ružomberok, 2020, p. 18. [online]. [2020-06-02]. Available at: <http://www.ku.sk/images/dokumenty/ff/Sprava_z_vyskumu__EU_Kids_Online_Slovensko_2018_-_2020.pdf>.

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environment.⁶ Nevertheless, this strategy does not seem to be effective since children spend a lot of time in virtual environment to perform a broad range of other activities.

Admittedly, focusing solely on the amount of time spent in virtual environment may not be the right approach to assess the negative impact virtual environment may have on children. Many authors point out that digital technologies help develop creative skills in children such as through educational applications. „As for the use of appropriately targeted and well-designed didactic strategies, digital platforms can be used in a broad range of areas – from individual learning and practical skills development or application at all levels of education, to informal educational projects and lifelong education institutions.“⁷ Another study conducted at the Columbia University found that although 20% of children played video games for more than 5 hours per week, this should not cause any issue. On the contrary, having fun at playing games which require teamwork may lead to better relationships with schoolmates. However, the authors of the study also note that this does not suggest that an unlimited screen time is desirable.⁸ Lewalter⁹ also highlights the added value of multimedia features offered by digital media (especially for pre-school children), and suggests they may help the child follow and understand the story and remember more information. Another team of authors¹⁰ suggest digital applications may help develop creativity in pre-school children.

The above studies and other research projects on the subject support the notion that a combination of reasonable time spent with digital technologies and an appropriate selection of content (ideally supported by subsequent clarification with parents/caregivers) may be one of many (but definitely not the only) stimuli for development of children and adolescents. Parents/caregivers are in the best position to coordinate the activities of their children in virtual environment. The extent to which parents or caregivers are successful in that respect depends on a number of variables.

Earlier studies carried out in other countries suggest that the impact of parents' income and level of education on their decision to allow children to use digital technologies for either educational or entertainment purposes is not insignificant. One of the studies suggests¹¹ that higher income families tend to prefer educational content to entertainment. Authors of that study also conclude that internet and mobile devices are less accessible to children raised in lower income families, and they are mostly used for entertainment. Mascheroni et al.¹² concurs with another study (Chaudron, 2015) in that low-income families including one-parent families

⁶ IZRAEL, P., HOLDOŠ, J., ĐURKA, R., HASÁK, M.: *Slovenské deti a dospievajúci na internete: Závěrečná správa z výskumu EU Kids Online IV – Slovenská republika [Slovak Children and Adolescents on the Internet: Final Report from the EU Kids Online IV Research – Slovak Republic]*, p. 35. [online]. [2020-06-02]. Available at: <http://www.ku.sk/images/dokumenty/ff/Sprava_z_vyskumu_EU_Kids_Online_Slovensko_2018_-2020.pdf>.

⁷ VRABEC, N.: *Deti a učenie sa prostredníctvom digitálnych médií [Children and Learning Through Digital Media]*. In *Digitálne detstvo [Digital Childhood]*. Catholic University in Ružomberok : VERBUM – Catholic University Press, 2019, p. 39.

⁸ See: KOVÉSS-MASFETY, V., KEYES, K., HAMILTON, A. et al.: Is time spent playing video games associated with mental health, cognitive and social skills in young children? In *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 2016, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 349-357.

⁹ See: LEWALTER, D.: *Cognitive strategies for learning from static and dynamic visuals*. [online]. [2020-06-11]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222299439_Cognitive_strategies_for_learning_from_static_and_dynamic_visuals>.

¹⁰ See: MARSH, J., PLOWMAN, L., YAMADA-RICE, D., BISHOP, J. C., LAHMAR, J., SCOTT, F., WINTER, P.: *Exploring Play and Creativity in Pre-Schoolers' Use of Apps: Final Project Report*. [online]. [2020-06-10]. Available at: <www.techandplay.org>.

¹¹ See: HOLLOWAY, D., GREEN, L., BRADY, D.: *0-8: Young children's Internet use*. [online]. [2020-06-10]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270583255_0-8_Young_children's_Internet_use>.

¹² See: MASCHERONI, G., LIVINGSTONE, S., CHAUDRON, S., DREIER, M.: Learning versus play or learning through play? How parents' imaginaries, discourses and practices around icts shape children's (digital) literacy practices. In *Media education – Studi, ricerche, buone pratiche*, 2016, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 263. [online]. [2020-02-20]. Available at: <http://riviste.erickson.it/med/wp-content/uploads/6%20MED_Novembre.pdf>.

tend to use media as babysitter, and these parents also spend less time with their children. It was also observed that parents who are familiar with downloading educational applications for their children represent a minority compared to parents who seek entertainment for their children. The selection of downloaded applications based on their entertainment potential is important to parents – a notion which is supported by another study, according to which their primary concern is the entertainment value and playability of an application whereas educational value is considered secondary. Apart from that, studies confirm that part of the downloaded applications for the youngest children do have some potential to develop creativity.¹³ Another foreign study supports the assumption of a large share of parents using digital technologies as babysitter, i.e. to fill in the time when parents themselves require assistance of a third person, or when they need to engage in other activities such as housework (70% of parents), or when they are unable to discipline an anxious child (65% of parents).¹⁴ The risks of such an approach have been discussed in several studies by Jenny Radesky. One of them¹⁵ suggests there is a significant correlation between the increased social and emotional strain of infants and the tendency of parents to sooth their children using mobile technologies; this approach is typical of families with lower social and economic status.

3. Purpose Statement, Research Questions and Hypotheses

The Slovak research environment dynamically responds to the penetration of digital technologies into the lives of children and adolescents. The Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava is one of the research centres which focus on the impact of (digital) media on the activity of children and adolescents – as part of a research project led by the Department of Media Education in cooperation with the Department of Psychology and the Department of Journalism of the Philosophical Faculty of the Catholic University in Ružomberok. The primary aim of these research projects is to map the time spent by adolescents on media, identify the content they consume and assess their capacity to understand it, as well as to examine their ability to apply critical thinking and comprehend the risks of desocialization due to the excessive use of media including the potential for developing an addiction. In addition, research on the parental mediation is also gaining momentum. On the other hand, the research efforts on the economic indicators and the use of digital technologies remain relatively subdued.

With respect to the above, the aim of this research is to examine the following questions:

RQ1 Is there a correlation between the economic status of households and the preferred purpose of allowing children aged under 8 years to use digital media?

RQ2 Does parents' education level correlate with the media content they make available to their children?

¹³ See: MARSH, J., PLOWMAN, L., YAMADA-RICE, D., BISHOP, J.C., LAHMAR, J., SCOTT, F., WINTER, P.: *Exploring Play and Creativity in Pre-Schoolers' Use of Apps: Final Project Report*. [online]. [2020-02-20]. Available at: <http://www.techandplay.org/reports/TAP_Final_Report.pdf>.

¹⁴ KABALI, H. K., IRIGOYEN M, M., NUNEZ-DAVIS R., BUDACKI, J. G., MOHANTY, S. H., LEISTER, K. P., BONNER, R. L.: Exposure and Use of Mobile Media Devices by Young Children. In *Pediatrics*, 2015, Vol. 136, No. 6, pp. 1044-1050. [online]. [2020-06-02]. Available at: <<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/136/6/1044>>.

¹⁵ See: RADESKY, J. S., PEACOCK-CHAMBERS, E., ZUCKERMAN, B.: Use of Mobile Technology to Calm Upset Children Associations With Social-Emotional Development. In *JAMA Pediatrics*, 2016, Vol. 170, No. 4, pp. 397-399. [online]. [2020-06-02]. Available at: <<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2498404>>.

Based on the findings from previous studies carried out in other countries, the following assumption was articulated:

H1 There is a significant correlation between the household income and parents' decisions to allow their children to use digital media for entertainment and avoid boredom; as well as between the same and parents using the media as babysitter to fill in children's time when parents need to engage in other activities.

Our research on the subject as described above was carried out in the geographical area of the Žilina self-governing region.

4. Research Sample and Methodology

This research study is based on the data obtained as part of an earlier project *Media habits and competences in children from early childhood to early school-age*¹⁶. The project focused primarily on media habits and media literacy in children during their early childhood and early school age (0 – 8) with a focus on potentially positive or negative aspects of the use of digital media. Social and psychological determinants were also evaluated as part of the project by addressing parents/caregivers as mediators of media content.

The data was gathered on a sample of 572 parents or caregivers of children aged up to 8 years in the Žilina self-governing region. Anonymous questionnaires were used as part of data gathering.

The figures on household income and the use of digital media to avoid boredom were based on 511 responses, which represents 89,30% of the entire sample of parents; figures on household income and the use of digital media when parents need time to engage in other activities were based on 510 responses, which represents 89,20% of the analyzed sample. The difference in the percentage of responses between the above two items was only one tenth of percentage point, which is regarded insignificant with respect to the articulated research conclusions.

As for the second research question, the total number of responses related to parents' education and their willingness to allow children to use digital technologies for entertainment, has reached 550 (96,20%); 547 responses (95,60%) were obtained on the question to what extent specific subgroups of parents with a certain level of education are inclined to prefer educational digital content for their children.

The data obtained were analyzed using standard statistical procedures and methods. Initially, the correlation analysis was applied followed by the descriptive analysis with the use of contingency tables so as to identify differences between individual groups of respondents.

As part of the analysis, specific income and education level groups were identified and their behaviour examined. The education categories were defined as follows: elementary education, secondary education, university undergraduates, university graduates and university postgraduates. Three income thresholds were defined to categorize parents based on household income. The sum of income of the economically active household members was used for this purpose. Initially, our research was based on the income thresholds derived from the Report

¹⁶ The research was carried out in the period 2017 – 2019. The target group for the research – children aged up to 8 years – previously did not have a significant representation in Slovak research efforts. The research was led by the Philosophical Faculty of the Catholic University in Ružomberok, in association with the research centre of the Pedagogical Faculty of the Catholic University in Ružomberok and the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. The project was subsidized by the Scientific Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (ŠÚ SR). According to the available data from a report covering 4785 households, the average household had 2.94 members, out of which 2.23 were not children dependent on their parents. This number represented the economically active household members, pensioners or other members (social security or health insurance beneficiaries). Hence, 0.71 members of an average household represent children economically dependent on their parents.¹⁷ For the purpose of this research, income thresholds were defined based on an assumption that two members of each household earn some income.

The smallest category of respondents (40) were in the under 700 euro income group (net household income). The upper limit was based on an assumption that these are families, in which one household member is on minimum wage; or families, in which one or both household members receive social security benefits or other forms of social support, pension or health insurance benefit.

The medium-income category of 701 – 1600 euros was based on the median of average gross wage (according to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, the average gross wage currently represents 1092 euros). The statistics show that the median of the average gross wage is by about 70 to 100 euros lower than the actual average gross wage. For the purpose of our research, the second income range included households with at least two sources of income in the amount of minimum gross wage, or at least one income in the amount of the median of the average gross wage; or alternatively, the income in the amount of median average gross wage and/or a concurrent source of income in the amount of the minimum wage/one source of income in the amount of social security benefit or other form of social support, pension or health insurance benefit.

The upper income range is represented by high-income households with the amount of income of over 1601 euros, where at least one source of income is in the amount of the gross minimum wage along with at least one concurrent source of income in the amount of the median of the gross minimum wage.

The most populated income category was the medium category of 701 – 1600 euros, which represented 60% of all respondents who responded to the question on the household income. This reflects the fact that, statistically, in 58,00% of households there was at least one person employed, and within additional 12,90% of households, at least one member was self-employed.¹⁸ Our research also accounts for the fact that the average household has two members with some monthly income, i.e. in addition to the main provider, there is one additional economically active person or a person receiving pension, social security or health insurance benefits. The highest income range was populated with 165 respondents, which represented 32,28% of the sample.

Respondents were asked to choose an answer from the following range – never/seldom–sometimes – often/very often. The option ‘sometimes’ was evaluated as socially acceptable, hence a higher percentage of these responses could be expected; this expectation has been confirmed.

¹⁷ Compare to: STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC: *Príjmy, výdavky súkromných domácností za rok 2018 – simulované údaje [Income and Expenditure of Private Households in 2018 – Simulated Data]*. [online]. [2020-04-15]. Available at: <[¹⁸ Compare to: ŠÚ SR: *Príjmy, výdavky súkromných domácností za rok 2018 – simulované údaje \[Income and Expenditure of Private Households in 2018 – Simulated Data\]*.](https://slovak.statistics.sk/wps/portal/2b2d4f1a-8d66-4840-9c10-86e5581e422b/ut/p/z/1/rVLLcolwFP2WLLxibkKAsMQX4qMWKCLZdABRU-ShUq1_X-y4aBeKnWkWmTzOOcm59yCOFoJn4Vgsw0oUebit9wFX32zNYp0ONGA0pQfWyOvZpqtjoiD83wDWMrOwtGcHj23bfHEI4re vIRm-8rumMaTaBIBNTAU5Y-g5ui3LYMiP8eHGMKCJP0cc8TivymqDgil6hBvpkErIR9SCetqKNlxFOoLjlanS888TEpElXefQYktVISijl0kxBoimpialwnFBCoot2GYslCh5C-03F5vet-pf3GrrxDRI4L8TQqndtObMBWK9dwt yJSSBUGwCar4B7DWv6ZlDb1G7aHBPkH0VyQI5e7LM6gu4fqzgENEJcRfn7FGdtaGPCNJUSTJlO5Hp9y TTZT7vTds0bVhtJ5KsCLR7SrqnifbJRp2Zlq-Szwot_j00ZeZ5Xsbks5Q6_dW0L1MenU_G0xeRnlIc/dz/d5/L2dBISvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/>. >.</p>
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5. Research Outcome and Interpretation

Correlation of Household Economic Status and Digital Content

A statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.11$; $p < 0.5$) was observed between household income and the use of media when children are bored – these are primarily situations, in which the activities of children are limited, such as waiting at the doctor's office or during travel. Apart from that, a statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.14$; $p < 0.5$) was also observed between the total income of households and the use of digital media when parents need to engage in other activities.

It is also clear that the relation between parents' intentions behind their decisions to allow children to use digital media is also very strong. The correlation ($r = 0.59$; $p < 0.5$) suggests it is likely that if a child is allowed to be entertained through media in situations requiring certain amount of patience, parents also tend to resort to digital media as a substitution activity for that child when they are busy with other activities.

A more detailed analysis has revealed differences in behaviour within individual income groups (Table 1). The question as to how often parents allow their children to use digital media to entertain themselves and avoid boredom has brought the following responses: the response 'never/seldom' was obtained from 15,75% of respondents from the highest income group, 21,24% of respondents from the medium-income category, and 22,50% of respondents from the low-income households. The response 'often or very often' was selected by 21,80% of high-income respondents, 19,93% of medium-income respondents, and 15,00% of low-income respondents. The high-income group is the only category with the prevalence of 'often/very often' responses – this is the group which tends to regard digital media as a means to avoid boredom in children, unlike those who do the same 'seldom' or 'sometimes'. It should be noted that the response 'sometimes' allowed respondents to avoid taking more extreme positions, and it is therefore regarded as an option which enjoys the highest level of social acceptance. The research outcome has confirmed that this option has a significant share in each of the reviewed income groups.

How often do you allow your child to use digital media for entertainment, for example, when they are bored (at home, at the doctor's office, during travel)?

| household income | never/seldom | sometimes | often/very often | total | |
|-------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|-------|------|
| 0 – 700 euros | 22,5% | 62,5% | 15% | 40 | 100% |
| 701 – 1600 euros | 21,24% | 59,15% | 19,93% | 306 | 100% |
| 1601 or more | 15,75% | 62,42% | 21,8% | 165 | 199% |

TABLE 1: I never/seldom/often/very often allow my children to use digital media when they are bored

Source: own processing, 2020

The second question addressed to what extent parents/caregivers were willing to use digital media as babysitter, i.e. when they needed to engage in other activities (Table 2). Out of the total of 510 respondents (regardless of income) 183, i.e. 35,88% of the respondents opted for 'never/seldom' as opposed to just 60 respondents (11,76%), who often/very often resort to digital media as babysitter. The so-called socially acceptable response 'sometimes' was selected by as many as 267 respondents (52,35%).

The structure of the responses for individual income groups shows that out of the economically most vulnerable categories, 7,50% of the respondents 'often/very often' allow their children to use digital media when parents are busy; 37,50% do the same 'sometimes', and 55,00% 'seldom/never'. Within the medium-income category, 10,80% are highly positive about digital technologies, 54,09% opted for 'sometimes', and 35,08% of the respondents opted for 'never/seldom'. As for the high-income category, 'never/seldom' was selected by 32,72%

of the respondents, 14,50% opted for 'often/very often' and as many as 52,72% responded 'sometimes'. Based on the above, one can observe a pattern of the prevalence of respondents who are generally less interested in allowing their children to use digital technologies when parents are busy.

| How often do you allow your child to use digital media so that you can engage in other activities? | | | | | |
|--|--------------|-----------|------------------|-------|------|
| household income | never/seldom | sometimes | often/very often | total | |
| 0 – 700 euro | 55,00% | 37,50% | 7,5% | 40 | 100% |
| 701 – 1600 euro | 35,08% | 54,09% | 10,80% | 305 | 100% |
| 1601 or more | 32,72% | 52,72% | 14,50% | 165 | 100% |

TABLE 2: I never/seldom/often/very often allow my children to use digital media so that I can engage in other activities

Source: own processing, 2020

Interestingly, the high-income category is the only group with the prevalence of parents willing to use digital media as a source of entertainment when the child is bored. However, as for the use of digital media as babysitter, the behaviour of this group follows the pattern of the other two income groups.

Education as Indicator of Preferred Digital Content

According to studies from other countries, parents with higher education are less likely to prefer the use of digital media to entertain their children. However, in our research, the relationship between the education of parents and the preferred digital content has not been statistically significant.

The data obtained (Table 3) show that the group of undergraduates is the only one with the prevalence of parents who are often or very often willing to offer digital technologies to their children so they can obtain new knowledge (out of 100 respondents within this group, it was 29,16%); compared to 20,83%, who have opted for the response 'never/seldom'. The response 'never/seldom' accounted for 33,33% of parents with completed elementary education, 29,37% of parents with secondary education, 26,87% of university graduates, and 29,41% of respondents with completed postgraduate education. For the sake of comparison – in respect of the motivation to give children access to digital media to obtain new knowledge – the response 'often/very often' was selected by 16,67% of parents with elementary education, 18,22% of respondents with completed secondary education, 23,89% of university graduates and 23,53% of respondents with completed higher degree of education. This means that the response 'never/seldom' outweighs the responses 'often/very often' in all categories mentioned above (except for undergraduates).

Further analysis of the data show that education has virtually no impact on the perception of the purpose to which parents allow their children to use digital media. It is a paradox that in the context of the first question of the questionnaire (on new knowledge obtained through digital media) undergraduates stand out compared to other categories. Within this group there were more respondents (28,57%) who 'often/very often' perceive digital media as an instrument for entertainment, compared to 24,49% of parents within this group, who 'never/seldom' give their children access to digital media to avoid boredom. At the same time, and as mentioned above, this is the group with highest share of parents who give digital media to their children to obtain new knowledge. The distribution of responses for postgraduates was leveled; their responses 'never/seldom' and 'often/very often' in terms of educational purposes were equal at 29,41%. As for the question about the use of digital media to avoid boredom through entertainment, the response 'never/seldom' was selected by 24,33% of parents with elementary education, 20,37% of parents with secondary education, 19,31% of university graduates. To the same

question, the response 'often/very often' was selected by 16,67% of those with elementary education, 19,26% of parents with secondary education, and 15,85% of university graduates.

| Highest level of education achieved | I allow my child to use digital media to learn something new. | | | | I allow my child to use digital media for entertainment to avoid boredom. | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------|------------------|--------------|---|-----------|------------------|--------------|
| | never/seldom | sometimes | often/very often | Total (100%) | never/seldom | sometimes | often/very often | Total (100%) |
| Elementary | 33,33% | 50% | 16,67% | 12 | 24,33% | 58,33% | 16,67% | 12 |
| Secondary | 29,37% | 52,42% | 18,22% | 269 | 20,37% | 60,37% | 19,26% | 270 |
| Undergraduate | 20,83% | 24% | 29,16% | 48 | 24,49% | 46,94% | 28,57% | 49 |
| Graduate | 26,87% | 49,25% | 23,89% | 201 | 19,31% | 64,85% | 15,85% | 202 |
| Postgraduate | 29,41% | 8% | 23,53% | 17 | 29,41% | 41,18% | 29,41% | 17 |

TABLE 3. *I never/seldom/often/very often allow my children to use digital media to obtain new knowledge and/or for the purpose of entertainment*

Source: own processing, 2020

6. Discussion

In general, with the diminishing household income, the parents' interest in using digital media is also slightly lower, regardless of the purpose of use – when parents try to prevent boredom of their children or when they want to fill in children's time while engaging in other activities. As for the latter, these may be specific situations where children have limited opportunities to move around or interact with their peers, or engage in play (such as waiting at the doctor's office, during shopping, travel etc.). Our research suggests that higher-income households are more likely to use digital media in those situations as a substitute activity for their children. However, this finding does not accord with the outcomes of studies conducted abroad, which tend to suggest a preference for the use of digital technologies as babysitter in socially and economically more vulnerable category of families.

The reason for such behaviour of the low-income groups (specific to the Slovak environment) is (likely) to be associated with more limited availability of digital technologies or limited mobile data packages¹⁹. With respect to the preferences of the strongest economic category in terms of allowing children to use digital media in specific situations (when bored), it should be noted that information and communications technologies (ICT) sector offers one of the highest paid jobs in Slovakia. The data obtained for this particular target group could reveal to what extent the competence of parents in providing safe digital environment (the so-called technical mediation)

¹⁹ This assumption is supported by the analysis of the *Education Policy Institute (IVP)*. The report inter alia concludes: „From the perspective of social and economic background, the internet is significantly less available to children from the Roma households as well as children from poor households of the ethnical majority. Based on a representative survey conducted in April 2019, internet access is enjoyed only by 52% of children from poor households, and 40% of children from the Roma households – compared to 95% of common households connected to the internet. [...] The differences in terms of technological equipment are significant among children from various social and economic environments. According to the representative survey conducted in 2019, children from poor households or children from the Roma households have significantly limited access to various types of technological equipment; only 21% of children from the Roma families, and 28% of children from poor families have access to a notebook or laptop compared to 86% of children from common households; only 17% of children from the Roma households and 29% of children from poor households have a desktop PC compared to 51% of children from common households.“ BEDNÁRIK, M., ČOKYNA, J., OSTERTÁGOVÁ, A., REHÚŠ, M.: *Ako v čase krízy zabezpečiť prístup k vzdelávaniu pre všetky deti [How to Provide for Access to Education for All during Crisis]*, 2020. [online]. [2020-06-07]. Available at: <<https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/16113.pdf>>.

affects parents' decisions to allow their children to use digital technologies. The specific nature of high-income group is reflected in the fact that it is the only group with different approach to both situations. Whereas 21,8% of this group is 'often/very often' willing to accept digital media as an instrument for entertainment to avoid boredom, this option is 'never/seldom' preferred by 15,75% of high-income parents/caregivers. When parents are busy, 14,40% of them 'often/very often' resort to using digital media as a substitution for parental attention; however as many as 32,72% of high-income parents refuse or only rarely consider this an option. This finding may point to a specifically organized schedule of high-income families with busy parents, and as a result, they have less time to supervise the non-organized leisure activities of their children. However, thanks to high income of their parents, these children are likely to enjoy more organized leisure activities (such as leisure-time centres, clubs, etc.).

In both cases – i.e. when children are bored and when parents/caregivers need time for their own activities – one can observe that parents within the 701–1600 euro income group are less inclined to resolve those situations by giving children access to digital media; the calculated discrepancies account for several percentage points (Table 1 and Table 2). The composition of this income group in terms of education is also quite interesting. As many as 52,60% of medium-income households include one member (likely to be the person filling in the questionnaire) with completed secondary education; 33,98% of them graduates and 10,45% undergraduates (negligible number of households – 0,98% and 1,96% – account for elementary and postgraduates, respectively)²⁰. In this respect, one can only observe some signs of a pattern: the income group has reasonable economic background, and both the education structure (of at least one household member) and the total income suggest non-managerial roles. Based on the above one can assume that this group is not likely to be exposed to subsistence pressures, and at least one member of the household has an opportunity to maintain work-life balance, and thus may find some time to identify and introduce reasonable stimuli for their children. This also includes sufficient time of attention as well as a tendency to organize children's time spent with digital media. Based on the EU Kids Online IV Research carried out in Slovakia, the most popular parental mediation strategy is restrictive mediation associated with significant limitation of time spent in virtual environment without checking the content.²¹ The tendency to impose time limits corresponds to the usual behavioural pattern of this income group.

Our research suggests that the pattern of preference for restrictive mediation is reflected primarily in limiting the child's time spent with digital media rather than excluding specific content – a pattern, which can be also associated with the highest education level. Hence, a correlation between parents' education and the change in preference for digital content was not observed. This means, parents tend to perceive higher risks in the excessive use of digital media in terms of time rather than content.

7. Limitations of Research

The sample of parents having children aged up to 8 years was obtained in cooperation with the elementary schools seated in the municipalities and towns of the Žilina self-governing region. The related randomness resulted in different quantitative incidence of education-based

²⁰ The data point on the relation between the household income and education is just a secondary indicator to support the assumed composition of households for the purpose of subsequent research on the subject; the questionnaire was used to obtain data on the total income of households, i.e. all members of the household, however, the question on education was aimed only at the parent/caregiver who has filled in the questionnaire.

²¹ Compare to: IZRAEL, P., HOLDOŠ, J., ĎURKA, R., HASÁK, M.: *Slovenské deti a dospievajúci na internete: Závěrečná správa z výskumu EU Kids Online IV – Slovenská republika [Slovak Children and Adolescents on the Internet: Final Report from the EU Kids Online IV Research – Slovak Republic]*, p. 78.

and income-based groups. Moreover, not all respondents were willing to respond to each question. The available data from such a selection of respondents is a limitation, but it allows us to present the conclusions of the study as a certain assumption of the behaviour of individual education-based and income-based groups within the Slovak context. Our research was based on the conclusions of studies carried out in other countries; however, future research projects focusing primarily on the relation of social and economic indicators and the use of digital media as well as the preferred purpose of their use will be able to refer to the findings presented here that are based on domestic data. Hence, the behavioural patterns of Slovak population can be formulated based on this research.

The option 'sometimes' is deemed a limiting factor for the interpretation of research conclusions. The prevalence of these responses raises questions about the intentions of respondents who may have selected this choice just to conform to a socially acceptable standard. Therefore, it is recommended that future questionnaires avoid this option completely and provide a less neutral option instead.

Our research has relied on the available data on the income of the household as a whole, and the highest education level achieved by one member of the household (most probably the one filling in the questionnaire). It is suggested that future studies rely on a more rigorous approach to measuring the impact of social and economic status of families on their preference for digital content and the way in which children are allowed to use digital media; such an approach will require targeted mapping of the total net income for each household as a whole, and specific datapoints on the education level of all income providers.

8. Conclusion and Future Research

Despite the research limitations outlined above, the findings presented in this study are useful as they support the assumption of a relationship between household income and children being allowed to use digital media to avoid boredom and/or when parents need to engage in other activities. However, a significant relationship between these indicators could not be established; on the contrary, the results point to a rather weak correlation. The research also shows that the education factor does not play a significant role in terms of parents' preferences for specific digital content.

The analysis of the data set into the context of the conclusions derived from other studies suggests that the low-income groups are somewhat restricted in their parental media education through limited availability of digital technologies mainly due to the limits of their mobile data packages. A larger proportion of technical mediation can be anticipated for the high-income group mainly due to the supposed prevalence of IT-related professional background of those parents. The relationship between income and education seems strongest within the medium-income category, and both factors have a potential to positively affect the selection of an adequate strategy of parental mediation.

The limited impact of education and the economic status of families on the selection of digital content as well as the purpose of digital media use observed as part of our research speaks in favour of the restrictive quantitative mediation. The preference for non-specific restriction on the use of digital media by children – rather than imposing limits on specific activity – is also supported by the data from other research projects such as the one carried out by P. Izrael²². The observed prevalence of parents (regardless of income and education) who prefer entertainment to educational content correlates with the outcome of research projects carried out in other countries.

²² IZRAEL, P.: Mediálne návyky detí do osem rokov a rodičovská mediácia používania [Media Habits of Children up to Eight Years Old and Parental Mediation of Use]. In *Digitálne detstvo [Digital Childhood]*. Catholic University in Ružomberok : VERBUM – Catholic University Press, 2019, pp. 28-29.

Based on these conclusions, one could argue that parents seldom or never allow their children to have access to digital technologies in various situations (such as when children are bored or parents busy). However, the preference for such an approach does not seem to be driven primarily by parents being aware of the risks of an excessive use of digital media, but it can be explained more as a consequence of external influences and economic factors in particular.

Based on the findings of this research, it is of concern that most parents – regardless of education and income – do not seem to fully comprehend the educational potential of digital technologies. One way to address this problem might be parental media education; in that respect, an increased demand for the development of parental skills in this area can be expected. In the recent period, many parents have experienced or come to recognize the benefits digital media have to offer in terms of education and more effective communication. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the period of March – June 2020 has become a period of distance learning marked by extensive use of digital technologies. As the pandemic-driven preference for distance learning gradually fades away, the current period can be regarded as an opportunity for a profound re-evaluation of the competences and approaches to digital education of children. All the factors outlined above also create an opportunity to conduct a new research to explore changes in the mindset of parents and their attitudes toward digital media, as well as choices they make in terms of content their children consume. At the same time, it would be quite interesting to examine whether the time designated for digital education is already included in children's daily limit set by parents for the use of digital media. Clearly, there are a number of variables that enter into the equation and eventually may lead to a change in the mindset, but household income or education will definitely play a role in that respect.

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photo: Soňa Maléterová

William Mel C. Paglinawan

University Students Engagement With And Disengagement From Fake News

ABSTRACT

The immensity of the exposed news online has given everybody the chance to manipulate information; and so, confusion and misinformation transpire, and the evaluation of credibility and trustworthiness becomes intricate. In spite of the continuous efforts of various academic institutions to provide a wide array of databases and resources among learners – still the current phenomenon called fake news has become incessantly dispersing. This research has explored university students' dis/engagement from/to fake news. Using quantitative measures, it was revealed that the students had used online platforms for communication processes and for retrieving and allocating information. Moreover, upon text mining the student responses, nearly all defined fake news as satirical with misleading and fabricated content which tends to deceive and do harm to people. Students also have a moderate view in which they scarcely believe that as they disengage from fake news, they will develop their communication skills since they learn how to fact check information before sharing it. Lastly, the content analysis has revealed various themes divulging students' experiences of fake news and its implications to the curriculum.

KEY WORDS

Fake news. Online media. Engagement and disengagement. Media studies.

1. Introduction

People trust what they know – what is familiar to them. So, it only makes sense that as coverage of their local communities has dwindled, so too has people's trust in the media. For decades, some pollsters have shown data on the deterioration in audience's dependence and trust of the online media in providing accurate and unbiased news – hence, fake news.¹ The notion of fake news is connected to the complex situation of a decline in public trust coupled with the current state of journalism.²

The Google Trend of 2017, the term *fake news* experienced a dramatic surge in Google searches.³ Jokes, rumours, lies, deceit, and propaganda had all earned a new name – fake news, however, has proven to be an elusive term.⁴ Within the media itself, its definition includes satire, hoaxes, poorly reported news that often gets retracted, a misuse of data, and imprecise and sloppy journalism.⁵

In the United States of America (USA), the perplexity and wide definition of the term was further convoluted when Donald Trump received the electorate majority necessary to become the 45th president of the United States. Shortly after, only weeks into his presidency, the term *fake news* received a massive overhaul. Lies, deceit, and deception are not new concepts in relation to news media and politics. Since the beginning of news media, the spread of information has caused worry over the possibility of said information to be misconstrued, incomplete, or entirely fabricated.

In the Philippines, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Cebu Citizens-Press Council (CCPC) in March 2017 released its definition of „fake news“ or „false news.“ The definition states that fake news occurs when standards of journalism are violated, and scope of content.⁶ According to Pachico A. Seares, CCPC executive director, who in an article in SunStar Philippines said: „The definition sees „fake news“ from the viewpoint of media and the public it serves. Hence, fake news is a fabricated content presented as factual information in the guise of news. With this, the government (referring to two pending bills) in the Senate and the House that seek to penalize fake news.“⁷

With this, while journalists and politicians have categorized and discussed what they think *fake news*“ is and what implications they think it might have in the current news media context, no one has ever asked audiences. To overlook the audiences who either engage or disengage with fake news would be to ignore many key dimensions in the discussion of fake news and how it fits into the current era of current affairs dissemination.

Locally, in an institution such as the Notre Dame of Dadiangas University (NDDU) in the Philippines, college students have been exposed to different media both for leisure and socialization. This exposure has led to various media activities such as blogging, reading articles online, watching vlogs (video blogs), online streaming and virtual chatting.⁸ During the rapid field assessment, it was found out that the student's substantial screen time exposure

¹ SWIFT, A.: *Media Bias: How the Bias Affects Public Perception of the Media*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2018. [online]. [2018-10-12]. Available at: <<https://tinyurl.com/yy74t2w5>>.

² ZARYAN, S.: *How Audiences are making sense of Fake News*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Sweden : Lund University Press, 2017, p. 2. [online]. [2018-09-07]. Available at: <<https://tinyurl.com/y5nh9h27>>.

³ *Google Trend*. [online]. [2018-10-08]. Available at: <<https://trends.google.com/trends/>>.

⁴ JOHNSON, H.: *Journalistic Hoaxes in American Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts : MIT Press, 2018. [online]. [2018-10-12]. Available at: <<https://tinyurl.com/y64u36dt>>.

⁵ SCHOW, A.: *The Case against the Media*. New York, USA: New York Media LLC, 2019. [online]. [2018-12-11]. Available at: <<https://tinyurl.com/zm2sn6g>>.

⁶ *National Union of Journalist (NUJ)*. [online]. [2019-09-07]. Available at: <<https://www.nuj.org.uk/home/>>.

⁷ SEARES, P.: *CCPC Offers Definition of Fake News*. Released on 06 March 2018. [online]. [2019-10-12]. Available at: <<https://tinyurl.com/y36aen4k>>.

⁸ DECENDARIO, A.: *Health Implications on Technology Usage among College Students*. [Thesis]. General Santos City, Philippines : Notre Dame of Dadiangas University. Research and Publications Center, 2017, p. 3-5.

and engagement with online media (e.g. exposure to mostly all forms of media) has incrementally led to various conflicts academically, socially and in terms of peer interaction.

With this, NDDU adhered towards providing students with authentic and reliable materials. In fact, the institution's library (for instance), has subscribed to diverse print and online resources for the students. In the 1st semester of SY 2019-2020, there were a total of 15,076 student library users who maximized various library print and online materials. This is an initiative of the university to capitalize on the extent of resources by providing them with quality databases and materials essential in their academic journey at the university.

However, as per interview, some university students tend to spread wrong information during class participation. The information they have read online has been shared in their classes which was later discovered to be a hoax. Moreover, with the students' exposure to online media, they tend to disseminate wrong news such as the presumptuous class-off and holidays without official declaration. Added to that, social conflict has also occurred due to giving wrong judgments and misinformation towards their peers. All these are dilemmas brought by university students' engagement with fake news. Experts say that overexposure and too much engagement with social media may affect one's life drastically.⁹

On the basis of the above-cited scenarios, the researcher became motivated to conduct this study due to its topicality and sense of urgency. In the Philippines alone, there have been comparatively fewer studies conducted focusing on fake news, such as on identifying political fake news¹⁰; the effects of fake news in media and economy¹¹; and, on fake news production and social media „trolls.“¹² There have been minimal studies related to the effects of fake news among students and how academic institutions encourage students to become responsible in retrieving and processing online information. Further, this research hopes to make a contribution to knowledge by better understanding news audiences and how they engage with journalism in the public sphere.

2. Statement of the Problem

The research has examined the students' dis/engagement from/with fake news within the context of online news media. Specifically, the following research questions were answered:

1. What are the online activities engaged in by the university students?
2. How do the university students define fake news in the context of online media?
3. How do the university students view the effects of their engagement with and disengagement from fake news in their development in terms of:
 - 3.1.1. Academe
 - 3.1.2. Communication Skills; and,
 - 3.1.3. Interpersonal Skills
4. What are the experiences of the university students to fake news in the context of online media?
5. What are the implications of the students' engagement with fake news to the curriculum?
6. Based on the findings, what media literacy program can be designed?

⁹ SCHUDSON, M.: *The Power of News*. Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 208.

¹⁰ BAUM, M.: Foundations of Fake News: What We Know. In BAUM, M., LAZER, D., MELE, N. (eds.): *Combating Fake News: An Agenda for Research and Action*. Cambridge : Harvard University press, 2017, p. 6. [online]. [2018-10-15]. Available at <<https://tinyurl.com/yy99ty4s>>.

¹¹ MANALO, S.: *The Effects of fake news on the Philippine media and the economy*. Released on 06 August 2018. [online]. [2018-10-15]. Available at: <<https://tinyurl.com/yylg6hh2>>.

¹² CABANES, J.: *Fake news and scandal*. Released on 07 September 2017. [online]. [2018-10-15]. Available at: <<https://tinyurl.com/y6r9b4rs>>.

3. Methodology

This study utilized the quantitative - qualitative method of research. Specifically, this involved a conducted survey on students' most frequent online activities and how they view the effects of fake news as they dis/engage with such. Furthermore, with their online experiences and exposures, this research also text mined the student's definition of fake news and how their experiences affect the institution's program through examining its implications in the academe. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will employ Moustakas' Phenomenological Thematic Analysis procedure. This described the procedure of preparing and analyzing the data. The general procedures include preparing data for the analyses, reducing the phenomenological data, engaging in imaginative variation, and uncovering the essence of the experience.

Moustakas Thematic Analysis in 1994 includes identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns of relevant statements and revealing the core themes within the data. Hence, the Thematic Content Analysis as paraphrased by Moustakas, includes the following procedures:¹³

Horizontalizing or listing all relevant expressions. In this part of the data analysis, the researchers should look at all data as every statement has equal value. If some statements are irrelevant to the investigating phenomena and are repetitive or overlapping, researcher should ignore these statements. In other words, researchers can create a list from the verbatim transcripts of and delete all irrelevant expressions. After cleaning the data, the remaining parts of the data are called *horizons*. Horizons are the textural meanings or constituent parts of the phenomenon. The horizons are unlimited and horizontalization is a neverending process.¹⁴

Reduction of horizons into relevant statements. In this step, researcher should cluster horizons into relevant statements. The translated data should be split into meaning of units so that each of the horizons has only one meaning. This step of the phenomenological reduction describes the phenomena in „textural language.“

Creating clustered core themes. In this step, the researchers should cluster and thematize the relevant statements which became the „core themes of the experience“ of the phenomenon.

Construction of individual textural descriptions. The textural description is a narrative that explains participants' perceptions of a phenomenon. Moreover, the researcher explains the meaning of units in a narrative format to facilitate the understanding of participants' experiences.

Developing a composite structural description. After researcher writes the textural description, researcher should incorporate the textural description into a structure explaining how the experience occurred. Researcher adds the structures at the end of each paragraph in order to create structural description. This process helps researchers to understand experiences with the phenomena under investigation.

4. Sampling Method

The research participants of this study were randomly selected students of Notre Dame of Dadiangas University (NDDU) in the 2nd semester of school year 2018-2019. There were 2,099 students enrolled in the university by means of the Slovin's Formula. As per computation, using 5% margin of error, the researcher has chosen 16% of each population in every department. Box 1 shows the distribution of the respondents:

¹³ SALINAS, E.: *Academic Journey of the Blaen Tertiary Learners*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Davao City, Philippines : University of Immaculate Conception Graduate School, 2016, p 198-200.

¹⁴ MOUSTAKAS, C.: *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 1994, p. 178-184.

| Department | Total Population | Percentage | Sampling Size |
|---|------------------|------------|---------------|
| College of Arts and Sciences | 284 | 16% | 45 |
| Business College | 791 | 16% | 126 |
| College of Education | 244 | 16% | 39 |
| College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology | 601 | 16% | 96 |
| College of Health Science | 179 | 16% | 28 |
| Total | 2099 | 16% | 334 |

Table 1: *Distribution of the respondents of the study*

Source: own processing, 2020

5. Results and Discussion

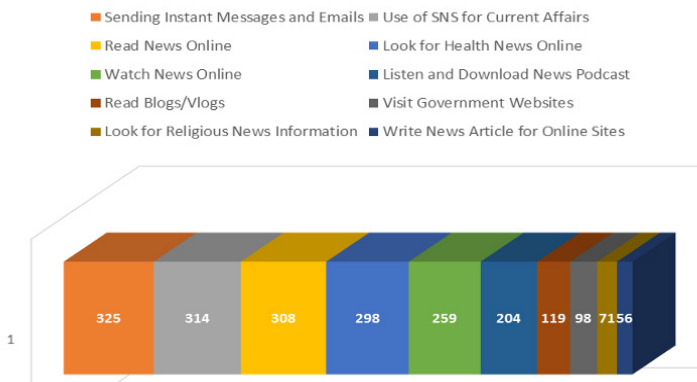


FIGURE 1: *Online activities engaged in by the university students*

Source: own processing, 2020

The data implies that in terms of online activities, students utilized online platforms primarily for communication purposes. Sending instant messages online or through electronic mails or any other social messaging sites was the most convenient way of sharing information.¹⁵

An email, for example, is a digital message sent electronically from one computer to one or more other through the internet. Emails are flexible and can be used in schools in giving instructions, serving as documentation, providing confirmation, for communication, making recommendations, providing a status update and making an inquiry.¹⁶ Moreover, with its increasing availability, dynamic nature and easy use, the Internet has become a popular source of information that has inevitably changed citizens' media repertoires.¹⁷ The data also revealed that students have used internet and social media as a source for current events. This means that many students have instead turned to social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter rather than to television, radio or newspapers to read and acquire their news.

¹⁵ SALUDO, R.: *Fake News in PH: Here's the real story*. Released on 15 February 2018. [online]. [2018-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.manilatimes.net/2018/02/15/opinion/columnists/topanalysis/fake-news-ph-heres-real-story/380295/>>.

¹⁶ SYJUCO, M.: *Behind the fakes in the country*. Released on 24 October 2017. [online]. [2018-08-18]. Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/24/opinion/fake-news-philippines.html>>.

¹⁷ MARCHI, R.: With Facebook, Blogs, and Fake News, Teens Reject Journalistic Objectivity. In *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 2012, Vol. 36, No. 3, p. 246-262. [online]. [2012-10-03]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0196859912458700>>.

On the other hand, upon text mining¹⁸ students' definitions of fake news, it was revealed that the student respondents define **fake news as information that can deceive and harm people**. In terms of its content, students define **fake news as a satire or parody, or information with misleading and false content**¹⁹. This means, fake news are news information that has no intention to cause harm but has the potential to fool and the information are used to frame an issue in which the new content is 100 % false, invalidated, unverified and designed to deceive and do harm. The following are excerpts from students' definitions.

A report or an information broadcasted live, personal and online which are not yet proven true or factual. Today, fake news circulates around the world today in different forms from different platforms - mainly to divert people from the authentic truth, to sway someone in the wrong info, to spread wrong type of awareness or to fight a government. By spreading wrong info, it illuminates a macroeffect that threatens people, their identity and their existence. (Student B)

Fake news is basically, false information being put out to the public, mostly by reporters and journalists. It is mainly used in order to mislead and damage an identity, a company etc. This type of news can happen within the news media or social media platforms. (Student E)

The table shows the overall view of the students on the effects of their engagement with and disengagement from fake news. As revealed, the student's engagement with fake news is 3,35 which is interpreted as moderate. This means that as students engage with fake news, they believe that it has a moderate effect in the academe, their communicative competence and interpersonal skills.²⁰

Moreover, the data also presented the overall result of the students' disengagement from fake news. The table shows an overall mean of 3,49 or interpreted as high. This means that as students disengage from fake news, they feel that it has a high effect on their academe, their communicative competence and interpersonal skills

| | Overall Mean | Interpretation |
|------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Engagement with Fake News | 3,35 | Moderate |
| Academic | 3,31 | Moderate |
| Communication Competence | 3,37 | Moderate |
| Interpersonal Skills | 3,38 | Moderate |
| Disengagement from Fake News | 3,49 | High |
| Academic | 3,32 | Moderate |
| Communication Competence | 3,55 | High |
| Interpersonal Skills | 3,60 | High |

TABLE 2: Overall view on student's engagement and disengagement to fake news

Source: own processing, 2020

¹⁸ DASRI, Y.: Text mining framework, methods and techniques. In *IOSR Journal of Computer Engineering (IOSR-JCE)*, 2017, Vol. 19, No. 4, p. 19-22. [online]. [2017-07-15]. Available at: <<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2249/6c8251735204fcf66cceb0feedb946a68e25.pdf>>.

¹⁹ WARDLE, C.: *Six types of misinformation circulated this election season*. [online]. [2018-08-05]. Available at: <https://www.cjr.org/tow_center/6_types_election_fake_news.php (2017-05-05)>.

²⁰ KIEMAN, S.: *With The Rise of Fake News on Social Media, Can Information Literacy Impact how Students Evaluate Information on their Social Media Channels*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Sydney, Australia : Anglicare, 2017, p. 29. [online]. [2017-08-19]. Available at: <<https://tinyurl.com/yyow3xeu>>.

This implies that, in terms of how students view the effects of their engagement with fake news, they believe that it has a moderate effect in the academe, their communicative competence and interpersonal skills.²¹ Moreover, in terms of their views on their disengagement, results revealed that it has a high effect on their academe, their communicative competence and interpersonal skills.

Student Experiences on Fake News

In addition, the researcher has analyzed and extracted relevant themes from the clustered statements using the lens of Moustakas²², the following were the themes:

| Clustered Core Themes | Relevant Statements |
|--|---|
| Deception in Fake News | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought it was an interesting advertisement but it was a software virus • My computer has been damaged so badly • Fake news scammed me. • It was not a job opportunity at all. • It's all a scam |
| Fake News Caused Disappointment and Inconvenience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It really caused disappointment to us fans. • We found out that the job source was just a hoax. • It's a simple fake news but it affects a lot of people. • A trending news says „no class“ but stated otherwise. • The person tweeted that holiday post was not reliable. |
| Harmful Effects of Fake News on Students' Academics and Relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I copied some reviews but it turned out the source gives wrong information • Reviews were made by netizen and was not professionally made • <i>Mali ang nabasa ko</i> (I read wrong information) • I don't know which sites are fake and which are not. • My assignment was not accepted. • I got no grade on that activity. • <i>Parang contradicting yung information na naresearch namin</i> (It was as if that our researches were contradicting) • I think she (classmate) built this hard feeling towards me. • <i>So di nya ako pinapansin.</i> (My classmate starts ignoring me) • <i>Parang nagka conflict kami a little bit.</i> (It seems we had a little conflict) |
| Conventional Responses to Fake News | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where did I go wrong? • Maybe I don't know which sites are fake and which are not fake • (Fake news) It's a scam! • <i>maybe mali lang talaga nabasa ko</i> (Maybe I read the wrong ones) • Professor reacted and sort of got angry upon hearing it. • That post was not reliable at all. • Everybody in class laughed |

TABLE 3: Experiences of the university students on their engagement with fake news

Source: own processing, 2020

²¹ KEARSLEY, M., SCHNEIDERMAN, J.: *Engagement theory*. Columbia, USA : Journalism Review, 1999, p. 15.

²² YUKSEL-ARSLAN, R., YILDIRIM, S.: Theoretical Frameworks, Methods, and Procedures for Conducting Phenomenological Studies in Educational Settings. In *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 9-15. [online]. [2015-07-01]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271833455_Theoretical_Frameworks_Methods_and_Procedures_for_Conducting_Phenomenological_Studies_in_Educational_Settings on September 2019>.

Implications of Fake News on the Curriculum

This research also examined the implications of student engagement with fake news as viewed by various subject matter experts (SME) and university administrators. After examining the responses of the SME or faculty informants, when asked about the implications of fake news, the following were the themes extracted:

| Clustered Core Themes | Relevant Statements |
|--|--|
| Fake News Radically Alters and Manipulate Truth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread of information to misinform and alter public opinion • Satire or mock a subject or position with all its metaphors and overstatements • Manipulate public stance and opinion |
| Fake News Misleads Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students possibly use wrong concepts in their future academic tasks • It is difficult to correct or change students' perspective especially if they strongly believe the misinformation shared in social media despite the evidence proving otherwise. |
| Fake News Compromised Critical Thinking and Research Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skeptical in identifying sources to support claims • Students should be critical of them not to be easily deceived. • Students should know how to differentiate facts from opinion • Fake news would be a hurdle in training students' critical thinking. • Critical thinking is greatly affected. |
| Too Much Exposure to Fake News Affects Students' Psychological Well-Being | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The more students have increased access to media; so too they have more exposure to fake news • Fake news affects their confidence and well-being. • Teach students to navigate the challenges of the digital age • It is difficult to correct or change students' perspective especially if they strongly believe the misinformation |
| Proposition to Combat the Spread of Fake News | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate Digital Literacy in our respective classes. • Substantial training for students on how to contextually analyze sources • Integrate authentic materials such as using real news and compare it with fake news. • Integrate media literacy • Situate symposiums about topics concerning the issue • Integrate awareness in various disciplines especially among General Education (GE) courses. • Students must be taught with skills on identifying the demarcation between real and fake news. |

TABLE 4: *Implication of fake news to the curriculum*

Source: own processing, 2020

With the abovementioned results, an intervention program has been proposed to strengthen the current stance of the students on the subject matter. Even though, the students are aware of fake news, it is still necessary for the institution to build a program to intensify the values of trust and truth.²³

Looking at the last thematic statements, it can be implied that the faculty informants hope to discourse this issue with a collective and collaborative effort in the academe through formulating a concrete mechanism to mitigate the continuous spread of fake news.²⁴

²³ SHERMER, M.: *Reasons why people ignore facts and believe fake news*. Released on 19 March 2017. [online]. [2017-03-19]. Available at: <<https://www.businessinsider.com/why-do-people-believe-fake-news-2017-3>>.

²⁴ BALMAS, M.: When Fake news becomes real: Combined Exposure To Multiple News Sources And Political Attitudes Of Inefficacy, Alienation, And Cynicism. In *Communication Research*, 2014, Vol. 41, No. 3, p. 430-454. [online]. [2014-04-01]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0093650212453600?journalCode=crxa>>.

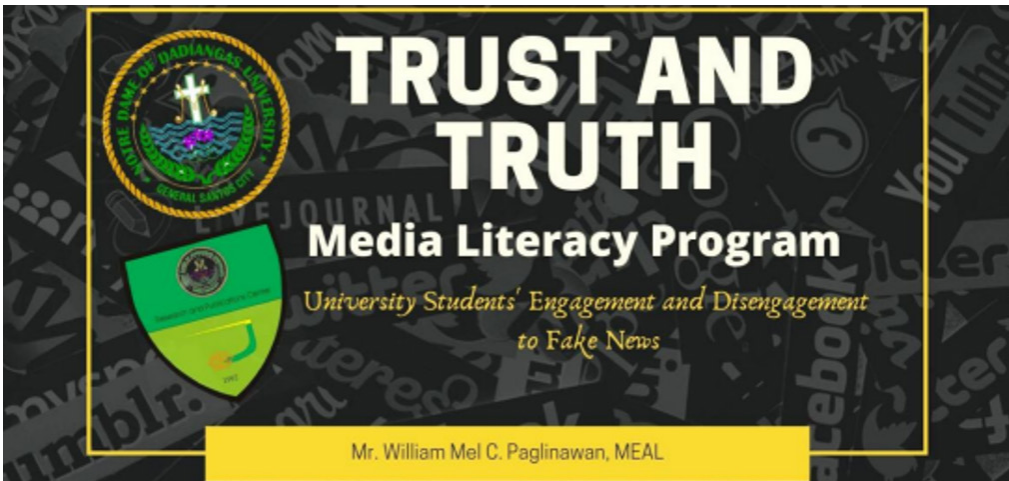


FIGURE 2 | Media literacy program

Source: own processing, 2020

It is imperative to convey the importance of teaching and embedding media and information literacy into the curriculum.²⁵ This could have been an initial step towards addressing the issue of fake news and its further implications.

Through the lens of the aforementioned results, this study also aims to build a program which primarily aims to address the issues under study. Hence, the researcher proposed a media literacy program named „*Trust and Truth: A Media Literacy Program.*“ This Media literacy program primarily encompasses the practices that allow students to access, use and critically evaluate media contents available.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that students utilized online platforms primarily for communication purposes. Sending instant messages online or through electronic mails or any other social messaging sites was the most convenient way of sharing information.

Moreover, fake news, as defined by the students, are news information that has no intention to cause harm but has potential to fool. The information is used to frame an issue in which the new content is 100 % false, invalidated, unverified and designed to deceive and do harm.

In terms of how students view the effects of their engagement with fake news, they believe that it has a moderate effect in the academe, their communicative competence and interpersonal skills. Moreover, in terms of their views on their disengagement, results revealed that it has a high effect on their academe, their communicative competence and interpersonal skills.

Lastly, various themes were extracted which helps the researcher analyzing the students' experiences on their engagement with and disengagement from fake news; as well as the implications fake news might have brought to the pedagogical curriculum of the institution.

With this, this study had probed on the university student's engagement with and disengagement from fake news. From the start of this research, there is still more to be explored in this topic. Hence, the following were recommended: Future research in this field may also discover other salient issues that the informants may experience in relation to the subject. Aside from this, other researchers may also include different participants coming from other ethnic backgrounds.

²⁵ RAYESS, E.: *Fake News Judgment: The Case of Undergraduate Students of Notre Dame University-Louaize, Lebanon.* [Dissertation Thesis]. Lebanon : Notre Dame University- Graduate School, 2018, p. 298.

Moreover, it is also recommended that a study on the experiences of teachers in the context of fake news will also be conducted. This will also determine if professionals also have personal experiences of fake news and how they cope with the spread of misinformation. Teachers may instill among their students the value of critical thinking and research skills. Aside from this, teachers may also learn and update themselves with various information gathering and searching tools to expand their versatility in teaching. The material output proposed in this paper will be launched and implemented. This will serve as the institution's initiative and mechanism in order to address the issue of fake news.

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Vladimíra Hladíková

Mobbing And Cybermobbing: Risk Aspects Of (Digital) Communication In The Workplace And Possibilities Of Legislative And Non-Legislative Protection Under The Conditions Of The Slovak Republic

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the issue of negative phenomena related to the field of communication in the workplace and has the character of an interdisciplinary study using knowledge from the theory of law, personnel management, psychology, theory of communication and media studies. The main aim of the paper is to examine the issue of communication in the workplace with a specific emphasis on mobbing and cybermobbing as negative aspects and consequences of this communication, and the legislative and non-legislative options for protection against them. In the paper, we present a reflection of the basic theoretical background and defining frameworks from various author's perspectives. In this paper, we focus on the origin of mobbing, its forms, and manifestations, as well as a brief description of cyberspace as a determinant for the transformation of mobbing into the virtual environment. The dominant part is the second section of the paper, where the current possibilities of legislative protection in the context of victims of mobbing and cybermobbing are identified regarding various manifestations and selected types of aggressive communication and behaviour.

KEY WORDS

Mobbing. Cybermobbing. Legislation. Protection. Prevention. Employee. Cyberspace.

1. Introduction

A democratic society brings an open debate on the importance and acceptance of human rights and the rule of law. In the context of complex interpersonal relationships in the private and especially work areas, space has therefore been created for the emergence of a specific form of aggression and bullying –so-called mobbing. This is one of the most serious problems of the present, which can affect anyone, regardless of gender, education, occupation, or social status. With the constant expansion of modern communication technologies and digital media, aggression is also shifting to cyberspace, where the potential for defence is even more difficult.

It is obvious that the basic elements of a functioning corporate culture are correct relationships in the workplace. It may also be the result of media content, but violence is generally becoming a common part of our lives, becoming literally „anaesthetic“ to it – insensitive. Therefore, even in the work environment, the negative phenomena presented in this paper are occurring more and more often. According to statistics available from The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in 2000, approximately four percent of employees have been victims of physical violence in the workplace.¹ Several recent researches indicate that in Slovakia approximately a third of employees encounter mobbing or its forms², the results of Holubová's research³ confirm that up to two thirds of employees have had such experiences. Other data even show that up to 80% of employees witness such behaviour⁴, in the Czech Republic more than 30% of employees are victims.⁵

Given the seriousness and topicality of the phenomenon of mobbing, we have subjected this issue to a deeper analysis, and in the conclusion, we propose several preventive measures to eliminate it.

2. Theoretical background

From the etymological point of view, the term mobbing has its origin from the English term „to mob“, which means to oppress, humiliate, harass, attack.⁶ Kratz defines mobbing as „a series of negative communicative acts committed by an individual or several people against a person over a longer period of time.“⁷ Mobbing can also be defined as a form of hostile, spiteful and unethical communication that is systematically controlled by an individual or a group of people, especially against a particular individual.⁸ Çelîkôz-Çelîkôz add that this is most often an emotional attack manifested by disrespectful and inappropriate behaviour, which includes discrediting and ridicule.⁹ The definition by the Czech author Halík, who defines mobbing very expressively, is also interesting, but this statement is very appropriate: „*Mobbing is malicious manipulation, systematic humiliation, psychological terror, manoeuvres aimed at inducing stress.*“¹⁰ However,

¹ STEFFGEN, G.: Physical violence at the workplace: Consequences on health and measures of prevention. In *European review of applied psychology – Revue européenne de psychologie appliquée*, 2008, Vol. 58, No. 4, p. 287.

² See e.g. ONDREJKOVIČ, P.: Násilie – spoločensky nežiaduci jav. In *Sociológia*, 2008, Vol. 40, No. 5, p. 401.; KONČEKOVÁ, L.: Prieskum mobbingu u pracovníkov troch slovenských miest. In KUBÁNI, V. et al.: *Psychologická revue III*. Prešov : Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, 2009, p. 127-131.

³ HOLUBOVÁ, B.: Šikanovanie? Zažili ho už dve tretiny ľudí. In *Hospodárske noviny*, 2007, Vol. 43, No. 22, p. 14.

⁴ OLŠOVSKÁ, A.: *Mobbing a bossing na pracovisku*. Bratislava : Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, 2013, s. 8.

⁵ WAGNEROVÁ, I.: *Psychologie práce a organizace: Nové poznatky*. Praha : Grada, 2011, s. 131.

⁶ NOVÁK, T., CAPPONI, V.: *Sám sobě psychologem*. Praha : Grada, 2003, s. 73.

⁷ KRATZ, H. J.: *Mobbing, jak ho rozpoznat a jak mu čelit*. Praha : Management Press, 2005, s. 16.

⁸ DUFFY, M., SPERRY, L.: *Mobbing*. New York : Oxford University Press, 2012, s. 42.

⁹ ÇELİKÖZ, M., ÇELİKÖZ, N.: Exposure to Mobbing: Perceptions of Primary School Teachers. In *Journal of Education and Practise*, 2017, Vol. 8, No. 3, p. 195.

¹⁰ HALÍK, J.: *Vedení a řízení lidských zdrojů*. Praha : Grada, 2008, s. 108.

in the context of mobbing, it is often simply referred to as bullying and harassment in the workplace. It can also be the case where a superior terrorizes a subordinate to cover up his own shortcomings. Howard¹¹ states that workplace violence can be spoken of when inappropriate behaviour reduces the safety of employees, superiors, or the organization as a whole.

However, mobbing is not a modern phenomenon or behaviour; on the contrary, it has existed as long as work itself. However, as an undesirable phenomenon, this process of behaviour was described and further investigated in the 1980s. In this context, mention may be made of the Swedish scientist and work sociologist H. Leymann, who introduced the concept of mobbing in the field of social sciences and created a definition of mobbing on the basis of intensive research (1984). Theoretical frameworks of the issue state that mobbing can be spoken of if the victim is attacked at least once a week by one or more people for a period of at least half a year. However, it is obvious that this phenomenon cannot be explicitly expressed metrically, so it can therefore be, for example, a shorter but more intense period of attacks. It is a deliberate humiliation of human dignity, damage to a specific employee by active permanent psychological pressure. As early as 1999, Zapf¹² stated in the context of workplace mobbing that this is an extreme type of social stress at work. In Slovakia, the first research on bullying in the workplace was carried out in the 1970s by psychologists Zelin and Palovkin. The essence of these systematic attacks is the will to harm, humiliate, destroy or sabotage the victim's work, as well as make working conditions uncomfortable so that the victim is unable to do a good job and perform quality work, most often through psychological terror. „It is a severe disorder of communication or relationships in a team of co-workers, a form of unwanted aggression in interpersonal relationships, the most serious distortions of social relationships, roles and norms of life.“¹³ Kowal & Gwiazda-Sawicka consider mobbing to be the most dangerous and destructive phenomenon in the workplace, the presence of which is drastically increasing.¹⁴

Despite the fact that the definition of the term mobbing and its complex definition varies from author to author, it is always possible to see the consensus that it is a systematic violation of the rights of another person in the workplace. Mobbing causes enormous psychological suffering to victims, which can damage their mental health and often has lasting consequences. The main aim is also the effort of victims to leave from given job. Several leading U.S. businesses and companies have identified workplace violence as one of the most significant security threats they face.¹⁵ In this context, one can also agree with Rasool et al.¹⁶, who cites a reduction in work productivity and, in particular, a reduction in morale and unity amongst co-workers and colleagues as risks of mobbing in the workplace.

Forms of mobbing can have different character, indications, and courses in practice. According to Drgoňová¹⁷, these are the following:

1. Bossing – when a manager exerts pressure and attacks a subordinate to force their adaptability or obedience, or to force them out of the job.

¹¹ HOWARD, J.L.: Workplace Violence in Organizations: An Exploratory Study of Organizational Prevention Techniques. In *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 2001, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 59.

¹² ZAPF, D.: Organisational, work group related and personal causes of mobbing/bullying at work. In *International Journal of Manpower*, 1999, Vol. 20, No. 1-2, p. 70.

¹³ RITOMSKÁ, M.: *Mobbing, história a príčiny vzniku*. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://euractiv.sk/section/podnikanie-a-praca/opinion/mobbing-historia-a-priciny-vzniku-017785/>>.

¹⁴ KOWAL, J., GWIAZDA-SAWICKA, G.: Mobbing as a problem in management ethics. In *Annales. Ethics in Economic Life*, 2018, Vol. 21, No. 5, p. 132.

¹⁵ HUNT, M. L., HUGHEY, A. W.: Workplace Violence: Impact and Prevention. In *KCA Journal of Business Management*, 2010, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 40.

¹⁶ RASOOL, S. F., et al.: Sustainable Work Performance: The Roles of Workplace Violence and Occupational Stress. In *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2020, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 912. [online]. [2020-08-19]. Available at: <<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/3/912/html>>.

¹⁷ DRGOŇOVÁ, Z.: Mobbing a ďalšie nové formy násillia na pracovisku. In *Zamestnanosť a sociálna politika*, 2009, Vol. 11-12, p. 4.

2. Staffing – these are attacks by employees on managers or management. The goal of staffing (in English, staff means management) is to destroy the superior, management or personnel or corporate policy.
3. Bullying – represents tyrannizing, intimidation, abuse. It is derived from the noun „bully“, which means brutal „man“ or „tyrant, despot, grobian.“ It is an obvious and situationally conditioned direct manifestation of the bully’s aggression. It takes place between two people and is not as destructive as mobbing.¹⁸
4. Stalking – (in English, stalking means hunting, chasing, persecution) means harassment, persecution by telephone terror, threats of violence and public scenes.
5. Chairing – (in English, it means chair, sofa) is a specific form of unfair attacks at the level of top leaders, a kind of „fight for the chair“, while top management has a number of specific tools and methods that it can use.
6. Defaming – similarly to shaming, it means ridicule, slander, defamation. It is an open and unfair attack, especially on the reputation of an individual, group or organization in public.
7. Shaming is tied to a specific gossip; defaming can hit the worker unexpectedly. The destructive roles are played mainly by the media.
8. Hightech-mobbing – is behaviour in which computer files are deleted and exchanged, or via the sending of anonymous threat emails or viruses. Some authors use the terms mobbing and bullying synonymously, others include both terms under the Slovak term bullying.
9. Bullying-mobbing – is generally not made public at all because it is not reported and made public by victims who do not ask anyone for help. This creates an increased risk because the aggressor is not afraid of punishment, does not worry about it at all, and similar acts continue to be overlooked and tolerated in the future.

Mobbing is a long-term process that is characterized by immense dynamism. It consists of several developmental stages that describe the origin, course, and end of this undesirable behaviour. Leymann defined four basic phases of mobbing:

1. Mobbing mostly begins with an unresolved conflict on the part of the victim and the aggressor.
2. There is a deepening and intensification of attacks, other people also join in, this is a phase of systematic psychological terror.
3. The victim is exposed to almost unbearable stress. Under the influence of the escalation of attacks, there is room for the occurrence and repetition of errors, to which personnel management is already responding.
4. Resignation of the victim and their departure from the workplace.¹⁹

In addition to the above phases, it is important to note that situations and events outside the premises and outside standard working hours, but with negative motives focused on the work performance and abilities of the employee, may also be part of mobbing and violence in the workplace.²⁰

The consequences for victims of mobbing are very serious; in addition to socio-economic interventions (e.g. dismissal at work), the result of psychological terror in the workplace are also health problems (stomach problems, headaches, insomnia and others), as well as poor mental health (anxiety, nervousness, stress, fear, depression, self-destruction, etc.). For victims,

¹⁸ Compare to: MAKAROVA, E. A. MAKAROVA, E. L. MAXIMETS, S. V.: Intentional Concepts of Verbal Bullying and Hate Speech as a Means of Expressing Intolerant Attitude to the Speech Object. In *Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)*, 2020, Vol. 60, No. 3, p. 445-446. ISSN 1994-4160.

¹⁹ KALLWASS, A.: *Das Burnout-Syndrom*. Stuttgart : Kreuz Verlag, 2007, p. 19.

²⁰ HOWARD, J. L.: Workplace Violence in Organizations: An Exploratory Study of Organizational Prevention Techniques. In *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 2001, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 61.

the end of working hours is often a time of redemption when the mobbing ends. However, there are also cases where mobbing does not stop and limit itself to the workplace but continues and blends into cyberspace and the virtual environment. In this case we are talking about so-called cybermobbing. The 21st century has confirmed the massive increase in the influence of the Internet on all areas of life – in cyberspace we communicate, work, have fun, and live virtual lives. It is therefore possible to agree with Gálik, who in this context defines it as a new existential dimension of man.²¹ Cybermobbing, as a negative phenomenon of cyberspace, therefore represents a specific type of cyberbullying, which is connected to the work area. It is therefore a modified form of mobbing implemented in cyberspace using information and communication technologies, digital media, and the Internet. In this context, Kohut also offers an interesting opinion: „Technologies provide treacherous weapons that have no limits, no boundaries, no conscience. The Internet has changed the world of the information society and made life in industrialized countries easier. However, it is a psychological weapon of unimaginable power”²² In the context of cybermobbing as one of the forms of cyberbullying, the aggressor is offered much more powerful and insidious weapons in the form of ICT resources.²³ Positive and optimistic approaches to the Internet are widespread, as it can be considered the most popular medium that facilitates communication and provides various forms of entertainment.²⁴ However, it is also important to point out its negative aspects and risks, among which cybermobbing can undoubtedly be included.

Cybermobbing therefore belongs to a group of different forms and manifestations of cyberbullying with a specific link to work and employment, so we consider it important to state Belsey's classic definition that cyberbullying „involves the use of information and communication technologies to encourage intentional, repetitive and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, aimed at harming others.”²⁵

Hollá²⁶ defines cyberbullying, to which cybermobbing undoubtedly belongs, as behaviour that involves the harassment, threat, humiliation, persecution, or other negative behaviour of an individual or group using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. The purpose of this behaviour is to harm victims through the use of general insults, homophobic, sexist, racist and other discriminatory prejudices, with a significant mismatch in ICT skills between cybermobber and victim, and the victim has long been exposed to negative online material and attacks. An interesting view is also provided by Smith et al.²⁷, who consider cyberbullying to be a type of aggressive and deliberate behaviour that is regularly repeated at a given time through the individual or group use of electronic and digital devices against the victim who cannot easily defend themselves. Therefore, it can be stated that in both forms – mobbing and cybermobbing, it is possible to indicate common characteristic attributes, which include intention, repetition, disproportionate forces, and damage.

The nature and character of cybermobbing are determined by the very characteristics of cyberspace. „How one behaves there depends on the interaction of these traits with the personality characteristics of each individual.”²⁸ Several experts (Vybíral 2002; Šmahaj 2003;

²¹ GÁLIK, S.: Influence of cyberspace on changes in contemporary education. In *Communication Today*, 2017, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 31.

²² KOHUT, M.: *The complete guide to understanding, controlling, and stopping bullies: a complete guide for teachers&parents*. US, Florida, Ocala : Atlantis Publissih Group, 2008, p. 26.

²³ HLADÍKOVÁ, V., GÁLIKOVÁ-TOLNÁIOVÁ, S.: Cyberagressors, their motives, emotions and behavioural tendencies in the process of cyberbullying. In *AD ALTA*, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 73.

²⁴ GÁLIK, S., GÁLIKOVÁ-TOLNÁIOVÁ, S.: Influence of the internet on the cognitive abilities of man. Phenomenological and hermeneutical approach. In *Communication Today*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 6.

²⁵ BELSEY, B.: *Cyberbullying*. [online]. [2020-04-15]. Available at: <<http://www.cyberbullying.ca/>>.

²⁶ HOLLÁ, K.: *Kyberšikana*. Bratislava : Iris, 2013, p. 4.

²⁷ SMITH, P. K. et al.: Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in secondary school pupils. In *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 2008, Vol. 49, No. 4, p. 368.

²⁸ DIVÍNOVÁ, R.: *Cybersex: forma internetové komunikace*. Praha : Triton, 2005, p. 25.

Hulanová 2012; Šmahel 2003) characterize cyberspace and with it the Internet as an environment without barriers, which can have a negative effect. This is mainly related to the attribute of anonymity, which further enhances the whole character of cyberspace and is incredibly attractive for many participants in the virtual environment – especially aggressors. Although anonymity in cyberspace plays an important role in selected situations and also has positive consequences, it is often the factor that encourages immoral behaviour and supports the criminal activity of users.²⁹ As Šmahel says: „...if an Internet user has confidence in his anonymity, and therefore in his security, he behaves differently than if he does not have that trust.“³⁰ In correlation with anonymity and the character of cyberspace as an environment without barriers, it is undoubtedly possible to combine the disinhibitory effect, which is one important element of online communication. The effect of disinhibited behaviour can be described as the loss of social barriers. Psychology has been recording this concept since the 1960s – it is not a completely new concept, which is put into context exclusively with the virtual environment.

Holdoš refers to Zimbard (1977), who characterizes this type of behaviour as „any behaviour that is characterized by a reduction in fear of self-presentation and condemnation of others.“³¹ It can therefore be the opposite of social inhibition, which includes impulse control, non-expression of emotions and overall social control. In general, according to Holdoš, we can understand disinhibited behaviour on the Internet as behaviour that is less socially hampered than comparable behaviour outside cyberspace. According to Horská et al. disinhibition in the virtual environment means „greater relaxation and audacity of participants in electronic communication, loss of inhibitions, embarrassment, doubts. It thus becomes a source of greater openness and straightforwardness.“³² At the same time, language is changing and being released, as users often present their personal experiences, feelings and moods through an anonymous virtual environment and online communication.³³

In the context of cybermobbing, it can also be stated that, according to Vybíral³⁴, the following can be considered as typical manifestations of disinhibition:

- loss or postponement of inhibitions, shame, shyness, feelings of embarrassment and inadequacy;
- circumvention of censorship (nothing is forbidden, everything is allowed);
- turning off the conscience (turned off „call to responsibility“, I can give passage to immorality);
- no restraint, impatience, speed (I don't have to tame, control);
- interest in taboo topics (violence, extremism, paedophilia, etc.);
- increased curiosity;
- instinctive behaviour, impulsive decision-making;
- allowing the forces of „ID“ (unconsciousness): behaviour is driven by an urge to pleasure or destructiveness (desire to enjoy, desire to harm);
- exhibitionism;
- departure from reality and escape to the world of fantasy.

The consequences of disinhibited behaviour can also include increased aggressiveness in communication in cyberspace, manifested, for example, in discussions under articles, blogs or videos on the web, partly also the boom of pornography on the Internet, superficiality, lack

²⁹ SARDÁ, T. et al.: Understanding online anonymity. In *Media Culture & Society*, 2019, Vol. 41, No. 4, p. 560.

³⁰ ŠMAHEL, D.: *Psychologie a internet. Děti dospělými, dospělí dětmi*. Praha : Triton, 2003, p. 14.

³¹ HOLDOŠ, J.: Disinhibičný efekt uživatelův internetu v čase sociálních sítí. In *ALUMNI Conference of Graduates*, Ružomberok : Verbum, 2016, p. 64.

³² HORSKÁ, B. et. al.: *Internet jako cesta pomoci*. Praha : Sociologické nakladatelství, 2010, p. 18.

³³ SÁMELOVÁ, A., STANKOVÁ, M.: Some Ideas On Facts and No Facts Within Media Language. In *European Journal of Media, Art & Photography*, 2018, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 121.

³⁴ VYBÍRAL, Z.: Výzkum disinhibice u mladých uživatelů chatu. In PLAŇAVA, I., PILÁT, M. (eds.): *Deti, mládež a rodiny v období transformace*. Brno : Barrister&Principal-studio, 2002, p. 27.

of interest in others, selfishness or lies. There is also an increased willingness to accept risky behaviour, either with oneself or with others (e.g. flirting with strangers, illegal downloading, spreading spam and hoaxes, intolerable content, etc.).

Disinhibitory behaviour can be both positive and negative. Suler³⁵ gives a basic division into the benign and the harmful, and toxic disinhibition. The first type allows us to better understand ourselves by losing barriers, because it allows us to express ourselves as we would like, but in the offline world, for example, we would not dare to behave in this way. Thanks to this, users in cyberspace sometimes behave more positively than the live world – they are more supportive and express their understanding and praise.

Thus, one of the biggest positives of benign online disinhibition is primarily the social consequences, e.g. philanthropic gestures, counselling, emotional support, and greater self-disclosure.³⁶ Harmful disinhibition is the opposite – it includes aggressive behaviours and negative emotions, harsh criticism, hatred, threats, etc. It is obvious that if we deal with cybermobbing and cyberbullying, the second type of disinhibitory behaviour is essential for us.

Mobber – an attacker from the workplace does not only limit their activities and attacks to the physical space at work, but also continues to attack via the Internet. It is not a new phenomenon, but its digital form is governed by different laws and has other consequences:

1. Cybermobbing can take place almost continuously – the constant availability of digital media and the Internet enables the possibility of carrying out online attacks and at the same time prevents the victim from escaping from them. Unlike mobbing, it does not end after leaving the workplace. However, if all virtual accounts are blocked to avoid contact with the cybermobber, it can also have a negative consequence and can cause some form of social exclusion, as well as access to information, etc.
2. Cybermobbing reaches a wide audience – social networking sites, e-mails or SMS messages enable rapid and immediate dissemination of negative content to the public. As soon as some data is published on the Internet, it is exceedingly difficult to delete it. Since the memory of the Internet is unlimited, even deleted data could have been previously copied and archived. Attacks or the spread of negative content can be carried out very actively and easily, so there exists an endless audience.
3. Cybermobbing can also take place anonymously – aggressors often hide behind fictitious identities. On the one hand, it can reduce disinhibitory behaviour – cybermobbers do not have to face the reactions of victims face to face and often do not realize the consequences of their attacks on victims. On the other hand, the anonymity of attackers is another source of fear and insecurity for victims of cybermobbing.³⁷

There is ambiguity in the classification of individual manifestations of mobbing and cybermobbing in professional literature. By synthesizing and comparing several relevant sources and studies (Hollá, Šmahaj, Horváth, Ritomská, Dvončová, etc.), we created the following lists of possible forms and manifestations of mobbing in offline and online environments:

³⁵ SULER, J.: *The Online Disinhibition Effect*. [online]. [2020-04-19]. Available at: <<http://users.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/disinhibit.html>>.

³⁶ LAPIDOT-LEFLER, N., BARAK, A.: The benign online disinhibition effect: Could situational factors induce self-disclosure and prosocial behaviors? In *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychological Research on Cyberspace*, 2015, Vol. 9, No. 2, Article 3. [online]. [2020-08-20]. Available at: <<https://cyberpsychology.eu/article/view/4335/3402>>.

³⁷ *Aktiv gegen CyberMobbing*. [online]. [2020-04-13]. Available at: <https://www.saferinternet.at/fileadmin/categorized/Materialien/Aktiv_gegen_Cyber_Mobbing.pdf>.

| MOBBING | CYBERMOBBING |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Defamation – by defamation the attacker gives false information about the other person (victim of mobbing), and thus tries to „win“ a better position for themself, while the topic of defamation may be from the private life of the affected person or from the work environment.</p> | <p>1. Flaming – internet debate, fiery quarrel, in which offensive, vicious language, insults and threats are used. It usually takes place in a public communications environment, e.g. discussion forums, chat rooms, etc.</p> |
| <p>2. Laughter – the target of ridicule can be a hairstyle, clothing, certain characteristics, and physical defects (stuttering, squinting, obesity, etc.). After a longer period, the victim of mobbing starts to avoid the collective and thus gets into isolation, which can affect their work performance.</p> | <p>2. Harassment – harassing the victim by repeatedly sending offensive, insulting, or threatening messages via SMS/MMS, e-mail, chat, social networking sites. The aggressor sends a huge number of messages, is one-sided, lasts a long time and causes the victim's emotional distress.</p> |
| <p>3. Retention of important information – by withholding important information necessary for the performance of the work function, the bully tries to artificially create stressful situations for the other person, with people working under stress being more prone to make mistakes, making wrong decisions, whereby the bully tries to form an image of the opponent as unreliable and an incompetent worker, so the mobber tries to strengthen their position.</p> | <p>3. Defamation, slander – publishing and disseminating verbal, graphic or audio content about the victim and the results of their work, which are derogatory, untrue, offensive, ridiculing. The victim is not a direct recipient of messages, the aim is to destroy their reputation, name and disrupt friendships, or cause possible social harm to the victim or exclusion. This includes e.g. photomontages of victims that are hurtful or sexual in nature.</p> |
| <p>4. Isolation of the worker – the result of slander, ridicule, or so-called voluntary isolation of the victim to avoid negative attacks.</p> | <p>4. Imitation, identity theft – the aggressor introduces himself or herself and acts on behalf of the victim, uses negative communication, insults, slanders others, sends inappropriate, misleading, derogatory information or files as if sent by the victim themself. This can communicate with the victim's friends and cause significant damage or even the destruction of social relationships. This is a kind of hacking activity.</p> |
| <p>5. Administrative and work measures – they are used mainly by superiors. At short intervals, the employee is transferred to another workplace, where they perform menial work that does not correspond to their qualifications. The consequence of these measures is the loss of the employee's interest in the assigned work.</p> | <p>5. Uncovering secrets and fraud – disclosure of private, secret, intimate information about the victim without their consent. This is data that embarrasses the victim, damages their reputation or name. In this context, we can also talk about the so-called disinformation (fabricated) and misinformation (based on facts) aimed at deliberately and intentionally harming the victim.³⁸</p> |
| <p>6. Excessive workload – this can be the assignment of unnecessary and pointless tasks or the assignment of constantly new and newer tasks beyond the abilities and competencies of the worker. The result is the overwork of an employee who is under constant pressure, stress. This is one of the ways in which a superior try to „remove“ or „disable“ a more capable subordinate, who is, for instance, trying to get their position. Excessive workload is not always related to mobbing, but can be a sign of poor work organization by the superior, which can contribute to the creation of an atmosphere that supports the emergence of mobbing</p> | <p>6. Exclusion and ostracization – intentional exclusion from the online group or online meetings, online conferences, etc. It is about directly and purposefully ignoring the victim, preventing access to digital data and materials.</p> |

³⁸ KAČINOVÁ, V.: The Topic of Media-Disseminated Mis-Information and Dis-Information As An Integral Part of General Education in Slovakia. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2020, Vol. 3, No.1, p. 19.

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|---|---|
| <p>7. Excessive criticism – this method is used by superiors as well as workers at the same level. Excessive and constant criticism is frustrating and raises doubts in the victims about their abilities, lowers self-confidence. Criticism can be justified or often unjustified and generalizes over time. Ultimately, it leads to apathy, resignation, insufficient performance of assigned tasks and, in the worst case, to „voluntary“ or „involuntary“ leaving the workplace.</p> | <p>7. Persecution – this is about stalking, sharing, or persecuting the victim and their loved ones through ICT means. Cybermobber repeatedly sends harassing and threatening messages, including extortion. These messages are extremely hurtful, offensive, and humiliating. An aggressor can often hide their identity behind anonymous means of communication.</p> |
| <p>8. Sexual harassment – mainly women, rarely men, are exposed to sexual harassment by their superiors. It is important to distinguish between expressing sympathy and actual harassment, which can take various forms, e.g. verbal – slander, making suggestions for sexual intercourse; conative – stroking against the will of another person, in more serious cases also violent coercion of sexual intercourse, etc.</p> | <p>8. Happy slapping – this is a specific phenomenon when the victim is recorded (most often on a smartphone) at moments when he or she is ridiculed or physically assaulted. Subsequently, this record is published on the Internet and distributed virally. An alternative is to take the victim out of self-control by indecent behaviour and then filming and publishing their uncontrollable reaction. It has fatal consequences that can lead to suicide of victims. For aggressors, it is a form of fun and prestige.³⁹</p> |
| <p>9. Physical attacks – they rarely occur in the workplace, because physical assault, in contrast to the above points, is punishable by law.</p> | <p>9. Cyber threats – these are electronic materials that either generally or specifically raise concerns that their author intends to cause harm or violence. We also include technological attacks: hacking attacks, sending viruses, malware, creating automatic programs for simultaneous sending of thousands of e-mail messages, which will cause the e-mail box to collapse, or account blocking, etc. Cyber threats also include phishing and pharming (trying to obtain passwords, especially for bank accounts, online banking, etc.).</p> |

TABLE 1: Manifestations of mobbing and cybermobbing

Source: own processing

The Internet can now be considered an absolute matter of course in our lives, and it can undoubtedly be described as the largest and most powerful medium today.⁴⁰ Although the virtual world is often referred to as parallel to the real world, it has its own rules and specifics that make it significantly different from reality in certain ways. The presented phenomena cannot always be said to affect the entire population of cyberspace participants and in all circumstances. They also differ in their influence according to different types of communication environments. We therefore tried to show the ways in which people can perceive cyberspace and the communication in it, what type of „filter“ they put over their eyes when they enter this environment. This „filter“ then influences their behaviour and the overall perception of the virtual world.

It can be stated that the digitization of relationships and people has changed the boundaries in the mutual perception of interactions. Digital media and online communication have brought many opportunities on the one hand, but also several risks and negative phenomena on the other.⁴¹ Therefore, the behaviour of people in cyberspace is quite different from their behaviour in real life. Hence, we consider it important to point out that in cyberspace, in addition to the perception of others, the perception of oneself also changes, often with negative inclinations and consequences for other users.

³⁹ CHAN, S. et al.: Understanding ‘happy slapping’. In *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 2012, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 44.

⁴⁰ HUBINÁKOVÁ, H., MIKULA, M.: The Importance of the Internet in the Life of Students of Media Studies. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2018, Vol. 1, No.1, p. 32.

⁴¹ GÁLIK, S., HLADÍKOVÁ, V., PAVLÁK, L.: Cyberbullying and Opportunities for its Prevention. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 7.

3. Material and Methods

The aim of the paper is to examine in more detail the issue of communication in the workplace with a specific emphasis on mobbing and cybermobbing as negative aspects and consequences of this communication and the possibilities of legislative and non-legislative protection against them. Based on the defined main aim, partial goals were also defined:

- to define the issue of mobbing as a risk phenomenon in the context of personnel management;
- to define the issue of cybermobbing as a risky aspect of communication in cyberspace and as a consequence of the negative atmosphere in the workplace;
- to analyse and to define the possibilities of the currently valid legislative protection in connection with mobbing and cybermobbing;
- to analyse non-legislative options for mobbing solutions;
- to set levels of prevention for mobbing and cybermobbing;
- to define solutions and possibilities of prevention and elimination of mobbing in the context of the hierarchy of a company unit or organization;
- to define proposals for a society-wide solution to the issue of mobbing and cybermobbing.

The main method used in the article was the hermeneutic method⁴², which includes the understanding and interpretation of texts and the phenomenological method⁴³, through which we examined the nature and basic structure – *the eidos* of specific phenomena. We believe that it is the phenomenological method that complements the hermeneutic method within the theoretical basis. Using qualitative methods, we defined individual research problems, and we used critical in-depth analysis, descriptive method, as well as other general cognitive methods.

4. Results and discussion

Legislative aspects of mobbing and cybermobbing

It is obvious that mobbing and all its forms and manifestations can be described as a serious social problem. Given that the issue of mobbing generally concerns the dignity of the employee (human in general) and the protection of human rights, it is possible to derive the protection of the victim of mobbing from this general regulation. Many states that have not specifically adapted for mobbing in their legislation also rely on discriminatory legislation or occupational safety and health legislation. The basic context of the solution to mobbing in the workplace is also enshrined in labour law regulations, or in collective agreements or other internal regulations of the employer and companies.

Given that the legislation of the Slovak Republic does not explicitly contain legislation on mobbing and cybermobbing, it is necessary to proceed from the above sources of law and those legal regulations that affect this issue (e.g. Civil Code governing the protection of personality, Criminal Code if mobbing would reach such an intensity that the characteristics of some crimes would be fulfilled).

The basic source of law in our country is the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (No. 460/1992 Coll.). In relation to issues of mobbing and its legal protection, the following may be mentioned in the context of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic:

- Art. 12, which guarantees fundamental human rights and freedoms, does not, however, directly regulate relations between persons within the framework of private law relations.

⁴² *Hermeneutika*. [online]. [2020-08-19]. Available at: <<http://film.ff.cuni.cz/rozcestnik/metodika/hermeneutika.pdf>>.

⁴³ VYDROVÁ, J.: Fenomenologický a estetický postoj. Poznámky k ich svojbytnosti a prekryvaniu. In *Filozofia*, 2008, Vol. 63, No. 7, p. 619.

- Art. 16, par. 1, according to which the inviolability of the person and their privacy is guaranteed and par. 2 – no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Art. 19, par. 1, according to which everyone has the right to respect for human dignity, personal honour and reputation and to the protection of their name.
- Art. 19, par. 2, according to which everyone is guaranteed the right to protection against unauthorized interference with private and family life.
- Art. 36, according to which employees have the right to fair and satisfactory working conditions, in the context of mobbing, especially par. c, protection of safety and health at work.⁴⁴

The basic legal framework for protection against mobbing and its forms and manifestations is contained in Act no. 311/2001 Coll. The Labour Code as amended (hereinafter also referred to as the „Labour Code“). This protection is mainly related to the application of the principle of equal treatment, which is already reflected in the basic principles of the Labour Code (Article 1). The aggressor often abuses their position in the workplace, using the means and force resulting from their job position to intimidate, humiliate or endanger the victim of mobbing. In this context, it is appropriate to mention Art. 2 of the basic principles of the Labour Code, according to which the exercise of rights and obligations arising from employment relationships must be in accordance with good morals, no one may abuse these rights and obligations to the detriment of the other party to the employment relationship or co-employees.

Furthermore, the provision of § 13 par. 1 to 3, stipulates the obligation of the employer to treat employees in accordance with the principle of equal treatment with reference to the Anti-Discrimination Act. At the same time, it prohibits discrimination against employees on nine explicitly listed grounds. The prohibition of bullying is defined in paragraph 3: „*The exercise of rights and obligations arising from employment relationships must be in accordance with good morals. No one shall abuse these rights and obligations to the detriment of the other party of the employment relationship or co-workers.*“⁴⁵ The Labour Code also stipulates that no one may be persecuted or otherwise punished in the workplace in connection with the performance of employment relationships for filing a complaint, lawsuit, motion to prosecute or otherwise report crime or other anti-social activity against another employee or employer.

Every employee, as well as every manager, must behave in accordance with good morals and must not abuse their rights and obligations to the detriment of another employee. However, the abstract definition of good manners is perceived differently and is therefore the most common problem. Good manners have an exclusive ethical dimension and are assessed individually for each specific situation. If the employee in any way considers that the principle of equal treatment regulated in the Labour Code as well as the provisions of § 13 par. 3 of the Labour Code have been violated, **they have the right to file** under § 13 par. 6 complaint to the employer in the said case. The employer is obliged to respond immediately to the complaint in question, make a correction, refrain from such action, and eliminate its consequences.⁴⁶

Among other things, in the event of a violation of their rights, the employee can also go to court and demand the protection provided by the Anti-Discrimination Act. The provision of § 2a par. 4 of Act no. 365/2004 Coll. on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and on Protection against Discrimination and on Amendments to Certain Acts (Anti-Discrimination Act) contains

⁴⁴ Zákon č. 460/1992 Z. z. Ústavný zákon. [online]. [2020-04-22]. Available at: <<https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1992-460>>.

⁴⁵ Zákon č. 311/2001 Z. z. Zákonník práce. [online]. [2020-04-21]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2001/311/20200617>>.

⁴⁶ Zákon č. 311/2001 Z. z. Zákonník práce. [online]. [2020-04-21]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2001/311/20200617>>.

a definition of harassment as a potential form of mobbing or bossing. It defines it as „such behaviour as a result of which an intimidating, hostile, embarrassing, degrading, humiliating, abusive or offensive environment is or may be created and which intends or may result in an interference with freedom or human dignity.“⁴⁷ At the same time § 2a par. 6 contains, for example, another potential form of bossing, **where the superior instructs the subordinate to discriminate against a third party**. Mobbing can also be involved if a worker encourages other workers to discriminate against a third party. „Incitement to discrimination is the persuasion, affirmation or incitement of a person to discriminate against a third party“ (§ 2a (7) of the Anti-Discrimination Act).⁴⁸

As Dvončová⁴⁹ points out, in the above cases, the employee has the right to go to court and seek legal protection in accordance with the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act. In doing so, they may claim that the person who has infringed the principle of equal treatment:

1. dismisses their action,
2. if possible, rectify the infringement or provide adequate redress,
3. in the case of non-compliance with the principle of equal treatment due to the reporting of crime or other anti-social activities, they may also claim the invalidity of a legal act whose effectiveness has been suspended pursuant to a special regulation.

In serious cases if adequate satisfaction is not sufficient, non-pecuniary damage may also be claimed. The amount of **compensation for non-pecuniary damage in money** is determined by the court, considering the seriousness of the non-pecuniary damage incurred and all the circumstances under which it occurred.

It is possible to agree with Olšovská⁵⁰, who states that there are few litigations concerning mobbing and its forms, therefore in the context of mobbing and the application of the protection of the law in accordance with the Anti-Discrimination Act, the existing court decisions can also be mentioned as interesting, such as decisions of the Regional Court of Banská Bystrica in this area. In it, the Court distinguishes between bullying and discrimination, while the Decision declares that bullying is not enshrined in the Labour Code and, by analogy, bullying can therefore be considered a specific type of abuse of law.

At the same time, we consider it important to mention Act no. 18/2018 Coll. on the protection of personal data and its provisions according to which the dissemination of personal data without the consent of the employee and for other purposes, for which the consent was given, is not possible.⁵¹

Above, we have listed several options and alternatives for the legal protection against mobbing and its forms in the offline environment. As the subject of our interest is also mobbing in cyberspace, we also introduce the possibilities of legal protection against **cybermobbing**. We stated that cybermobbing can be defined as one of the forms of cyberbullying. If we talk about the legislative regulation of cyberbullying – and therefore also cybermobbing – in the Slovak Republic, we can state that the Slovak legislation does not recognize the term cyberbullying. At present, there is no law in Slovakia that records the concept of cyberbullying,

⁴⁷ Zákon č. 365/2004 Z. z. o rovnakom zaobchádzaní v niektorých oblastiach a o ochrane pred diskrimináciou a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov (antidiskriminačný zákon). [online]. [2020-04-21]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2004/365/20160102>>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ DVONČOVÁ, M.: *Mobbing a bossing – právny rozmer a prostriedky právnej ochrany*. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://www.pravnenoviny.sk/mobbing-a-bossing-pravny-rozmer-a-prostriedky-pravnej-ochrany>>.

⁵⁰ OLŠOVSKÁ, A.: *Mobbing a bossing na pracovisku*. Bratislava : Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, 2013, p. 85.

⁵¹ More details can be found in ŠVEC, M., HORECKÝ, J., MADLEŇÁK, A.: GDPR in Labour relations – with or without the consent of the employee? In *AD ALTA*, 2018, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 281-286.

sexting or cybergrooming. Our legislation does not define these terms, but this does not mean that bullying through online technologies, the dissemination of defamatory, false information, threats or harassment have no legal consequences. If we want to defend ourselves against cyberbullying at the criminal law level, we can apply several sections of Act no. 300/2005 Coll. (Criminal Code)⁵²:

- Dangerous persecution, so-called stalking (§ 360a);
- Blackmail (§ 189);
- Pressure (§ 192);
- Sexual abuse (§ 201, § 201a, § 201b);
- Defamation (§ 373);
- Infringement of foreign rights (§ 376).

The international portal focused on cyberbullying, www.cyberhelp.eu, states, in addition to the above-mentioned contexts, that since 1 September 2011, stalking has been a criminal offense in our country. A person faces up to one year in prison, and in up to three years in particularly serious cases. Section 360a of the Criminal Code defines the essence of the criminal offense of dangerous persecution as follows:

„Whoever persecutes others for a long time in such a way that it may give rise to reasonable concern for his or her life or health, the life or health of a person close to him or her or substantially impair his or her quality of life, by:

- a) threatens to injure him or her, or otherwise harm him/her or a person close to him/her,
- b) seeks out his/her personal closeness or stalks him/her,
- c) contact him/her through a third party or electronic communication service, in writing or otherwise against his/her will,
- d) misuse his/her personal data for the purpose of obtaining personal or other contact, or
- e) otherwise restricts him/her in his/her usual way of life, *shall be punishable by a term of imprisonment of up to one year.*⁵³

Dangerous persecution via the Internet or mobile phone, i.e. the cyberstalking mentioned above, has also become a criminal offense.

We also consider happy slapping to be interesting in the legislative context. In the Slovak Republic, happy slapping is not a crime, but it is not unpunished. For instance, situations where the aggressor – mobber attacks the victim while they are filmed by an accomplice on a smartphone, and then places a video together on the Internet, can probably be assessed as several crimes: e.g. injury (§155 of the Criminal Code) (in case of paralysis and other similar damage to health), non-prevention of a crime (§ 341 of the Criminal Code) and failure to report a crime (§ 340 of the Criminal Code) (by an accomplice), subsequently failure to provide assistance (§ 177 of the Criminal Code). However, it always depends on the specific course of the proceedings. Therefore, e.g. incitement to hatred against a group of persons or restriction of their rights and freedoms (§ 424 of the Criminal Code), approval of a criminal offense (§ 338 of the Criminal Code), incitement to a criminal offense (§ 337 of the Criminal Code) and others is also conceivable. Less serious proceedings are most often related to one of the offenses against civic cohabitation. Some European countries have happy slapping directly enshrined in their criminal codes, e.g. in France, happy slapping is seen in the same way as a crime such as rape and faces up to 5 years in prison.⁵⁴

⁵² Zákon č. 300/2005 Z. z. *Trestný zákon*. [online]. [2020-04-19]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2005/300/>>.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Happy Slapping*. [online]. [2020-04-19]. Available at: <<http://www.eisionline.org/index.php/sk/ss-zlpas-blog>>.

In connection with cyberbullying, we can also talk about crimes related to extremist materials (their production, distribution or storage) or related to defamation of the nation, race and beliefs or support and promotion of groups aimed at suppressing basic human rights and freedoms, e.g. in the case of identity theft, when cybermobbers on the Internet act on behalf of the victim. The above-mentioned crimes are primarily and most often related to cyberspace in the sense that they can be carried out in public (show affection, support, spread, promote, etc.) – also via computer networks. In these cases, the following sections of the Criminal Code may be used to examine the proceedings from a legislative point of view:

- Support and promotion of groups aimed at suppressing fundamental rights and freedoms (§ 421, § 422);
- Production, dissemination and storage of extremist materials (§ 422a, § 422b, § 422c);
- Denial and approval of the Holocaust and crimes of political regimes (§ 422d);
- Defamation of the nation, race and beliefs (§ 423);
- Incitement to national, racial and ethnic hatred (§ 424);
- Incitement, defamation, and intimidation of persons for their affiliation with any race, nation, nationality, colour, ethnic group or origin of the family (§ 424a).⁵⁵

It is gratifying that also a country like Slovakia is constantly striving to strengthen cyber security. In 2016, a new committee was established within the Security Council of the Slovak Republic – the Committee for Cyber Security. Its aim is to prepare, and coordinate measures aimed at maintaining the security of the cyberspace of the Slovak Republic. In 2014, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved a document entitled *Preparing the Slovak Republic for Cyber Defence Tasks*, and a year later adopted a key strategic document – *the Slovak Republic's Cyber Security Concept for 2015-2020*, which in the outline of the institutional framework proposed the National Security Office as the central institution of cyber security. Its aim is to draw attention to the importance of cybersecurity and to propose measures and solutions to eliminate cyberattacks on individuals, systems, and society as a whole.

Other means of legal protection against mobbing

Although the Labour Code, in conjunction with the Anti-Discrimination Act, probably provides the most effective and comprehensive protection against mobbing, bossing and other forms of bullying in the workplace, seeking protection of rights through other legal means is not excluded.

Mobbing and its various forms may in a specific case be, for example, disproportionate to even inadmissible interference with the personal rights of the individual, while the means of protection of personality are regulated in § 11 et seq. Act no. 40/1964 Coll. Civil Code as amended (hereinafter also referred to as the „*Civil Code*“). Directly mentioned § 11 of the Civil Code determines that an individual has the right to protection of their personality, especially life and health, civil honour and human dignity, as well as privacy, their name and expressions of a personal nature.⁵⁶

Another alternative is to report the offense, which in relation to mobbing or bossing would probably be an offense against civic cohabitation. In more serious cases, it is also possible to file a criminal report on suspicion of committing a criminal offense, because bullying proceedings, to which mobbing undoubtedly belongs, may fulfil the elements of the factual nature of certain criminal offenses within the meaning of the Criminal Code, e.g. the criminal offense of defamation, extortion, unauthorized handling of personal data, etc. However, the filing of a criminal report should not be purposeful otherwise the notifier himself/herself could be prosecuted for the crime of false accusation.

⁵⁵ *Kyberšikanovanie*. [online]. [2020-04-21]. Available at: <<http://www.zodpovedne.sk/index.php/sk/ohrozenia/kybersikanovanie>>.

⁵⁶ *Zákon č. 40/1964 Z. z. Občiansky zákonník*. [online]. [2020-04-23]. Available at: <<https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1964-40>>.

In connection with protection against mobbing and its forms, it is possible to turn to several institutions, e.g. labour inspectorates or the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. Within the scope of **labour inspectorates**, there is, among other things, supervision over compliance with labour law regulations, i.e. primarily the Labour Code. The employee may turn to the relevant labour inspectorate with a complaint in accordance with Act no. 125/2006 Coll. on Labour Inspection and on Amendments to Act No. 82/2005 Coll. on Illegal Work and Illegal Employment and on amendments to certain acts, as amended, or with a complaint pursuant to Act No. 9/2010 Coll. on Complaints as amended.

In 2004, the **Slovak National Centre for Human Rights** became the Slovak anti-discrimination body for assessing compliance with the principle of equal treatment under the Anti-Discrimination Act. The Centre issues expert opinions on discrimination in the provision of legal services, represents participants in proceedings in cases of violation of the principle of equal treatment, provides legal assistance to victims of discrimination and intolerance, has the right to request courts, prosecutors, other state authorities, local authorities, interest bodies municipalities and other institutions to provide information on respect for human rights.

Another alternative for protection against bullying in the workplace is the institute of the **Public Defender of Rights – the Ombudsman**, who can also help resolve the situation based on their powers. However, to completely eliminate the realization of psychological terror in the workplace, these institutions are not enough, comprehensive legislation is needed.

Another possibility is the use of **mediation** as a way of out-of-court dispute resolution, where a qualified mediator invites the employer, the aggressor and the victim to resolve the dispute without legal proceedings in order to conclude a mediation agreement. The mediator is an impartial and independent party in the process, which creates suitable conditions for equal communication between the employee and the employer, or between the employees concerned. Because the process is confidential, the risk of the problem moving outside the business environment or the spreading of related information in the workplace is minimized. Employees are interested in a quick and effective solution to the current problem, for the employer, executive employees are especially important, who cooperate and do not fight among themselves, not excluding the positive image in the internal environment, where the employer clearly shows that they care about employees and are interested in a real solution to an employee problem.

In addition to the above, we also consider it important to conclude by mentioning the fact that all advanced companies and corporations have codes of ethics in their internal regulations. Most of them also contain certain clauses on the ethical behaviour of all employees. The application, enforcement, and possible sanctioning of breaches of these clauses can make a significant contribution to the prevention and elimination of mobbing and cybermobbing in the context of workplace communication.

Although mobbing and its forms present significant problems in the workplace not only for the victim but also for the entire organization, its consequences can be mitigated and do not have to grow to maximum dimensions. However, this is only possible if this phenomenon is not overlooked but is addressed in a timely manner. The implementation of various preventive strategies in the context of these adverse events is therefore one of the basic attributes of their elimination and prevention of occurrence in the workplace. As there is no antimobbing law in Slovakia, every organization, company, or enterprise, regardless of its focus, should have developed and prepared a plan for the solution of mobbing in the workplace. The role of the employer is to inform and instruct managers and other employees about the issue, identification and especially about the possibilities of its solution.

At the level of the employer – the organizational level of the company – we present several preventive solutions:

1. Formulate an internal antimobbing rule that would define exactly what behaviour is mobbing in the workplace, defining how the groups or individuals concerned can defend themselves in the event of a threat and violation of their rights.
2. Update corporate codes of ethics with the explicit definition that no manifestations of mobbing, unethical behaviour, discrimination, or other psychological terror in the workplace will be tolerated.
3. Include specific clauses in employment contracts in which the connections with the issue of mobbing will be regulated and defined, e.g. application of sanctions in case of violation of the set rules.
4. Bring and disseminate information and education on mobbing and its consequences. We consider education in this context to be one of the most basic measures that can eliminate the occurrence of mobbing in the workplace. *“These educational activities must be attractive enough and respect the uniqueness and the needs of the individual target groups.”*⁵⁷ Education can take place through:
 - various professional seminars, lectures, trainings, or courses focused on building quality working relationships and a healthy working climate,
 - personalized training programs focused on personal development of employees, e.g. conflict resolution culture, correct and effective use of assertive communication and other communication techniques as well as non-verbal communication, stress management, tolerance and empathy training in interpersonal relationships, improving social perception, optimizing self-regulation of behaviour, developing and training work skills and competencies, etc.
5. To be able to identify and detect undesirable behaviour in the form of mobbing – to implement into the structure of mandatory legislative training on safety and health at work also the issue of mobbing and its forms, health consequences, quality of life, as well as the overall work environment and employee performance.
6. Introduce the institution of annual job evaluations of the employee’s performance, within which the employee has the opportunity to draw attention in the open atmosphere to the presence of mobbing towards themselves as well as towards co-workers; if this institute is established in organizations, define the communication space also for the issue of mobbing.
7. Ensure framework agreements with institutions focused on occupational psychology, if necessary, enable the victim to intervene within working hours with a vision of improving work performance.
8. Appoint a supervisor – a person from the human resources department authorized to monitor, control, and inform the company’s management about the occurrence of mobbing and bossing.
9. Increase individual responsibility for bullying and workplace behaviour.
10. Appeal to compliance with netiquette and cybersecurity in the work environment.
11. Create space for informal meetings of employees, e.g. through teambuildings to strengthen working relationships and a healthy working atmosphere.

It can be stated that a manager is often co-responsible for cases of mobbing, whose role is, among other things, to participate in the creation of a suitable working environment and climate. As a rule, the manager performs several functions in the organization: they are a leader, guide, administrator, organizer, coordinator, decides on goals and procedures, and in connection with the topic of violence in the workplace may also be in the job of providing assistance

⁵⁷ PETRANOVÁ, D., VRABEC, N.: Age as a Factor in Evaluation of Media Literacy Levels in Slovakia. In *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy*, 2016, Vol. 1, No 1. p. 25.

to victims of mobbing, a role in prevention, and in dealing with this undesirable phenomenon. To fulfil this wide range of functions, the manager must have, in addition to professional and managerial competencies, also moral competencies – the ability to select people and lead them appropriately, to influence their attitudes and communication skills.

Within the level of management, we propose:

1. To build trust and empathy between subordinates and the whole work team. Trust in superiors of potential victims will cause greater openness to conversation and thus contribute to resolving the situation.
2. To train moral competencies, which should guarantee confidence in the fair resolution of potential conflicts, help for victims of mobbing, overall friendly and pleasant atmosphere in the workplace for all employees, e.g. through socio-psychological training in practice.
3. Respond flexibly to warning signals, e.g. restlessness in the workplace, tension, sadness, deterioration of work ethic and atmosphere, and thus a decline in the performance of their subordinates and, based on the findings, to solve problems.
4. Conduct informal interviews with subordinates (e.g. twice a year) to identify undesirable manifestations of communication or other suspicions of mobbing.
5. To intervene in an adequate and immediate form in the manifestation of mobbing and its forms and to deduce responsibility and consequences for aggressors.
6. Implement self-education, e.g. by applying Self-Managed Learning.
7. Be open to the completion of special management training programs to eliminate bossing aimed at resolving conflicts arising from management positions.

Within the collective level, cooperation and communication of employees is important, it is necessary not to overlook even small manifestations of mobbing and its forms. Employees should have the courage to name the situation and possible conflicts, or iniquity to always communicate. One of the consequences for aggressors is the moral condemnation of other collaborators.

Within the societal level, we propose the following preventive activities:

1. Promote prevention projects and activities in the context of assistance to victims of mobbing and cybermobbing, e.g. Internet psychological counselling centre IPčko.sk, which provides free psychological and social counselling or OZ Práca a vzťahy dedicated to victims of mobbing and activities to improve the situation in the Slovak Republic.
2. Carry out research in the field of mobbing, disseminate the results and possibilities of the solution to the professional and lay public.
3. Implement profesiograms and personality tests in job interviews to (among other things) eliminate pathological personalities and aggressors.
4. Obtain and consolidate the so-called social skills and soft skills, where we include e.g. self-knowledge and self-motivation, perception, communication, conflict resolution, teamwork, development of empathy, aggression management, assertiveness, and the support of personal and professional growth.
5. To create educational programs in the context of violence, undesirable behaviour and strengthening communication in the workplace.
6. Appeal the importance of adhering to netiquette and cybersecurity in the electronic form of communication.

5. Conclusion

At present, there is no specific law in the legislation of the Slovak Republic yet, nor has an official institution or organization been established exclusively focused on mobbing in the workplace, or its sequel in cyberspace. However, based on our analysis of mobbing, it can be stated that the Slovak legal system provides victims of mobbing and cybermobbing with a relatively sufficient number of alternatives to legal protection and various procedures and options for the defence and elimination of undesirable situations. It can also be appreciated that in recent decades, several institutions have been established in Slovakia, whose mission is to protect human rights. Nevertheless, they do not have the competence to deal with or sanction (e-)mobbing aggressors.

This necessarily requires legislative regulation, specifically and in particular the explicit definition of the forms and manifestations of mobbing and cybermobbing in the work environment, the introduction of sanctions for mobbing practitioners, the competence of individual cases, the method of filing remedies and other legislative contexts. However, in addition to legislation, it is also necessary to create relevant protection mechanisms and forms of counselling for victims and employers.

Although the issues of mobbing and cybermobbing are partially discussed, we believe that employees as well as the public still do not have enough information and knowledge in this area. Therefore, it is important to provide essential and crucial information and training for employees (e.g. in the form of courses in the context of communication), as well as professionals who deal professionally with this issue, as well as the general education of society. Paying attention to these issues also poses a challenge for personnel management, which should address psychosocial issues not only in terms of ethics, but also in terms of the overall performance of the company and employees – only a satisfied and non-frustrated employee can deliver quality performance.

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Derya Gül Ünlü, Oya Morva

Whose Information Should Be Shared With Whom?: Parents' Awareness Of Children's Digital Privacy In Turkey

ABSTRACT

Today, parents make use of social media accounts for many different purposes, such as obtaining information, giving advice, receiving support, and exchanging ideas with other parents. In parallel with the use of social media, according to their parenting roles, individuals frequently share various content related to both their own daily practices and the development processes of their children. The fact that most of the content shared is about children raises the question of digital privacy in this context. Based on this focus, this research aims to determine the priorities attached by the parents when they share content about children on their social media accounts, and what kind of measures they take in sharing this content to protect the digital privacy of their children. Therefore, a questionnaire based quantitative field study was carried out within the scope of this research. As a result of the study, it was found that parents primarily prefer sharing special occasions with their children, family photographs and photographs of their children at early ages; if the child is at a later age, they tend to consult him/her before sharing the content, but they do not tend to pay enough attention to ensuring that the child's identity is kept confidential and sharing of personal information is avoided.

KEY WORDS

Sharenting. Digital parenting. Digital privacy.

1. Introduction

As individuals start using digital media in line with their needs regarding their parenting roles, this process is accompanied by sharing of a large amount of content about themselves and their children. By benefiting from the possibilities provided by digital media, parents obtain many opportunities, such as giving suggestions to others regarding their own parenting practices, avoiding feelings of loneliness, having access to recommendations on daily parenting practices and evaluating different perspectives on parenting roles.¹ Therefore, it can be suggested that digital media have been integrated into parenting practices and provide many functions to mothers and fathers. On the other hand, posts shared by individuals on digital media about their parenting roles also make it possible to reveal a large amount of personal data about their children. In this regard, although digital technologies provide new opportunities in many areas of a parent's daily life, they also pose potential risks resulting from sharing the personal information of the child.² Parents are primarily responsible for ensuring the well-being of their children. This also imposes on parents the duty of protecting personal information about the child on digital media.³ However, the way in which parents often do not pay enough attention to the contents of their posts about their children or do not take the necessary protective measures, causes violations of their children's privacy on digital media, even if this is unintentional. For this reason, determining the priorities attached by the parents when they share content about their children on their social media accounts, and what kind of measures they take in sharing this content to protect the digital privacy of their children, is considered important.

2. Sharenting

The concept of 'sharenting' corresponds to the combination of the words 'share' and 'parenting'; and refers to parents' using social media for their motherhood and fatherhood practices, sharing content about their children, such as news, photographs and videos, and presenting themselves to other users as a parent.⁴ In those posts, parents share both many activities they spend with their children, and also their emotions about their children on social media.⁵ Parents have various motivations to share posts about their motherhood/fatherhood practices or their children by means of social media. For instance, they connect to their families, friends or other parents through social media, reinforce and expand these relationships, thereby having a strong social capital.⁶

¹ See: KEITH, B. E., STEINBERG, S.: Parental Sharing on the Internet: Child Privacy in the Age of Social Media and the Pediatrician's Role. In *JAMA Pediatrics*, 2017, Vol. 171, No. 5, p. 413-414. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2XozRQV>>.

² YAMAN, F., DÖNMEZ, O., AKBULUT, Y., KABAKÇI-YURDAKUL, I., ÇOKLAR, A. N., GÜYER, T.: Exploration of Parents' Digital Parenting Efficacy through Several Demographic Variables. In *Education and Science*, 2019, Vol. 44, No. 199, p. 149. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3ehPn6Y>>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See: BLUM-ROSS, A., LIVINGSTONE, S.: „Sharenting“ Parent Blogging, and the Boundaries of the Digital Self. In *Popular Communication*, 2017, Vol. 15, No. 2, p.110-125. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3b2QoOe>; FOX, A. K., HOY, M. G.: Smart Devices, Smart Decisions? Implications of Parents' Sharenting for Children's Online Privacy: An Investigation of Mothers. In *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, Vol. 38, No. 4, p. 414-432. [online]. [2020-04-13]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2wyoEC6>>.

⁵ MARASLI, M., SUHENDAN, E., YILMAZTURK, N. H., COK, F.: Parents' Shares on Networking Sites About their Children: Sharenting. In *Anthropologist*, 2016, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 399. [online]. [2020-06-15]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2CaAbdp>>.

⁶ See also: JANG, J., DWORKIN, J.: Does Social Network Site Use Matter for Mothers?: Implications for Bonding and Bridging Capital. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2014, Vol. 35, p. 489-495. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3csAs8e>>; YOUNG, K.: Social Ties, Social Networks and the Facebook Experience. In *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, 2011, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 20-34. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/34Kb5Mv>>.

It can also be suggested that they interpret their posts on social media about their children as *better parenting*, they have the experience of showing their attention and support towards their children also in digital media,⁷ which allows them to construct a parental identity of themselves.⁸ On the other hand, it is also observed that there are positive aspects to individuals' sharing posts about their parenting practices and children on social media accounts, such as getting social and psychological support through 'likes' and comments to these posts, receiving information from *more experienced* parents who go through similar situations, and getting rid of the feeling of loneliness.⁹ From this point of view, it can be suggested that parents of today make use of various social media accounts, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram with various motivations, namely, to share content about their children, follow the posts of other parents, have an exchange of ideas on daily parenting practices, have an access to an environment of solidarity with regard to various social and psychological problems they encounter, and share information and developments about their children.¹⁰

Possibilities provided by digital media environment to mothers and fathers motivate parents to prefer their social media accounts more and more every day to share content about their children. In this context, Brosch¹¹ even argues that the contents parents update about their children on their accounts through shared photos and videos have "*almost become a social norm*". Similarly, Kumar and Shoenebeck emphasize the fact that today Facebook has become

⁷ See: INAN-KAYA, G., KAYA, U.: Bir Ebeveyn Pratiği Olarak 'Sharenting'. In AKFIRAT, O. N., STAUB, D. F., YAVAŞ, G. (eds.): *Current Debates in Education*. London, İstanbul : IJOPEC Publication, 2018, Vol. 5, p. 480-549. [online]. [2020-04-22]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3eLg58a>>.

⁸ See: BLUM-ROSS, A., LIVINGSTONE, S.: „Sharenting“ Parent Blogging, and the Boundaries of the Digital Self. In *Popular Communication*, 2017, Vol. 15, No. 2, p.110-125. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3b2Qo0e>>.

⁹ See: KEITH, B.E., STEINBERG, S.: Parental Sharing on the Internet: Child Privacy in the Age of Social Media and the Pediatrician's Role. In *JAMA Pediatrics*, 2017, Vol. 171, No. 5, p. 413-414. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2XozRQV>>.

¹⁰ See also: AMMARI, M., MORRIS, M., SCHOENEBECK, S.: Accessing Social Support and Overcoming Judgement on Social Media among Parents of Children with Special Needs, In *Proceedings of AAAI International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, 2014, p. 22-31. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3euTEUG>>; BARTHOLOMEW, M. K., SCHOPPE-SULLIVAN, S. J., GLASSMAN, M., DUSCH, C. M. K., SULLIVAN, J. M.: New Parents' Facebook Use at the Transition to Parenthood. In *Family Relations*, 2012, Vol. 61, No. 3, p. 455-469. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2XxXg2f>>; DRENTEA, P., MOREN-CROSS, J.: Social Capital and Social Support on the Web: The Case of Internet Mother Site. In *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 2005, Vol. 27, No. 7, p. 920-943. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2XJGkGg>>; DWORKIN, J., CONNELL, J., DOTY, J.: A Literature Review of Parents' Online Behavior. In *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 2013, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 1-12. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2xGGjYO>>; GIBSON, L., HANSON, V.: Digital Motherhood: How Does Technology Help New Mothers?. In MACKAY, W. E., BREWSTER, S. (eds.): *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. New York : Association for Computing Machinery, 2010, p. 313-322. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2RLV5EF>>; LUPTON, D.: The Use and Value of Digital Media for Information about Pregnancy and Early Motherhood: A Focus Group Study. In *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 2016, Vol. 16, p. 171-81. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2RMX3Vh>>; LUPTON, D., PEDERSEN, S.: An Australian Survey of Women's Use of Pregnancy and Parenting Apps. In *Women and Birth*, 2016, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 368-375. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3epOgCt>>; MADGE, C., O'CONNOR, H.: Parenting Gone Wired: Empowerment of New Mothers on the Internet. In *Social & Cultural Geography*, 2006, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 199-220. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3cvhGxh>>; MORRIS, M.: Social Networking Site Use by Mothers of Young Children. In FUSSEL, S., LUTTERS, W. (eds.): *Proceedings of the 17th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing*. New York : Association for Computing Machinery, 2014, p.1272-1282. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3ahPzPl>>; WALKER, S., DWORKIN, J., CONNELL, J.: Variation in Parent Use of Information and Communication Technology: Does Quality Matter?. In *Family & Consumer Sciences Research* Vol. 40, p. 106-119. [online]. [2020-04-17]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/34KvDo7>>.

¹¹ See: BROSH, A.: When the Child is Born into the Internet: Sharenting as a Growing Trend Among Parents on Facebook. In *The New Educational Review*, 2016, Vol. 43, No. 1, p. 225-235. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3b6hxji>>.

a “modern day baby book”, due to the contents parents share about their children on Facebook.¹² It is even observed that most parents start sharenting posts through the photos of their children, who are not born yet.¹³ Hence, it can be suggested that today, among parents who have children over the age of 4, 56 % of mothers, 34 % of fathers share posts about their children on their social media accounts within the framework of the parenting role.¹⁴ Sharenting not only involves mothers and fathers who are primary parents, but other family members, such as grandmothers and grandfathers, close friends also assume the role of parenting.¹⁵ In this regard, it is of paramount importance for parents who are active social media users to have an awareness of the potential risks their posts pose on their children as they make use of the possibilities provided by social media to them by sharing various content about their children.

3. Violation of Child’s Digital Privacy and Possible Risks

The concept of privacy, in the broadest sense of the word, can be defined „as the right to be left alone, to be able to keep one’s personal information out of the public domain, to be protected from control by others, to decide what personal information to share with others, to know what personal information is being collected by others, and to access one’s personal data held by others.“¹⁶ Based on this definition, it would not be wrong to suggest that social media posts of parents have the potential to violate their children’s privacy, and therefore bring along various risks with regard to protection of child’s digital identity as digital identities of children are constructed by their parents before children become social media users.¹⁷ A recent study shows that today 80 % of children have an image of themselves shared on digital media by their parents before they reach the age of two.¹⁸ The fact that a child’s personal information reaches digital media in a period when they cannot give their personal content, even if this is done through the posts of their parents, eliminates the child’s freedom to share information about themselves with persons they prefer and causes the private information, which the child may prefer keeping confidential, to be circulated without their consent. It becomes difficult for children, who already have a digital footprint through the posts shared by the parents, to have a say in the construction of their digital identities in the ensuing years.¹⁹

¹² See: KUMAR, P., SCHOENEBECK, S.: The Modern Day Baby Book: Enacting Good Mothering and Stewarding Privacy on Facebook. In *Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW’15) ACM*, 2015. [online]. [11-04-2020]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2V0cg7t>>.

¹³ QUVREIN, G., VERSWIJVEL, K.: Sharenting: Public Adoration or Public Humiliation?: A Focus Group Study on Adolescents’ Experiences with Sharenting against the Background of their own Impression Management. In *Children and Youth Sciences Review*, 2019, Vol. 99, p. 320. [online]. [2020-06-15]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3hwZSFi>>.

¹⁴ DAVIS, M., CLARK, S. J., SINGER, D. C., HALE, K., MATOS-MORENO, A., KAUFMANN, A. D.: Parents on Social Media: Likes and Dislikes of Sharenting. In *Mott Children’s Hospital National Poll on Children’s Health*, 2015, Vol. 23, No. 2, p.1-2. [online]. [2020-06-15]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2V2rVD1>>.

¹⁵ FOX, A. K., HOY, M. G.: Smart Devices, Smart Decisions? Implications of Parents’ Sharenting for Children’s Online Privacy: An Investigation of Mothers. In *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 2019, Vol. 38, No. 4, p. 414. [online]. [2020-04-13]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2wyoEC6>>.

¹⁶ See also: LIVINGSTONE, S.: Children’s Privacy Online: Experimenting with Boundaries within and Beyond the Family. In KRAUT, R., BRYNIN, M., KIESLER, S. (eds.): *Computers, Phones and the Internet: Domesticating Information Technology. Human Technology Interaction Series*. Oxford University Press : New York, 2006, p.145-167. [online]. [2020-04-16]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3ayx36y>>.

¹⁷ See: BROSH, A.: When the Child is Born into the Internet: Sharenting as a Growing Trend Among Parents on Facebook. In *The New Educational Review*, 2016, Vol. 43, No. 1, p. 225-235. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3b6hxji>>.

¹⁸ See: BESSANT, C.: *Too Much Information? More than 80 % of Children Have an Online Presence by the Age of Two*. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2Rwh5U2>>.

¹⁹ INAN-KAYA, G., KAYA, U.: Bir Ebeveyn Pratiği Olarak ‘Sharenting’. In AKFIRAT, O. N., STAUB, D. F., YAVAŞ, G. (eds.): *Current Debates in Education*. London, İstanbul : IJOPEC Publication, 2018, Vol. 5, p. 481. [online]. [2020-04-22]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3eLg58a>>.

As mentioned above, due to its functions, such as keeping people in constant connection and providing instant access to information, social media provide the possibility to get social and psychological support by accessing information and recommendations when they have a problem that they cannot handle, or when they find themselves in a situation of uncertainty. However, it can be suggested that this encourages individuals to stay connected to digital media for their parenting roles. Parents' sharing of information and recommendations about their children on digital media is accompanied by sharing private content about their children, and the increase of personal content shared about the children also increases the vulnerability of the child.²⁰ Within this framework, it becomes necessary to consider who can have access to the contents shared about the child. The necessity arises from the fact that being able to know the persons with whom the parents share the information about the child becomes gradually more difficult due to the increase in the intensity and frequency of shared information, and because the boundaries between public and private space become more and more blurred.²¹

In addition to this, yet another subject that must be considered is to what extent the person sharing the information transfers it to a third user, or to what extent the third user will have access to the content in question through the account of the sharing person. The reason behind this consideration is the fact that the users' friends, who have access to the content these users share about themselves and their children, can also share these contents with their other friends on their own accounts²² and the understanding about the privacy level of the shared content may be interpreted differently according to the context.²³ In this regard, it can be suggested that a case of privacy breach of under the name of „Instagram role playing“ started involving also children. According to this, photographs of children shared by parents on their Instagram accounts are stolen, a new digital history is written for children in these photographs and fake parents present the photographs of these children as if they are their own children.²⁴ Considered within this scope, it can be suggested that not being able to know who has access to the posts shared by parents with good intentions may make it impossible to estimate the diffusion of personal contents about the child, such as photograph or video, and cause such contents to be used for purposes like cyber-harassment or paedophilia.

Parents share important moments, parenting experiences with their social circle through social media sharing sites, particularly Facebook, Instagram and blogs, in which one can keep digital diaries and also participate in discussions about the situations they confront in parenting process and share their opinions on such platforms. Considered from this perspective, it can be suggested that the posts shared by parents with regard to their parenting practices pose various risks by possibly violating the privacy of their children's digital identity. Those risks include:²⁵ (1) posts shared by parents about their children make it possible for foreign persons, who are not

²⁰ See: FOX, A. K., HOY, M. G.: Smart Devices, Smart Decisions? Implications of Parents' Sharenting for Children's Online Privacy: An Investigation of Mothers. In *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 2019, Vol. 38, No. 4, p. 414-432. [online]. [2020-04-13]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2wyoEC6>>.

²¹ See: LANKTON, N. K., MCKNIGHT, H. D., TRIPP, J. F.: Facebook Privacy Management Strategies: A Cluster Analysis of User Privacy Behaviours. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 76, p. 149-163. [online]. [2020-04-16]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/34G9RC4>>.

²² See: FOX, A. K., HOY, M. G.: Smart Devices, Smart Decisions? Implications of Parents' Sharenting for Children's Online Privacy: An Investigation of Mothers. In *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 2019, Vol. 38, No. 4, p. 414-432. [online]. [2020-04-13]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2wyoEC6>>.

²³ See: NISSENBAUM, H.: A Contextual Approach to Privacy Online. In *Daedalus*, 2011, Vol. 140, No. 4, p. 32-48. [online]. [2020-04-16]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3alezGN>>.

²⁴ See also: GROSSMAN, W.: 'Online Baby-Role-Playing': Between Casual Fantasy and Real-Life Obsession. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/76296/>>; MILLER, B.: *The Creepiest New Corner of Instagram: Role-Playing with Baby Photos*. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3ehsZdR>>.

²⁵ MINKUS, T., LIU, K., ROSS, K.W.: Children Seen But Not Heard: When Parents Compromise Children's Online Privacy. In GANGEMI, A., LEONARDI, S.: *Proceedings of the 24th International Conference on World Wide Web*. Italy: International World Wide Web Conferences Steering Committee, 2015, p. 777. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2VpKwbc>>.

directly related to the parents or the child, to have access to the personal information about the child, (2) although social media accounts allow users to take various security measures about their posts, it is not one hundred per cent possible to know who can see the contents shared about the child, (3) shared contents allow creating a profile about the child and this profile can be used by various brands or advertisers for marketing purposes, (4) as child's likings and identity information are transferred to online media, parents create a digital footprint for the children, which is voluntarily presented to the viewing of other observers.

4. Protecting the Digital Privacy of the Child

It is of significant importance for parents to pay attention to certain criteria in order not to violate the digital privacy of the child, especially when they share content about children who cannot look out for their own well-being. In this context, the fact that no content, which does not need to be disclosed to the public, should be shared on social media, can be accepted as the first and basic criteria.²⁶ Considering the fact that social networks are public spheres, all contents shared by parents about the child will also be publicly visible and they can be recorded by other users and used for different purposes afterwards. On the other hand, although parents do not share contents related to their children with the intention of circulating them publicly, detailed information is transferred to the media in question (birthday, school of the child, etc.) and as the shared content increases, it becomes impossible to hide or delete this information. In this regard, certain measures that can be taken when contents related to the children are shared in media can be suggested. Regarding this subject, Minkus, Liu and Ross²⁷ emphasize the following recommendations, which may allow parents to protect the digital privacy of their children, while using social networks actively at the same time: position before sharing content about the child and evaluating the potential risks that might be caused by this post, (4) not sharing contents which contain personal information about the child, (5) encrypting the contents shared on social networks by means of applications such as Cryptagram,²⁸ thereby being able to share content related to the child with only preferred users.

On the other hand, it is observed that other studies conducted on parents with children of older ages²⁹ suggest that parents can make use of the following recommendations, which will allow them to protect the privacy of their children, while ensuring that they participate in digital media as independent users at the same time:

- having information about the security of the website, on which contents are shared,
- using applications such as Google Alert for receiving a warning message whenever the child's name is searched on the Internet,
- sharing contents by not revealing the identity of the child as far as possible,

²⁶ See: ORTERO, P.: Sharenting... Should Children's Lives Be Disclosed on Social Media. In *Archivos Argentinos de Pediatría*, 2017, Vol. 115, No. 5, p. 412-414. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2ya5N0y>>.

²⁷ MINKUS, T., LIU, K., ROSS, K.W.: Children Seen But Not Heard: When Parents Compromise Children's Online Privacy. In GANGEMI, A., LEONARDI, S.: *Proceedings of the 24th International Conference on World Wide Web*. Italy: International World Wide Web Conferences Steering Committee, 2015, p. 783. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2VpKwbc>>.

²⁸ For more information see: TIERNEY, M., SPIRO, I., BREGLER, C., SUBRAMANIAN, L.: Cryptagram: Photo Privacy for Online Social Media. In MUTHUKRISHNAN, M., EL ABBADI, E. (eds.): *Proceedings of the First ACM Conference on Online Social Networks*. Boston: Association for Computing Machinery, 2013, p. 75-88. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3a4KfQg>>.

²⁹ See: MOSER, C., CHEN, T., SCHOENEBECK, S. Y.: Parents' and Children's Preferences about Parents Sharing about Children on Social Media, In *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 2017, p. 5221-5225. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2XukTZJ>>; KEITH, B. E., STEINBERG, S.: Parental Sharing on the Internet: Child Privacy in the Age of Social Media and the Pediatrician's Role. In *JAMA Pediatrics*, 2017, Vol. 171, No. 5, p. 413-414. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2XozRQV>>.

- avoiding referring to the personal information and location of the child in shared content,
- giving children of older ages the right to reject their parents' sharing content about them,
- making sure that children are dressed in all photos,
- deciding to share a content about the child after considering the child's reaction to this post when they grow older,
- taking the preferences of the child into account by means of software that especially remind getting the approval of children of older ages and allow checking whether the child is tagged in the post.

Parents must not only share their own posts in a way that the privacy of their children is protected, but also act as guides for the contents shared by the children. Because the measures taken by parents regarding the use of digital media also shape the child's experience of digital presence in digital media. While digital media pose various threats for individuals of all ages, it is observed that children are the most vulnerable group among others since their digital literacy level is low.³⁰ Within this framework, it can be suggested that parents assume the most important role to ensure that children take place in digital media safely³¹ and all the monitoring acts, measures and prohibitions adopted by parents shape the child's experience in digital media³². In this regard, parents must be guides not only in terms of regulating child's use of digital media, but also to help the child understand the importance of protecting oneself by taking the right decisions when digital media are used.³³

5. Aim and Methodology

The research aims to determine the priorities attached by the parents when they share contents about children on their social media accounts and what kind of measures they take in these shared contents to protect the digital privacy of their children. Within this framework, the research questions of the study are as follows:

RQ1: Which content do parents primarily prefer when they share posts about their children on their personal social media accounts?

RQ2: Which preferences of their children do parents take into account when they share posts about their children on their personal social media accounts?

³⁰ See: AKBULUT, Y., ŞAHİN, Y. L., ERIŞTİ, B.: Cyberbullying Victimization among Turkish Online Social Utility Members. In *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 2010, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 192-201. [online]. [2020-04-12]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2yeqecL>>; KAŞIKÇI, D. N., ÇAĞILTAY, K., KARAKUŞ, T., KURŞUN, E., OGAN, C.: Türkiye ve Avrupa'daki Çocukların İnternet Alışkanlıkları ve Güvenli İnternet Kullanımı. In *Eğitim ve Bilim*, 2014, Vol. 39, p. 230-243. [online]. [2020-04-12]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2XBEiYN>>.

³¹ See also: LIVINGSTONE, S., HELSPER, E.: Balancing Opportunities and Risks in Teenagers' Use of the Internet: The Role of Online Skills and Internet Self-Efficacy, In *New Media & Society*, 2010, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 309-329. [online]. [13-04-2020]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2K4kbdw>>; ROSEN, L. R., CHEEVER, N. A., CARRIER, L. M.: The Impact of Parental Attachment Style, Limit Setting and Monitoring on Teen MySpace Behavior. In *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 2008, Vol. 29, No. 6, p. 459-471. [online]. [2020-04-13]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2yg5ph2>>.

³² See: ALVAREZ, M., TORRES, A., RODRIGUEZ, E., PADILLA, S., RODRIGO, M. J.: Attitudes and Parenting Dimensions in Parents' Regulation of Internet Use by Primary and Secondary School Children. In *Computers & Education*, 2013, Vol. 67, p. 69-73. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/34xb9iN>>; VALCKE, M., BONTE, S., DE WEVER, B., ROTS, I.: Internet Parenting Styles and the Impact on Internet Use of Primary School Children. In *Computers & Education*, 2010, Vol. 55, No. 2, p. 454-464. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3cgsIX6>>.

³³ See: LIVINGSTONE, S.: Children's Privacy Online: Experimenting with Boundaries within and Beyond the Family. In KRAUT, R., BRYNIN, M., KIESLER, S. (eds.): *Computers, Phones and the Internet: Domesticating Information Technology. Human Technology Interaction Series*. Oxford University Press : New York, 2006, p. 145-167. [online]. [2020-04-16]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3ayx36y>>.

RQ3: Which measures do parents primarily implement for the protection of their children's digital privacy when they share posts about their children on their personal social media accounts?

This study, which aims to present the awareness of parents about the protection of children's privacy in digital media, is a field study based on the descriptive method via questionnaire. Within this scope, the target population of the study was determined as parents who live in Turkey and use at least one social media account actively. Goal-oriented sampling, which is one of the non-random sampling methods, was used for the selection of individuals to be included in the sample group from the target population. Goal-oriented sampling allows determining and selecting the units that represent the characteristic for which information is required from the target universe³⁴ and conducting the research based on the units, from which in-depth information can be obtained through specific criteria and certain common characteristics. To avoid any error regarding the sample size, attention was paid to ensure that the participants selected from the determined population represent the population of Turkey. Accordingly, when the population of Turkey is taken into account,³⁵ the level of representation in the sample of 442 participants has a reliability degree of 95 % with a 4,66 % margin of error.

The questionnaire applied to the participants consists of five sections. In the first section of the questionnaire, questions intended for determining the demographic features of the participants were included, while ranking questions intended for determining the usage frequency of social media accounts of the users were included in the second section. In the next three sections of the questionnaire, the five-point likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, I have no idea, agree, strongly agree) was used. In these likert scale based three sections, statements for determining the priorities attached by parents when they share content about their children, statements regarding parents' tendency to take the preferences of their children into account in their social posts and statements for determining the digital privacy measures adopted by children were included respectively. In the process of determining the statements in the likert scale, various research findings addressing parent's awareness towards the digital privacy of children³⁶ were used and the questionnaire took its final form by revising recommendations for protecting the digital privacy of the child in accordance with the purposes of the study. This version of the questionnaire was first implemented on 20 participants and necessary revisions were made based on the findings obtained through 20 participants. Revisions made at this phase were in the form of adding explanations from example applications to the statements intended for determining the digital privacy measures adopted by parents as included in the fifth section of the questionnaire. The final version of the questionnaire with these additions

³⁴ YAZICIOĞLU, A., EROĞLU, C.: *SPSS Uygulamalı Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri*. Ankara : Detay Yayıncılık, 2014, p. 82.

³⁵ According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's (TUIK) data for the year 2018, the population of Turkey is approximately 83 million. [online]. [2020-04-22]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2W4wBJR>>.

³⁶ See: BELANGER, F., CROSSLER, R. E., HILLER, J. S., PARK, J. M., HSIAO, M.: Children Online Privacy: Issues with Parental Awareness and Control, In RAO, H. R., UPADHYAYA, S. (eds.): *Handbooks in Information Systems: Information Assurance Security and Privacy Services*. United Kingdom : Emerald Publishing, 2009, p. 311-333. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3c9V9pu>>; MINKUS, T., LIU, K., ROSS, K. W.: Children Seen But Not Heard: When Parents Compromise Children's Online Privacy. In GANGEMI, A., LEONARDI, S. (eds.): *Proceedings of the 24th International Conference on World Wide Web*. Italy : International World Wide Web Conferences Steering Committee Republic and Canton of Geneva Switzerland, 2015, p. 776-786. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2VpKwbc>>; MOSER, C., CHEN, T., SCHOENEBECK, S. Y.: Parents' and Children's Preferences about Parents Sharing about Children on Social Media. In *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 2017, p. 5221-5225. [online]. [11-04-2020]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2XukTJj>>; STEINBERG, S. B.: Sharenting: Children's Privacy in the Age of Social Media. In *Emory Law Journal*, 2016, Vol. 66, p. 839-884. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/3c9IDX0>>; KEITH, B. E., STEINBERG, S.: Parental Sharing on the Internet: Child Privacy in the Age of Social Media and the Pediatrician's Role. In *JAMA Pediatrics*, 2017, Vol. 171, No. 5, p. 413-414. [online]. [2020-04-11]. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2XozRQV>>.

was implemented on the participants. As far as the reliability degree of answers given by the participants to the questionnaire is concerned, it can be suggested that Cronbach's Alpha figure has a high level of reliability with 0,813. For the evaluation of the answers given to the questionnaire, the answers given to the implemented questionnaire were coded, data available for processing were transferred to the computer environment by using SPSS 22.0 package software. Descriptive analyses conducted for answering the research questions were also obtained by means of the same software.

6. Findings

In this study, which aims to measure parents' protection of their children's digital identity in their posts shared on social media, the participants were first asked questions to determine their demographic features. Accordingly, it was determined that 52% (230 persons) of the participants are women, 48% (212 persons) of the participants are men; 7,9% (35 persons) of the participants are between the ages of 25-30, 26,1% (115 persons) of the participants are between the ages of 31-35, 29,8% (132 persons) of the participants are between the ages of 36-40, 18,5 % (82 persons) of the participants are between the ages of 41-45, 19,3% (50 persons) of the participants are between the ages of 46-50, 4,9% (21 persons) of the participants are between the ages of 51-55, 1,5% (7 persons) of the participants are between the ages of 56-60. 24,9% (21 persons) of the participants are primary school graduates, 24,9% (21 persons) of the participants are high school graduates, 55,7% (246 persons) of the participants are university graduates, 10% (44 persons) of the participants have a graduate degree, 4,8% (21 persons) have a doctorate degree; 27,6% (122 persons) of the participants are single and 72,4% (320 persons) of the participants are married. As far as the number of children the parents have is concerned, it is observed that 54% (239 persons) of the participants have one child, 42% (186 persons) of the participants have two children, 4% (17 persons) of the participants have three children. Among the parents who have one child, 47,4% (131 persons) of them have a daughter, 52,6% (145 persons) have a son; among the parents who have more than one child, 24% (40 persons) of them have only sons, 28,9% (48 persons) of them have only daughters and 46,9% (78 persons) have both sons and daughters.

In addition to demographic features, the parents were also asked which social media accounts they use and about the frequency of using them. Accordingly, 94,5% (418 persons) of the participants are Facebook users, 88,9% (393 persons) of the participants are Twitter users and 96,1% of the participants are Instagram users. The table, which shows participants' frequency of using these social media accounts, is given below:

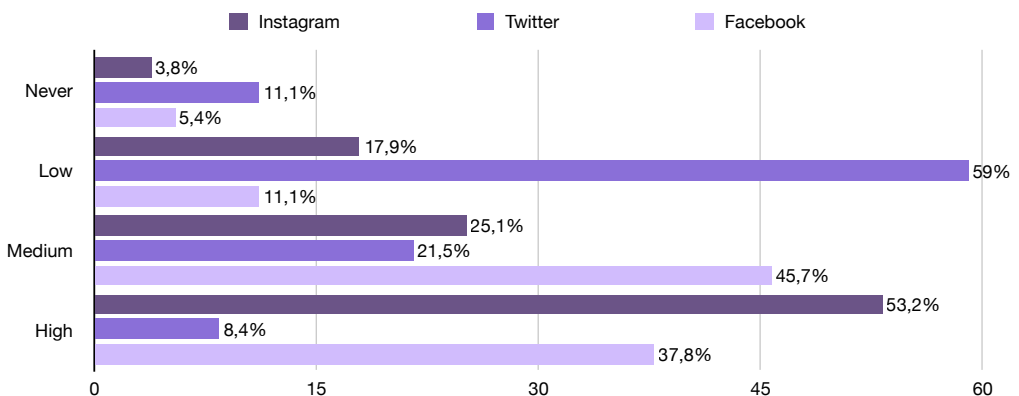


TABLE 1: Parents' frequency of using their personal social media accounts

Source: own processing

According to the table, among the users, who have a Facebook account, 37,8% (167 persons) use Facebook intensively, 45,7% use Facebook at a moderate level, 11,1% (49 persons) use Facebook occasionally; among the users who have a Twitter account, 8,4% (37 persons) use Twitter intensively, 21,5% (95 persons) use Twitter at a moderate level, 59% use Twitter occasionally; among users who have an Instagram account, 53,2% (235 persons) use it intensively, 25,11% (111 persons) use Instagram at a moderate level, and 17,9% use Instagram occasionally.

After the parents were asked questions for determining their frequency of using social media accounts, the participants were asked to mark the statements on the Likert scale according to their degree of agreement. Within this scope, statements for determining the priorities attached by parents when they share content about their children, statements regarding parents' tendency to take the preferences of their children into account in their social posts, and statements for determining the digital privacy measures adopted by children were presented.

The table, which shows the parents' agreement degree averages to the given statements for determining their preferences regarding the posts shared about their children, is given below:

| Parents' preferences about sharing content related to their children | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|------|----------------|-----|
| When I share posts about my child, I generally prefer special occasions such as their birthday, school graduation, etc. | 3,95 | 1,002 | 442 |
| I prefer sharing my child's infancy photos more. | 3,37 | 1,320 | 442 |
| I generally prefer sharing photos taken together as a family. | 3,93 | 1,123 | 442 |
| I prefer sharing posts which show the growth process of my child more. | 3,79 | 1,248 | 442 |
| I share the photographs and videos of my child in a way that they are only seen by my family members and close friends. | 4,10 | 1,043 | 442 |
| I prefer photographs and videos of my child which I consider entertaining or funny. | 3,87 | 1,221 | 442 |

TABLE 2: Parents' preferences about sharing content related to their children

Source: own processing

According to the table, when the parents' preferences about sharing content related to their children are evaluated, it is observed that participants generally choose special occasions, such as birthday, school graduation of their children (mean: 3,95; SD: 1,002), they prefer sharing the infancy photos of their children more (mean: 3,37; SD: 1,320), they generally share photos taken together as a family (mean: 3,93; SD: 1,123), they mostly share the contents that show the growth process of their children (mean: 3,79; SD: 1,248), they mostly share the photos and videos of their children in a way that they are seen by their family members and close friends (mean: 4,10; SD: 1,043) and they mostly prefer sharing photos and videos of their children, which they consider entertaining or funny (mean: 3,87; SD: 1,221).

The table, which shows the parents' agreement level averages of statements intended for determining parents' tendency to take the preferences of their children into account in their social media posts, is as follows:

| Parents' tendency to take the preferences of their children in their social media posts | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|--|------|----------------|-----|
| If my child is at an older age, I get my child's opinion when I share their photographs. | 3,81 | 1,085 | 442 |
| I avoid sharing photographs and videos which my child would not be happy to see. | 3,97 | 1,056 | 442 |
| If my child is at an older age, I take care of sharing photographs and videos that my child wants. | 3,92 | 1,084 | 442 |
| If my child is at an older age, I sometimes share the photographs that I like, although I think that my child will react negatively. | 2,69 | 1,082 | 442 |
| If my child is at an older age, I do not get my child's opinion when I share their photographs and videos. | 2,06 | 1,005 | 442 |

TABLE 3. *Parents' tendency to take the preferences of their children in their social media posts*

Source: own processing

As far as the parents' answers to statements regarding their tendency to take the preferences of their children in their social media posts are concerned, it can be suggested that if the participants' children are at an older age, they ask the opinion of their children when they share their photos (mean: 3,81; SD: 1,085), they avoid sharing photos or videos which they think their children will not like (mean: 3,97; SD: 1,056) and if their children are at an older age, they pay attention to sharing content in accordance with the preferences of their children (mean: 3,92; SD: 1,084). On the other hand, it is observed that the participants avoid sharing content about their children when they think that their children will react negatively to such posts (mean: 2,69; SD: 1,082) and they prefer asking for the opinions of their children when they share their photos or videos (mean: 2,06; SD: 1,005).

Finally, the table which shows the parents' agreement levels to statements intended for determining the measures adopted by parents to protect the digital privacy of their children is as follows:

| Measures adopted by parents to protect the digital privacy of their children | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|--|------|----------------|-----|
| I customized the security settings of the site on which I share content in a way that I can protect the privacy of my child. | 4,15 | ,919 | 442 |
| I share my posts by keeping my child's identity confidential. | 2,56 | 1,373 | 442 |
| I take care not to share my child's personal information. | 2,93 | 1,383 | 442 |
| If my child is at an older age, I tag them in my posts for allowing them to delete the contents that they do not like. | 4,13 | ,915 | 442 |
| I make sure that my child is dressed in the photos and videos that I share. | 4,46 | ,811 | 442 |
| Before I share a content about my child, I consider what my child would think about this content when they grow up. | 4,09 | 1,015 | 442 |
| If my child is at an older age, I share content by taking their preferences into account. | 4,06 | 1,019 | 442 |
| I use various applications to protect the digital privacy of my child in the posts that I share. | 3,95 | 1,039 | 442 |

TABLE 4. *Measures adopted by parents to protect the digital privacy of their children*

Source: own processing

According to the table, it is observed that the parents customize the security of the site on which they share posts (mean: 4,15; SD: ,919), tag their children in their posts for allowing them to delete photos that they do not like (mean: 4,13; SD: ,915), make sure that their children

are dressed in the contents that they share (mean: 4,46; SD: ,811), when they share content about their children, they consider what their child would think about the consent in question when they grow up (mean: 4,09; SD: 1,015), they take the preference of their children when sharing posts (mean: 4,06; SD: 1,019) and they use various additional applications to protect the digital privacy of their children (mean: 3,95; SD: 1,039). However, on the other hand, it can be suggested that parents do not adopt measures such as keeping the identity of the child confidential (mean: 2,56; SD: 1,373) and making sure that the child's personal information is not shared (mean: 2,93; SD: 1,383).

7. Conclusion

The contents shared by parents about their children on their personal social media accounts, how and with whom they share such contents is of paramount importance for protecting the privacy of the child in digital media. Based on this focus, the study aims to determine the priorities attached by the parents when they share contents about children on their social media accounts, and what kind of measures they take in these shared contents to protect the digital privacy of their children. When the social media useage frequency of parents included in the study is evaluated, it is observed that parents use Instagram primarily and more intensely for sharing content on social media. Instagram is followed by Facebook with a moderate level of use and Twitter with the least frequent use. As far as parents' preferences of sharing content about their children are concerned, it is observed that parents mainly choose special occasions, such as their children's birthday, school graduation, etc. when they share content about their children, they prefer sharing infancy photos of their children, they mostly share photos taken together as a family, they mostly share posts that show the growth process of their children, they generally share the photos and videos of their children in the way that these contents are seen by family members and close friends, and they mainly prefer sharing photos and videos of their children which they consider entertaining or funny.

On the other hand, it can be suggested that when parents share content about their children, they ask for the opinion of their children if they are at an older age, and if their child is younger, they avoid sharing content which they consider their child would not enjoy being shared by putting themselves in the child's position.

As far as the measures adopted by parents when they share content about their children on social media are concerned, it is observed that they make use of settings of the site, tag their children for allowing them to remove photos that they do not like from their profile pages, make sure that their children are dressed in the contents they share, and use various additional applications to ensure the safety of their contents. On the other hand, it can be suggested that parents do not keep the identity of their children confidential in their posts and are not careful enough about the measures such as not sharing their personal information. In other words, although parents take various measures to protect their children's privacy in digital media, they do not hide their children's identity completely in the contents they share. Evaluated within this framework, it would not be wrong to argue that, while parents take certain measures taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the digital media, there are various gaps in these measures. Therefore, it is of paramount importance for parents to extend these measures taken to protect the child's digital privacy completely. In this context, as Lökkke argued, the necessity to find a balance which will allow both attaching importance to privacy and developing useful digital tools and services must be re-emphasized.

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Establishment Of Procedures In The Creation Of Extended Multimedia News Reports

ABSTRACT

The authors deal with the issue of transformations and the establishment of news journalism genres in the online media environment, with a focus on extended multimedia news reports. They emphasise that the technical and technological platform of online media creates fertile ground for the modification of genres sourced from conventional media. According to them, the multi-platform essence of online media and the hybridisation trend in genre-based approaches are a suitable foundation for the formation of extended multi-platform news. They raise the question of whether it is possible at the end of the second decade of the new millennium to formulate a premise under which an extended multimedia news report has specific typological characteristics and established creative procedures. They reach a clear conclusion based on qualitative analysis completed on a selection of extended multimedia news reports from the portals sme.sk and pravda.sk. They state that it is appropriate to talk about a stable structure as well as established procedures in the creation of extended multimedia news reports.

KEY WORDS

Journalistic genres. News genres. Extended multimedia news report. Circular economy. News journalism processes. Recycling. Values. Criteria.

1. Introduction

The developmental phases of classical media and the journalistic genre types within them confirm a great degree of stability in the processes of depicting objective reality, and of course also in the choice of linguistic and stylistic means. While news journalism genres are known for the fact that their compositional structures, language and style are established in clear stereotypical schemes¹, it is impossible to deny their continuous developmental transformations. These are based on a number of factors, such as the type and typological characteristic of the media, relevance, and therefore a preference for certain themes from a newsroom or societal perspective, editorial changes within the editing process, the media's popularity in a specific developmental epoch of the media or the mental outlook in the socio-cultural environment. The mental outlook of society as a whole is very closely related to how journalists approach the representation of reality within the news, along with their editorial priorities and the degree of their professionalism.² The mental outlook of every group of people also speaks to the extent of their willingness to accept, for example, the tabloidisation of the news, the hybridisation of news genres, the publication of various hoaxes, conspiracies, manipulated news and the like.³

Given the broader context in which news journalism genres are formed, it is clear that the new era of journalistic work is influenced by the rise and establishment of online journalism.⁴ There is no denying the fact that online news did not appear out of nowhere and instead it built on the tradition of creating news genres in the classical media.⁵ Despite the fact that online journalism followed the procedures of older classical media, it found its own ways

¹ Stereotypical schemes include preference for established usages when constructing reports and when selecting linguistic and stylistic means. Within the construct of such stabilised creation of news genres, Mistrík speaks of a downward progression or downward perspective (see MISTRÍK, J.: *Štylistika*. Bratislava : Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1989, p. 469.). However, we note that the above perspectives are subject to development and to a large extent their selection is underpinned by the peculiarities of individual genre types as well as the creative abilities and intentions of individual journalists.

² Editorial priorities in this sense includes the outlook of the newsroom towards serious societal, political, economic and cultural matters, which are reflected in the selection of key events, and how and the manner in which they are processed. The professional prerequisites for a journalist include adequate higher education in a relevant academic program, knowledge and skills for writing in individual journalistic genres, and adherence to the generally valid principles of journalistic ethics (compare to HUDÍKOVÁ, Z.: *The convergence of media and journalism*. In *SGEM 2017: 4th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts: Science & Humanities Conference Proceedings. Volume I: Human Geography, Media and Communications, Information and Library Science, Demography and Women's Studies*. Sofia : STEF92 Technology, 2017, p. 133-140.; MISTRÍKOVÁ, Z., ŽITNÝ, M.: *Úloha médií v boji proti korupcii, etika v médiách, korupcia v médiách*. Bratislava : Róbert Vico, 2001, p. 7-24. [online]. [2020-07-05]. Available at: <https://www.transparency.sk/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/030807_uloha.pdf>.).

³ See PRAVDOVÁ, H.: *Mediálne a kultúrne rámce multiplatformovej žurnalistiky*. In PRAVDOVÁ, H., RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Koncepty a praktiky multiplatformovej žurnalistiky. Slovensko v sieťach digitálnych diaľnic*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2017, p. 52-64.

⁴ J. Višňovský differentiates between Internet journalism and online news journalism. According to him, Internet journalism conceptually included the publication of journalistic expressions and other materials in various forms in the Internet environment (websites, social media, RSS channels, emails, etc.). Online news journalism is specific in that it enables the presentation of news reports in a non-linear fashion and it is up to the recipients to decide if they will read them and when (VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Internetová žurnalistika*. In *Slovník vybraných pojmov z mediálnych štúdií. Klúčové termíny v súčasnej mediálnej komunikácii*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2016, p. 95.).

⁵ The term classical media covers periodicals, radio and television. Please note that this term is not rigidly defined in media studies and the authors typically alternate it with the term traditional media, which provides the desired level of contrast with so-called new media or media operating on the Internet, especially with respect to alternative media (see for example FIDLER, R.: *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media*. Thousand Oaks; London; New Delhi : Pine Forge Press, 1997.; MANOVICH, L.: *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge : MIT Press, 2001.; DEUZE, M.: *Media life*. Prague : Karolinum, 2015.; GÁLIK, S.: *Influence of Cyberspace on Changes in Contemporary Education*. In *Communication Today*, 2017, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 30-39. ISSN 1338-130X etc.).

of providing news interpretations of the depicted reality. Based on numerous indicators, online news journalism may be said to have many positive and comparative advantages compared to journalism in classical media. According to Bednář, these primarily include interactivity as a new form of communication with recipients by using information linked together via hypertext⁶, the free choice of information on offer and flexibility, with online inputs and overlapping formats.⁷ Undisputed advantages of journalism in the online environment are the creative opportunities that may be leveraged within the multi-platform essence of the communicated information. It is clear that multi-platform journalism⁸, thanks to its technical, technological and creative capacities, has elevated the Internet medium to the pedestal of the dominant medium during a period of more than two decades.⁹

Journalists modified common news genre templates taken from classical media. They adapted them to the new technical and technological possibilities of digital communication and the characteristics of the Internet environment. When creating news texts, they count on the ability to combine text, photographs, auditory or audiovisual statements. This leads them to certain schematic procedures, towards conciseness or, vice versa, towards writing exhaustive texts or towards making a conscious effort to make the texts clearer by using subtitles, infographics, etc. It is also important to apply a critical distance from the agenda that the journalist is working with.¹⁰ The creation of completely new genres can be observed in addition to the extant genres taken from the classical media and modified to the conditions

⁶ Hypertext (HTML) means hypertext markup language. The term „hyper“ refers to the extension of the original version of the text with additional information. The user „clicks“ on complementary, clarifying and similar texts, enriching his overall knowledge (CHATFIELD, T.: *Digitálny vek. 50 myšlienok, ktoré by ste mali poznať*. Bratislava : Slovart, 2013, p. 9). HTML offers quick orientation and navigation in a huge number of information packages located on Internet networks. It makes it possible to reciprocate information in textual, auditory or audiovisual form. „Hypertext Transfer Protocol (http) is a protocol for transferring HTML documents between servers and Web services clients. It enables worldwide interconnection of hypertext documents and serves as a primary communication tool in the WWW environment.“ (VRABEC, N.: *Komunikácia v ére internetu*. In MAGÁL, S., MATÚŠ, J., PETRANOVÁ, D. (eds.): *Masmediálne štúdiá v kocke*. Trnava : Fakulta masmediálnej komunikácie UCM, 2013, p. 500.)

⁷ BEDNÁŘ, V.: *Internetová publicistika*. Prague : Grada, 2011, p. 29.

⁸ Its creative basis is the connection of various components realised through digital technologies, such as text, photographs, drawings, graphics, animations, auditory or audiovisual elements (compare to HARDCUP, T.: *Oxford Dictionary of Journalism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014.; GERSHBERG, Z.: *Multiplatform Journalism*. In ALLEN, M. (ed.): *The Sage Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications, 2017, p. 1037-1040.; VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J., RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: *Online Journalism: Current Trends and Challenges*. In PEŇA ACUÑA, B. (ed.): *The Evolution of Media Communication*. Rijeka : InTech, 2017, s. 3-22.; RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: *Multiplatformové novinárstvo v kontexte mediálnej kultúry*. In PRAVDOVÁ, H., RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Koncepty a praktiky multiplatformovej žurnalistiky. Slovensko v sieťach digitálnych diaľnic*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2017, p. 107-182.; VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Paralely digitálneho novinárstva a jeho rozmach v kontexte rozvoja informačných a komunikačných technológií v spoločnosti*. In PRAVDOVÁ, H., RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Koncepty a praktiky multiplatformovej žurnalistiky. Slovensko v sieťach digitálnych diaľnic*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2017, p. 183-272.; GARCÍA, F. S., BRAVO, O. A., MARTIATU, R. Y.: *The Cyberjournalism that we Make and the One that we Want – Cyberjournalistic Praxis: The Case of Mass Media in Matanzas, Cuba*. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 73-84.; ŠVECOVÁ, M.: *Webová žurnalistika*. Trnava : FMK UCM, (CD), 2017. etc.).

⁹ Two factors function as evidence of the dominance of multi-platform journalism on the media market. The first is traffic to sites and ad packages that surf the pages of successful online media or web magazines (compare to *Výdavky do internetovej reklamy 2019*. [online]. [2020-09-08.] Available at: <<https://www.iabslovakia.sk/vydavky-do-reklamy/vydavky-internetovej-reklamy-2019-sk/>>. The second factor points to the adaptation of classical media to the means of expression in a multi-platform format. As an example, television news now includes references to the home television station's website, etc. According to Carr, this trend can be seen in periodicals as well. It is much more structured, and image material prevails at the expense of text, and effective visualisation on pages is a priority (CARR, N.: *The Shallows. What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. New York : W.W. Norton, 2010, p. 232-234.).

¹⁰ Compare to: SILVERBLATT, A.: *Media Literacy and Critical Thinking*. In *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy*, 2018, Vol. 3, No.2, p. 71, ISSN 2500-106X.

of the new technical-technological platform. These are mainly blogs on the web or so-called hybrid genres that are not fixed with respect to their genre templates because they apply different genre elements and techniques. After more than two decades of online news, its genre fixation remains an open question. Journalistic content in the online environment is arranged in hypertext and communication is established through a non-linear combination of symbols and images.¹¹ This study primarily focuses on the modification of classical extended news and we monitor its degree of stability in terms of preferred journalistic practices in its creation. We ask the question of whether it is possible at the end of the second decade of the new millennium to formulate a premise under which an extended multimedia news report has specific typological characteristics and established creative procedures.

2. Establishment of compositional procedures and content structures in multi-platform news genres

2.1 Universal applicability of news values, criteria and procedures

The news journalism genre may be identified through a certain model structure of the journalism department. This means that it follows a template procedure on the basis of which the author builds the news report. Of course, the extent to which the resulting text, audio or video message deviates from the basic scheme depends on the situation, the medium and the personality of the creator. However, it is clear in the case of news creation that genre features remain decisive, i.e. they determine the choice of title, composition (including linguistic and stylistic means), the method of verbal interpretation and the manner by which images are captured and edited in the case of electronic media.¹²

A specific portion of journalism as a whole may be identified as news based on certain genre characteristics. Clearly, in both the environment of professional journalists and among the general public, news has a clear function: to inform. This is the reason why its defining frameworks are established in the theory of genres. For example, one can agree with Osvaldová and Halada, who offer a generalised definition of news based on the starting points of several authors. They state that it is the oldest journalistic field and strictly characterise it as factual, accurate, complete, timely and emotionally neutral information about an event or phenomenon.¹³ Similarly, Harcup in his glossary of basic journalistic terms assigns the role of providing information about current events to the news. Selection is based on various criteria, such as interest, relevance, topicality, unusualness, etc. The selection and prioritisation of acceptable information is conditioned in each newsroom upon preferred reporting values.¹⁴ In our opinion, they have two positions: universal and pragmatic.

In the case of universal values within news, the views of researchers overlap, although the terminology and their numbers tend to be different. A. Predmerská states that there is a whole set of defined news values based on an analysis of various author's starting points.

¹¹ Compare to: GÁLIK, S. Philosophical Reflection of the Influence of Digital Media on Current Education. In *Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)*, 2020, Vol. 60, No.1, p. 102, ISSN 1994-4160.

¹² See TUŠER, A.: *Ako sa robia noviny*. Bratislava : EUROKÓDEX, 2010.; TUŠER, A. a kol.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Bratislava : PEVŠ, 2010.; VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Aktuálne otázky teórie a praxe žurnalistiky v ére internetu*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2015.; RUß-MOHL, S., BAKIČOVÁ, H.: *Žurnalistika*. Prague : Grada publishing, 2005.; PRAVDOVÁ, H., KOLTAIOVÁ, A.: *Problematika periodickej tlače*. Trnava : FMK UCM Trnava, 2007.; RUSNÁK, J.: *Textúry elektronických médií: interpretácia a vývoj*. Prešov : Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity, 2010. And others.

¹³ OSVALDOVÁ, B., HALADA, J. a kol.: *Praktická encyklopédie žurnalistiky a marketingové komunikace*. Prague : Nakladatelství Libri, 2007, p. 239.

¹⁴ HARCUP, T.: *Oxford Dictionary of Journalism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 197-198.

The differences are mainly in their naming as different terminology is used to refer to similar phenomena. Among the most important and most frequently recurring news values are novelty, proximity, continuity, personalisation, surprise, entertainment, relationship with elite nations, and relationship with elite people.¹⁵ From our own experience and observations¹⁶ we know that pragmatic news values, meaning those which are preferred in practice, are created in editorial practice based on the typological characteristics of the media themselves, value and ideological aspects, and editorial tasks in the selection of topics, priority information and their processing.

The creation of news genres requires more than a universal or pragmatic relationship towards news values from journalists; it also requires knowledge of basic news attributes. News would be unable to meet its basic genre criteria without them. A. Tušer summarises, clarifies and justifies them. He includes timeliness and currency, professionalism, objectivity, readiness, conciseness, and comprehensibility.¹⁷ We believe that the six basic news attributes defined by Tušer determine exactly what a news report should contain to bring the expected benefits to recipients. Within the context of the very core art of compiling a news report, we emphasise the criteria of conciseness and comprehensibility, which are very closely related. All unnecessary information, excursions and diversions should be purged in an ideal news report. These can confuse the recipient and unnecessarily flood their mind with irrelevant information. Redundancy in terms speaks more about the author's lack of professionalism and a high degree of stylistic colouring. An exception is redundancy in radio or television news. In these formats, supporting information must be repeated to ensure better retention among the recipients. Conciseness is related to a preference for efficient, streamlined sentence structure and the use of material and accurate linguistic means. News values and criteria preordain the selection of a procedure for constructing a news text. The most widely used is that which follows the inverse pyramid principle, i.e. the logical approach¹⁸. In practical terms, this involves configuring the information in a sequential manner, from the most important to less important. The construction of a news report is subject to the rules determining the sequence for working with facts and in drafting the macro composition of the text. The headline is the first to provide vital information about what happened. The beginning of the body of the text either repeats this information or expands upon it using important facts. However, it must be noted that the structure of a logical news story is based on a template in most classic, serious media. A. Tušer offers her standardised model. It confirms the rule of an ironclad sequence and is intended to serve as inspiration to potential journalists. It recommends putting a new event at the very beginning of the report, then devoting two to three paragraphs to further details on the current situation, followed by a section potentially covering behind-the-scenes details, and finally additional information on new developments, background or possible future developments. In such a composition,

¹⁵ PREDMERSKÁ KAČINCOVÁ, A.: *Spravodajstvo v periodickej tlači: žurnalistické žánre*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2017, p. 44.

¹⁶ We have formulated a premise regarding the application of pragmatic news values based on our own practical experience in newsrooms and the criteria applied when selecting themes suitable for publication.

¹⁷ TUŠER, A.: *Ako sa robia noviny*. Bratislava : EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 129-130. Objectiveness is considered a basic journalistic prerequisite and is closely associated with professionalism. It speaks of the manner in which information is verified and to impartial and non-partisan reporting. However, the degree of the subject's involvement is questionable and therefore Vojtek is relatively sceptical with respect to this criterion, stating that a journalist's story is simply „a subjective reflection of objective reality“: (VOJTEK, J.: *Žánre anglicky písaného novinárstva: S ukázkami*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2012, p. 7.).

¹⁸ Within professional literature, three basic approaches to the compilation of news reports are found: chronological, logical and emphatic or dynamic (compare to TUŠER, A.: *Ako sa robia noviny*. Bratislava : EUROKÓDEX, 2010.; PREDMERSKÁ KAČINCOVÁ, A.: *Spravodajstvo v periodickej tlači: žurnalistické žánre*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2017.; RUP-MOHL, S., BAKIČOVÁ, H.: *Žurnalistika: Komplexní průvodce praktickou žurnalistikou*. Prague : Grada Publishing, 2005.; HUDÍKOVÁ, Z.: Emotions a key element of news reporting. In *Current issues of science and research in the global world: proceedings of the international conference*. Leiden : CRC Press, 2014, p. 161-169.; PRAVDOVÁ, H., KOLTALIOVÁ, A.: *Problematika periodickej tlače*. Trnava : FMK UCM Trnava, 2007. etc.).

a journalist should look for answers to the basic news questions of who? what? when? where? how? and why?¹⁹ S. Ruß-Mohl and H. Bakičová in their recommendations to journalists formulate a number of principles to be followed during the creation of news materials. According to them, the most important information should be right at the beginning, but it is necessary to ensure that information about what happened is presented first and not where it happened or the implications. They also recommend using indirect speech, paraphrasing, avoiding redundancy of information, paying attention to the mixing of genres, as well as to publishing subjective opinions, feelings, etc.²⁰ It should be emphasized that these principles, when designing a news report, also form a characteristic platform of the news journalism genre, and the extended news report in particular. It is also clear that they refer to the establishment of news values, criteria and related procedures in the creation of individual outputs in the editorial practice of most classical media. As of yet, the question as to what extent these values, criteria and logical procedures are established in the current editorial practices of online media within the creation of extended multimedia news reports remains unsatisfactorily answered.

2.2 Establishment of procedures and content structure in the creation of multimedia news reports

The establishment of news values, criteria and procedures in the construction of news stories in multimedia news appears to be quite clear at first glance. It is necessary to emphasise that in the case of genres adopted and modified genres by online media, including the extended news report, their goals and tasks are identical to news genres in traditional media. They provide answers to basic news questions with the ambition of publishing information that enriches and illustrates a depicted event or situation. Similarly, criteria should be applied in online media according to which extended multimedia news reports should meet the same criteria and be the bearer of specific values, such as novelty, proximity, continuity, personalisation, surprise, entertainment, relationship with elite nations, relationship with elite people, professionalism, alertness, conciseness, intelligibility, etc.

The fact remains that certain distinct peculiarities and a diversity of procedures in the construction of news reports exist within the creation of news in multimedia journalism genres. These are characterised by greater structuring, the texts are more divided using subtitles and infographics, and they may be briefer or more extensive²¹. Another fact must also be taken into consideration. This is the need to continuously update the event due to the need to inform the audience immediately²². Something that was published ten minutes ago may no longer be current as the event continues to evolve and old information loses its informational value²³. This fact significantly influences the manner of working with information and, quite naturally, the actual construction of a news report. Authors strive to increase the complexity of their story and use combinations to accomplish this objective. Ultimately, this can lead to a fragmentation of the usual logical process through the use of hyperlinks, photos, videos, and podcasts.

¹⁹ TUŠER, A.: Prejav v tlačových médiách. In TUŠER, A. a kol.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Bratislava : PEVŠ, 2010, p. 93-94.

²⁰ RUß-MOHL, S., BAKIČOVÁ, H.: *Žurnalistika: Komplexní průvodce praktickou žurnalistikou*. Prague : Grada Publishing, 2005, p. 54.

²¹ Unlike journalism departments in periodicals or news programs on electronic media, the output of journalists in online media is not limited by scope or minutes.

²² The need for immediate information and continuous updating of an event is based on the technical and technological possibilities offered by online media in the Internet environment, as well as from the competitive struggle between individual media. The medium able to bring the latest information first succeeds in this environment.

²³ ONDRÁŠIK, B.: Internetová tvorba (online). In TUŠER, A. a kol.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Bratislava: Eurokódex, 2010, p. 333.

On the other hand, it is an excellent method of supplementing or expanding the basic or original texts in an impressive way.²⁴

The desire for complexity and efforts to provide information to the audience as flexibly and quickly as possible leads, in our opinion, to simplification of work with text and images. Hybridisation in the form of interweaving different genre approaches, deliberate mixing of various statements, hypertext links, etc., and is a natural consequence of this effort among multimedia journalists. However, we believe that hybridisation is both a significant and a legitimate way of depicting a real event within the confines of online media. We do not consider this much greater degree of hybridisation of news genres than in the current classical media to be negative; rather, it is one of the characteristic methods of constructing an extended multimedia message.

According to Osvaldová and Tejkalová, the genre awareness of the recipients and their expectations from the published information also oblige journalists in online media to label genre types, such as news, commentary, interviews, etc.²⁵ The composition of an extended news report is therefore, despite its hybrid intertwining of genres, expected to combine text, images, etc., based on the usual logical procedure. At the very least, this involves the publication of the most important information at the beginning of the news report and the gradual insertion of additional or testimonial information, such as press conferences, opinions of actors obtained from social networks, etc. The author can also summarise the most important facts or return to key information at the beginning of the news report by adding information about possible developments of the event or its unexpected reversal. This means that an online journalist also counts on the ability to further supplement, clarify, extend, etc., their statements using hypertext links. These provide a nearly infinite opportunity to expand upon the basic news report with additional information, context, details, causes, retrospective, chronology of the development of the event, etc. The possibility of unlimited space does not bind the journalist but, on the contrary, allows them to fully develop their text in all its epic breadth, to realise their observations by describing details, or apply and combine different genre approaches.

This is the reason for the difficulty in answering the question as to what extent these values, criteria and logical procedures are established in the current editorial practices of online media within the creation of extended multimedia news reports. Despite this, we believe that on the basis of an analysis of selected multimedia messages, it is possible to formulate a premise according to which the current form of an extended multimedia news report has specific typological characteristics and established creative procedures.

News reports on two relevant topics in Slovakia were selected to test the formulated premises. We focused on two events, the processing of which met the criteria for extended multimedia news reporting. One of the decisive elements in making this selection was the social and political significance of the underlying event. We focused on the application of news values, the use of methodological procedures (chronological, logical and emphatic), and the fulfilment of the basic characteristics of an extended news report: answers to the 6 news questions, a description of the course of events, the use of direct and indirect speech, and language. We also examined elements used in the online environment: links to related articles, links to relevant words, and the use of photos and videos. We also observed the graphical arrangement of the individual elements as well as the subtitles. The following topics were selected as model examples: dismissal of the director of the Social Insurance Agency (9 September 2020) and election of the chairman of the Slovak National Party (12 September 2020). One topic was created by processing reports from news agencies TASR and SITA. The second topic was processed in-house by both portals.

²⁴ PRAVDOVÁ, H.: *Manažment, marketing, redigovanie vo vydavateľskej a redakčnej praxi. Periodická tlač, online médiá*. Trnava : Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda, Fakulta masmediálnej komunikácie, 2015, p. 220.

²⁵ OSVALDOVÁ, B., TEJKALOVÁ, A.: *Žurnalistika v informačnej spoločnosti. Digitalizace a internetizace žurnalistiky*. Prague : Karolinum, 2010, p. 109.

2.3 Case studies from the portals sme.sk and pravda.sk

The first event we selected for model analysis was the dismissal of the director of the Social Insurance Agency in September 2020. This is a domestic political issue that is exacerbating disputes between the coalition and the opposition. The reason is that the Social Insurance Agency is an important social institution through which the social insurance system is provided, and specifically its five separate insurance schemes: health insurance, pension insurance - old-age and disability insurance, accident insurance, guarantee insurance and unemployment insurance. It therefore contains two inherent and sensitive sub-topics. The first is that it is an interesting financial institution through which large sums are collected and distributed. There is also a very intimate emotional connection to the perceived satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the country's overall social security system. The second significant sub-topic is that the director of the Social Insurance Agency was a nominee of the Smer-SD party, and the former minister of transport, against whom the opposition had objected. Therefore, the topic itself has a political aspect in addition to the economic and professional aspects. As this is a domestic topic, there was no problem to generate original content as all activities related to the dismissal of the old and the appointment of a new director took place in Bratislava, where the newsrooms of both portals are located. Both portals, sme.sk and pravda.sk, decided to use combined information from the TASR and SITA news agencies to process their in-house news reports.

Case study 1A: *Vážneho odvolali z funkcie šéfa Sociálnej poisťovne, obráti sa na Ústavný súd.* (Source: *Vážneho odvolali z funkcie šéfa Sociálnej poisťovne, obráti sa na Ústavný súd.* [online]. [2020-09-09]. Available at: <<https://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/22484528/vlada-odvolala-vazneho-z-funkcie-sefa-socialnej-poisťovne.html>>.) 9 September 2020 at 10:51 am (updated 9 September 2020 at 5:07 pm) SITA, TASR.

The main topic of the article is the dismissal of the director of the Social Insurance Agency. The title itself provides factual information and the material consequence of this action taken by the government (*Vážneho odvolali z funkcie šéfa Sociálnej poisťovne, obráti sa na Ústavný súd -- 'Vážny dismissed as head of the Social Insurance Agency, will file suit with the Constitutional Court'*). There is a short, single-sentence lede under the title which indicates who will be the outgoing director's successor (*Vážneho nahradí Juraj Káčer -- 'Juraj Káčer to replace Vážny'*). The first part of the text under the main title provides the date and reason for dismissal of the director in general and the name of his successor. The second section contains a subtitle (*Krajniak očakáva modernizáciu poisťovne -- 'Krajniak expects insurance agency modernisation'*) where the name and appointment date of the new director are specified along with the expectations of his superior, in this case, the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. In the third section, once again delineated by a subtitle (*Káčer sa vzdá postu viceprimátora Bratislavy -- 'Káčer resigns as deputy mayor of Bratislava'*), the new candidate, and his background, is presented briefly. Another two sections, each marked with a separate subtitle (*Nadlimitná zákazka pre Bonul, Chyby v rozpočte -- 'Above-threshold contract for Bonus, Budget irregularities'*) are devoted to the reasons for which the director was dismissed and the problems facing the Social Insurance Agency. They are much more extensive than the previous sections. The next part (*Kto je Juraj Káčer -- 'Who is Juraj Káčer'*) provides details about the new director and doubts as to his ability to cope with this new position due to his preoccupation with other positions. The final, again extensive part (*Vážny sa obráti na Ústavný súd -- 'Vážny will file suit with the Constitutional Court'*) presents the reaction and additional steps taken by the former director, and the chair of his political party.

In terms of composition, the text is composed of 5 subtitles, and each sub-topic is introduced with a separate subtitle except for the first. Every section represents a single paragraph that is physically separated from the others by a space. A large photograph of the main actor involved

in this topic is shown under the main title and the single-sentence lede. The article provides a photo of the new director, and the TASR news agency is identified as being the source of both photos. The newsroom also used a video, with the entire press conference organised by the chair of the Smer-SD party and the dismissed director on this specific topic posted with a total length of approximately 43 minutes. The newsroom placed the video at the end of the article and the Smer-SD website is shown as the source of the video. The text also contains a hypertext link to an article about Bonul, a company associated with an above-threshold contract with the Social Insurance Agency. A logical approach was used in the presentation, with the latest information provided at the beginning of the report, what happened: the director of the Social Insurance Agency was replaced, who replaced who, and the reasons were specified, and then explained in detail subsequently. At the end we learned of the reaction and the steps taken by the dismissed director. All 6 of the basic news questions were answered: who, what, when, how and why; in addition, the consequences were mentioned – the intention of the director to file suit with the Constitutional Court. An answer to the question of where was omitted because it simply was not pertinent. Formulations were presented in the third person, and direct speech was used commonly, with a few instances of indirect speech. The notional lexicon was used in the statements, the sentences were mostly simple, factual, impersonal, often used suffixes and indefinite ones.

From the point of view of the evaluation of news values, we can state that the report represents the basic news values characteristic of the news in traditional media. This is a very important societal event because its activities affect every person in the country. It provides interesting information about the background of the appeal (alleged mistakes on the part of the director, his intention to file suit with the Constitutional Court) and about the new successor (his profile and number of positions, doubts over whether he can handle the time that will be required in his new position), as well as the minister's idea of how institutions should function. This is a current event as it took place on the day the report was published. The report was prepared objectively: the reasons for the dismissal and the response from the dismissed director (although in another part of the report) were presented, as well as the reservations of the opposition representative to fill the post of new director without conducting a search to identify candidates to fill the position. The text was very often based on direct quotations from the actors involved in the event. The wording was clear and understandable, the report was concise and contained all the basic information.

Case study 1B: *Odvolali Vážneho z čela Sociálnej poisťovne. Nahradí ho Káčer.* (Source: *Odvolali Vážneho z čela Sociálnej poisťovne. Nahradí ho Káčer.* [online]. [2020-09-09]. Available at: <<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/562357-kabinet-odvolal-vazneho-z-funkcie-generalneho-riaditeľa-socialnej-poisťovne/>>.) TASR, SITA 09/09/2020 at 10:55 am, updated: 2:16 pm.

The pravda.sk portal used information from both Slovak news agencies, TASR and SITA, but presented them in the reverse order. The structure of the report, which works with the same sources, is partially different. A large photo of the main actor, the dismissed director, follows the title, basic information about the sources and the time of publication. The portal is the author of the photo and not one of the news agencies. This is followed by a 3-sentence lede that provides the essence of the report: the 3 brief sentences state what happened, why, and the ambition of the new director. It is interesting that a link to the video of Robert Fico's and Smer-SD's entire press conference (sourced from the Smer-SD party and ~43 minutes long) immediately follows the lede. This is followed by a quote from the main material regarding the dismissal of the director of the Social Insurance Agency, similar to that on the sme.sk portal. The next paragraph provides information on who will replace him and who that person is. After a subtitle (*Krajniak: Očakávam, že zo SP bude proklientská a moderná inštitúcia -- 'Krajniak:*

I expect the Social Insurance Agency will be a client-oriented and modern institution”) there is another video, from the press conference held by the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family regarding the issue at hand and lasting ~ 24 minutes. The reader then learns about the reasons for the dismissal, arguments made by the government (a past decision issued by the Constitutional Court) and the Minister’s idea of how the Social Insurance Agency should operate and its tasks. This section contains a link to an article on the former director’s plan of action and its options, as well as the reaction of his party’s chairman to this topic (*Fico: Odvolanie Vážneho bude predmetom súdneho skúmania -- ‘Fico: Vážny’s dismissal to be reviewed by the court’*). This is followed by another subtitle (*Káčer: Budem sa snažiť, aby v krátkom čase bolo vidno aj výsledky -- ‘Káčer: I’m going to try and deliver visible results in short order’*) and a part focused on who the new director is and his priorities. The final part, once again introduced by a subtitle (*Pellegrini: Ide o personálne rozhodnutie vlády -- ‘Pellegrini: It’s a governmental personnel decision’*) contains two sub-topics. The first are the responses from two representatives of the newly created Hlas-SD party. The second mentions the scandal around the dismissal of the Social Insurance Agency’s director and his complaint to the Constitutional Court and its decision. This text contains another link at the words „komunálny politik Káčer vzdal funkcie viceprimátora Bratislavy“ (*‘local politician Káčer resigns as Deputy Mayor of Bratislava’*), which is linked to an article about Bratislava’s new Deputy Mayor Zdenka Zaťovičová, who is set to replace Káčer (9 September 2020 at 1:16 pm, updated: 2:13 pm).

The text is divided into a smaller number of sub-topics, a total of 3, which are introduced with subtitles. As was evident, all three subtitles are in the form of direct statements, and specifically opinions. Videos and photos from in-house sources were more widely used. The newsroom used a logical approach and answered all 6 of the journalistic questions. Similar to the sme.sk portal, basic information about the change was presented, followed by the reasons and expectations about the future importance and operation of the institution as a whole, with responses from representatives of one opposition political party provided at the end. The organisation of the text on the pravda.sk portal is different, and the topics are concentrated into blocks, or subtopics, and the topical paragraphs in them are composed of multiple sentences, most of which are developed and longer (including when citations are used). In the choice of direct and indirect speech, in addition to factual formulations, we also find emotional expressions (*neprichádza s „krvavými očami“ -- ‘he’s not come to clean house’ (translator’s note: meaning to issue mass redundancies)*). Compared to the sme.sk portal, it can be seen that the pravda.sk newsroom relies more on citations than sme.sk and they are incorporated without abbreviation, which results in less editorial work. The author’s text is of a notional character and overall, it can be assessed as factual and impersonal.

Also in this text we find the application of news values: timeliness (the topic is published on the day of the event), relevance to society (decisions and distribution of benefits depend on the quality of management at the Social Insurance Agency), professional processing (the reader learned all the information on the background of the appeal, as well as on the new successor), conciseness and clarity. We do have one objection with respect to comprehensibility: sometimes sentences that are too long complicate the understanding of context.

The second topic on which we want to substantiate our claims is the topic of electing the chairman of the Slovak National Party, abbreviated as SNS. Again, this is a sensitive societal topic, because one of the candidates, the current chairman, has evoked a variety of reactions given his past performance as speaker of the Slovak parliament, his statements to the media, and personal scandals. Again, we looked at how both news portals handled this relevant and socially sensitive topic. In this case, the editors opted for the author’s elaboration, in one case in combination with TASR documents.

Case study 2A: *Danko obhájl post šéfa SNS, po vyhlášení výsledku část členov na protest odišla.* (Source: *Danko obhájl post šéfa SNS, po vyhlášení výsledku část členov na protest odišla.* [online]. [2020-09-12]. Available at: <<https://domov.sme.sk/c/22487084/danko-obhajil-post-predsedu-sns.html>>.) 12 September 2020 at 2:27 pm (updated 12 September 2020 at 2:52 pm) TASR, Daniela Hajčáková.

The main topic is a meeting of the Slovak National Party, SNS, and the election of a new chairman. The topic itself is divided into three sections, with two subtitles provided directly in the article itself. Immediately after the main title, which announces that Danko defended his position and some of the members left in protest, there is a one-sentence lede that states Anton Hrnko was interested in the position of chairman. Information then follows as to when the text was published, updated and source information (TASR and the author of the article). Below that is a large photograph of the face of the election winner, Mr Danko, sourced from the SITA news agency's database (which is interesting, as the agency was not listed as the source from which it was drawn). The place of the event is then identified. We then learn of the answers to the basic questions of what happened, where and with what main outcome, who the challenger was and how the election turned out (who received the most votes). The text then provided voting details (the answer to the question of how), and therefore who nominated candidates, when the old-new chairman made his decision, words from the losing candidate on the outcome and what happened after the outcome was announced (representatives from Žilina and other locations walked out of the meeting and in brief, what kind of reaction is expected from them). The first subtitle appears (*S politikou chcel skončiť -- 'He wanted out of politics'*) and opens the section about the victor. In five paragraphs, we learn about what he said after failure in the general election (taking of political responsibility), as well as the current similarly low preference ratings. The text continues, writing about an increase in his activity in advance of the party elections (travel to different regions and statuses on Facebook) as well as reactions to them (ridicule). This is followed by an illustration of one of his statuses with text and photos and a link to his profile. Some specific supporters of the old-new chairman were identified at the end of this section, along with the supporters of his opponent in brief. The last and most extensive section is focused on statements from his opponent and on reviewing changes in their relationship. In the introduction after the next subtitle (*Obrátil sa proti Dankovi -- 'He turned against Danko'*) it was recalled that the chairman's opponent was initially one of his defenders and only became a critic after the failure in the elections and the emergence of the Dobytkár ('Cattleman') scandal and its ties to SNS. The essentials of the scandal and how SNS is allegedly connected are explained in the next paragraph. Hrnko distances himself from these connections. In the final paragraph, he argues about negotiations with Kvietik, but on a different topic.

The report has a logical structure. Basic information about the key event, the election of the chairman of the SNS party at its general assembly, the outcomes and background information are all provided at the beginning. The second part is focused on motives behind the old-new chairman's activities. The final part is devoted to his opponent. The paragraphs are more extensive, alternating between one and two or three-sentences. The sentences are mostly developed. Direct and indirect speech is used appropriately. The formulations are mostly factual and impersonal. Only one photograph and one link to a Facebook profile are provided in the text. There are five direct links to articles about the candidate, chairman, and an indirect reference to other articles about the SNS chairman under the article itself.

In terms of the application of news values, we can certainly speak of timeliness (on the day of the election), relevance (an indication of the future and developments in SNS), professionalism, as well as objectivity (information about the course of the election and the motives of the candidate and his opponent). The wording is concise, factual and comprehensible.

Case study 2B: *Danko naďalej velí SNS, jeho odporcovia hovoria o fraške.* (Source: *Danko naďalej velí SNS, jeho odporcovia hovoria o fraške.* [online]. [2020-09-12]. Available at: <<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/562729-danko-opat-veli-sns-jeho-odporcovia-hovoria-o-fraške/>>.) Eva Štenclová, Pravda 12 September 2020, 9:22 pm.

The manner in which the topic is processed differs from the sme.sk portal. This is indicated by the title itself (*Danko naďalej velí SNS, jeho odporcovia hovoria o fraške* -- 'Danko continues to lead SNS, his opponents say it's a farce'), where the author used figurative statements (*velí SNS* -- 'commands SNS') and relays the opinion of those dissatisfied with the outcome (*odporcovia hovoria o fraške* -- 'opponents say it's a farce'). Information about the author of the article and the date and time of its publication follow after the main title. A photograph of the winner of the election, about whom the author created the article, is then presented. After the photo, there is a three-sentence lede expressing the essence of the report, who won the SNS party elections, who the opponent was and what his supporters did, as well as the location of the elections and how journalists were not allowed in to the assembly itself. Following the lede is a two-minute video of a dissatisfied member of the party with a comment regarding his mental state (an angry R.R.) and a transcription of his primary thoughts. This is followed by a description of events with elements of commentary in the form of adjectives, figurative expressions, as well as specific statements (direct speech - two paragraphs) from an SNS representative from Senec, who was also not let into the building, just like the media („*vchodové dvere mali pod kontrolou*" -- 'they were watching the entrances', '*urastení ochrankári*' -- 'muscle-bound bodyguards', '*stojí na opačnej strane „barikád"*' -- 'standing on the other side of the barricades', '*fandí Hrnkovi*' -- 'supports Hrnko', and „*celý snem je fraška*" -- 'the entire assembly is a farce'). We also learn of how many party members attended the assembly. On the right side, the reader is presented with statements from Mr Hrnko (introductory sentence: *Hrnko po sneme SNS: Skončilo sa to tak, ako som predpokladal* -- 'Hrnko after the SNS assembly: It ended up as I expected'). A link to the article is on the left side (*Danko je opäť predsedom SNS. Rafaj hovorí o kolektívnej samovražde* -- 'Danko once again SNS chairman. Rafaj says it's collective suicide'). This is followed by an approximately minute-long video statement from the winner, Mr Danko, with a text: *Predseda Danko: Budú ma trhať médiá a opozícia nenávidieť* -- 'Chairman Danko: I'm going to get ripped apart by the media and hate from the opposition'. There is a subtitle beneath the video (*Rafaj: Politická kultúra dostal facku* -- 'Rafaj: This is a slap in the face to political culture') and the second, more extensive part of the article is based on the reactions of those who are dissatisfied. In the introduction to this section, the reader learns of the voting results, with old-new chairman, his opponent, abstentions, and those who didn't vote. The paragraph ends with a description of events occurring after voting (*vychádzali rozhorčené skupiny straníkov* -- 'an outraged group of party members stormed out'). The next three paragraphs are based on the direct and indirect speech of SNS party member Rafaj. The quotes and paraphrasing are relatively expressive statements that he uses (*som v šoku, mám pocit, že delegáti schválili kolektívnu samovraždu, normálni ľudia vyvodlia zodpovednosť, politická kultúra dnes dostala veľmi tvrdú facku, konkrétni ľudia, ktorí si nedovedia na špičku svojho nosa, šéfom parlamentu, aj vlády, je alfasamec, človeku sa chce normálne plakať* -- 'I'm shocked, I feel that the delegates approved a kind of collective suicide, normal people would take responsibility, political culture today got a very hard slap, specific people can't see the tip of their noses; the head of parliament, even the government, is an alpha-male, it's enough to bring someone to tears'). One paragraph is devoted to a comparison of Danko and former chairman Slota, and indictment of the representatives who elected him chairman. This passage is followed a more than two-and-a-half-minute video of the unaccepted representative from Senec with the following sentence: *Ján Rohák považuje snem za frašku* -- 'Ján Rohák considers the assembly a farce'. Room is then provided for another dissatisfied representative in the three paragraphs below the video. In them, he accuses the president of non-patriotism, a bad election result, promises

of a different way of electing representatives to the assembly (originally other conditions that were supposed to bring higher numbers of representatives), and trips to the regions before the assembly. The last part of the article starts again with a video. The video covers the failed opponent for the chairmanship. The video is shown with text: *Anton Hrnko: Výsledok som predpokladal* -- 'Anton Hrnko: I expected this outcome'. He says that he expected the outcome based on what he saw going on and described his decision on the form of his activities in the party. Over the last two paragraphs, the chairman thanks his opponent and responds to the process („*Som hrdý na to, že tento snem bol pripravený tak, že ani jeden z delegátov nevzniesol žiadnu výhradu*“ -- 'I am proud of the fact that this assembly was so well prepared that none of the delegates raised any objections') and describes his expectations and plans („*Od pondelka ma čaká trhanie médií a nenávisť opozície*“, „*...bola SNS alternatívou pre voličov – vzoprela vláde Matoviča, Sulíka a Kollára. Urobím všetko pre to, aby som ich zastavil...*“ -- 'I'm going to get ripped apart by the media and hate from the opposition beginning on Monday', '...SNS was an alternative for voters – it was in defiance of the Matovič, Sulík and Kollár government. I'm going to do everything in my power to stop them ...').

In this case, the author used an emphatic approach. The main line of the report is based on the statements of dissatisfied critics of the newly elected chairman and the interesting things they said. Not once in the article is a representative who elected the old-new chairman addressed. On the other hand, we also learn about the feelings and ideas of the winner of the election and factual information about the election. All six news questions were answered: what happened, where, when – the SNS assembly in Liptovský Mikuláš on Saturday, how – what happened there – including statements from those dissatisfied with the outcome, an explanation of why it turned out so (the old-new president bypassed the regions) and what consequences it will have (potential secession of the opponent's supporters). The sentences are formulated clearly and are mostly developed. The author uses a lot of direct speech from the dissatisfied. The emotional atmosphere in the assembly is amplified by using videos with expressions of dissatisfied representatives and the opponent himself. A video of the chairman is presented for balance. A photo is only used at the beginning, along with a link to his Facebook profile.

In terms of news values, the report applies timeliness (the article was published on the day of the election), comprehensiveness (all available moments of the election are mapped), and clarity (the recipient has both direct speech and videos). Objectivity is questionable, as no supporter of the old-new president is addressed and the report is tabloid rather than factual. From the point of view of the professionalism of processing, we can also state that direct speech is overused, which sometimes degrades comprehensibility.

3. Conclusion

We can state that there are established processes for the construction of news reports and they have a stable structure based on long-term observations, analysis and studies of news reports on online news portals. These are based on classic journalistic formats and exploit the advantages of the Internet environment. The most commonly used is a short or extended news report, which also provides a deeper insight into the issues being processed. A „*minute-by-minute*“ chronological format is used if there is a need to provide a more detailed overview of developments in the current situation over time. An extended report takes the form of an inverted pyramid, and typically begins with the most important information (a logical approach). Subsequently, more detailed circumstances of the event are presented (how and why it took place) and broader contexts (statements of others, consequences, reminders of similar events or relevant moments of the topic) are presented after. The text is typically divided into 3 to 5 subtopics. Each of the subtopics is labelled with a subtitle, which provides the reader with a basic overview of the events. The text is structured into topical paragraphs (2 to 3 sentences,

and occasionally an individual sentence), divided by spaces, which facilitates quick reading when scrolling. Sentences are mostly developed, but are not long sentences, and simple and developed sentences alternate in longer paragraphs. Newsrooms very often work with citations, but in some they leave them very long, which retards the perception of information. Textual information is always provided with an expressive photograph of the most important actor or situation. To increase persuasiveness, videos are also used (more often in some periodicals), which are presented in full form, often without post-production editing. Links to relevant related pages (approx. 2) are listed on the margins of the basic text, after the first third. The texts mostly use the news values of timeliness, objectivity, professionalism and comprehensibility.

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photo: Soňa Hlavatá

Tahreem Noor Khan

The Usage Of Social Media Tools By Islamic Banks In Pakistan And The UAE

ABSTRACT

Realizing the fact that social media has become the mainstream of corporate marketing, this research aims to investigate the use of social media tools by Islamic banks: Facebook and YouTube. To identify and evaluate the social media activities, this research analyses four fully-fledged Islamic banks in Pakistan and seven fully-fledged Islamic banks in the UAE. Since there is a lack of research on the topic of social media marketing by Islamic banks, therefore eight effective features of utilising Facebook in corporate marketing have been extracted from the existing literature. Subsequently, in order to evaluate the eight factors descriptive observation analysis and coding methods were used. The findings deduce that Islamic banks require influential ways to distinguish their social media activities. This research believes that by channelizing such active social mediums aptly, consumer's concerns about Islamic banking can be addressed. Islamic banks need to realize that these social mediums enable them to offer differentiated services according to the target segment and audience, which will result in greater satisfaction and customer loyalty. Monitoring social media activities of local and global Islamic banks can assist in devising a unique corporate marketing approach for using Facebook and YouTube. There are few existing articles available on social media and Islamic banking topics, therefore this research makes an attempt to fill that gap and brings attention to conduct further study about social media as a corporate marketing communication tool.

KEY WORDS

Social Media. Islamic Banks. Marketing.

1. Introduction

Social media is the use of web and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue, open participation and community connectedness.¹ The social platforms engagement assists brands to initiate their communication, intensify their interaction and re-shape their relationship with customers.² Such platforms also encourage new variations for the organizations that are promoting customer interaction and foster engaging relationships.³

Some of the influential social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn. Among these platforms, Facebook is the third most visited site after Google and YouTube (Statista and Alexa.com).⁴ Facebook was created in 2004, for collaborative study amongst college students however, today it has evolved to be the world's premier platform with over 250 million users globally.

Due to its large user base, companies have great opportunities to reach the target audience and market their services or products through official Facebook pages. The companies learn about consumer's attitude towards brand impression, promotional offers, and their interaction in posts through the number of comments, shares, views and likes.⁵ The 'Like' button is a powerful tool to access new audiences as on average users on Facebook have 120 friends, and liking a Facebook page by one influences other friends to join the page and follow the brand.⁶

Realizing the importance of social media in fostering engagement and increasing followers, businesses should consider social media as a formal corporate marketing tool that requires a considerable strategy. However, a finding of concern was indicated by the literature that 'most Fortune 50 companies' are not using Facebook to its full potential; to share company or product related information with the public.⁷

While analysing the social media initiatives of global financial institutions, another study found that the lack of strategies implementing effective corporate dialogue with customers was a factor of worry.⁸ The research further insisted on identifying the factors of reluctance to using social mediums.

Compared to other social media platforms that focus on pictures and text, YouTube is considered the best media-centric platform for online marketing, branding, and promotion.⁹ YouTube is the second most visited video sharing social platform; where users can upload, view and share videos.¹⁰ Businesses can draw consumers' attention by video advertisements through YouTube and encourage the viewers to subscribe to their official channels, whereas

¹ BHANOT, S.: Use of social media by companies to reach their customers. In *SIES Journal of Management*, 2012, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 4.

² SASHI, C. M.: Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships, and social media. In *Management Decision*, 2012, Vol. 50, No.2, p. 253-272.

³ MITIC, M., KAPOULAS, A.: Understanding the Role of Social Media in Bank Marketing. In *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 2012, Vol. 30, No. 7, p. 668-686.

⁴ Alexa Internet Inc. *The top 500 sites on the web*. [online]. [2020-01-01]. Available at: <<http://www.alexa.com/topsites>>.

⁵ HANSSON, L. et al.: Optimal Ways for Companies to Use Facebook as a Marketing Channel. In *Journal of Information, Communication, and Ethics in Society*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 112-126.

⁶ BUSHELOW, E.: Facebook Pages and Benefits to Brands. In *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 2013, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 6-17.

⁷ MCCORKINDALE, T.: Can you see the writing on my wall? A content analysis of the Fortune 50's Facebook social networking sites. In *Public Relations Journal*, 2010, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 1-13.

⁸ BONSON, E., FLORES, F.: Social media and corporate dialogue: the response of global financial institutions. In *Online Information Review*, 2011, Vol. 35, No. 1, p. 34-49.

⁹ WATERS, R. D., JONES, P. M.: Using Video to Build an Organization's Identity and Brand: A Content Analysis of Nonprofit Organizations' YouTube Videos. In *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 2011, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 248-268.

¹⁰ EDOSOMWAN, S. et al.: The History of Social Media and its Impact on Business. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 2011, Vol. 16, No. 3, p. 79-91.

customers receive regular updates through notifications. In addition, the number of subscribers and video views results in monetary benefit.¹¹

For integration and alignment of social media strategies¹, a study¹² concluded that four key themes need to be explored by bank leaders: (1) social media knowledge management, (2) social media marketing strategy implementation, (3) social media data challenges and communication, and (4) social media competitive gain and future enhancements.

More specifically, banks can realign and readjust their social media strategies by answering the following questions: What role does social media play in their overall marketing position and ambitions? What are the factors to differentiate social media marketing from traditional marketing channels? What could be the potential benefit or loss of social media presence?

By addressing these questions, banks can identify the missing elements in their corporate marketing communication and utilize their capabilities to eliminate the gap.¹³

According to the existing literature, the effectiveness of social media channels is evaluated by the quality and relevance of message content.¹⁴ Furthermore, the following eight characteristics are essential for corporate marketing through Facebook:

1. Product Marketing¹⁵ advertisement and promotions¹⁶
2. Financial education and advice¹⁷
3. Online security information and support¹⁸
4. Customer review and bank representativeness^{19;20;21;22}
5. Customer engagement^{23;24}
6. Career Advice / Online recruitment through social media^{25; 26}

¹¹ WIGGINS, B. A.: The Culture Industry, New Media, and the Shift from Creation to Curation; or, Enlightenment as a Kick in the Nuts. In *Television & New Media*, 2013, Vol. 15, No. 5, p. 395-412.

¹² WRIGHT, M.: Social Media Data Strategies Bankers Use to Increase Customer Market Share. [Dissertation Thesis]. USA : Walden University, 2019, p. 28.

¹³ COSTIN, D.: Banking Business and Social Media - A Strategic Partnership. In *Theoretical & Applied Economics*, 2015, Vol. 22, No. 4, p. 121-132.

¹⁴ SMITH, T.: The social media revolution. In *International Journal of Market Research*, 2009, Vol. 51, No. 4, p. 559-561.

¹⁵ QUESENBERRY, K.: *Social Media Strategy: Marketing and Advertising in the Consumer Revolution*. Lanham, Maryland, USA : Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, p. 164.

¹⁶ BOHLIN, E. et al.: Social Network Banking: A Case Study of 100 Leading Global Banks. In *International Journal of E-Business*, 2012, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 3-10.

¹⁷ EFRAIM, T. et al.: *Information Technology for Management: On-Demand Strategies for performance, growth, sustainability*. Hoboken, New Jersey, USA : John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

¹⁸ SMITH, T.: The social media revolution. In *International Journal of Market Research*, 2009, Vol. 51, No. 4, p. 559-561.

¹⁹ KAPLAN, A. M., HAENLEIN, M.: Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. In *Business Horizons*, 2010, Vol. 53, No. 1, p. 59-68.

²⁰ CHAMPOUX, V. et al.: Corporate Facebook Pages: When Fans Attack. In *Journal of Business Strategy*, 2012, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 22-30.

²¹ YASA, E., MUCAN, B.: Paper presented at 12th International Marketing Trends Conference with subtitle Turkish Companies Value Creation through Social Media Tools: Analysing Fortune 100 Turkey. Paris, presented on 12th Jan 2013.

²² ARLI, D., DIETRICH, T.: Can Social Media Campaigns Backfire? Exploring Consumers Attitudes and Word-of-Mouth toward Four Social Media Campaigns and Its Implications on Consumer-Campaign Identification. In *Journal of Promotion Management*, 2017, Vol. 23, No. 6, p. 834-850.

²³ COSTIN, D.: Banking Business and Social Media - A Strategic Partnership. In *Theoretical & Applied Economics*, 2015, Vol. 22, No. 4, p. 121-132.

²⁴ DEKAY, S.: Are business-oriented social networking Web sites useful resources for locating passive jobseekers? Results of a recent study. In *Business Communication Quarterly*, 2009, Vol. 72, No. 1, p. 101-105.

²⁵ ARLI, D., DIETRICH, T.: Can Social Media Campaigns Backfire? Exploring Consumers Attitudes and Word-of-Mouth toward Four Social Media Campaigns and Its Implications on Consumer-Campaign Identification. In *Journal of Promotion Management*, 2017, Vol. 23, No. 6, p. 834-850.

²⁶ MARCIA, D., DENISE, S.: *Ethical Practice of Social Media in Public Relations*. London : Routledge, 2014, p. 38.

7. Survey and polling²⁷; ²⁸
8. Other posts (Bank news updates, sharing achievements, and greetings)²⁹; ³⁰

Despite the powerful impact of social media on consumers, limited data is available about the usage of social media for marketing purposes in banking services.³¹ Realizing the existence of the gap in the literature, this research suggests a need to conduct more qualitative studies to explore key practices and barriers in using social media for financial corporate marketing specifically in the context of Islamic banks. This research attempts to fill the gap, by observing key social media practices of Islamic banks in Pakistan and the UAE.

2. Research Method

Islamic banking emerged rapidly to meet the financial needs of consumers, by using different viable modes of financing to avoid interest/usury, risk-free returns and high uncertainty. However, literature indicates that Islamic banks face negative criticism because their marketing strategies focus on rewards and incentives, rather than the moral and ethical perspective of Islamic product values.^{32,33} The limited and insufficient information on the characteristics of Islamic financial products evoke authenticity concerns amongst consumers. The literature³⁴ insists, in order to gain the trust of customers, Islamic banks must provide correct, sufficient and clear information on the principles of Islamic financial accounts.

Although the article confirms that Islamic bank marketing through social media will surely accelerate customer connectivity and engagement; there is still a lack of research in the context of evaluating Islamic banking social media marketing efforts.³⁵ In reference to Islamic banking and social media, few news articles³⁶; ³⁷ and a report³⁸ found, that emphasize the need

²⁷ YASA, E., MUCAN, B.: Paper presented at 12th International Marketing Trends Conference with subtitle Turkish Companies Value Creation through Social Media Tools: Analysing Fortune 100 Turkey. Paris, presented on 12th Jan 2013.

²⁸ QUESENBERRY, K.: *Social Media Strategy: Marketing and Advertising in the Consumer Revolution*. Lanham, Maryland, USA : Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, p. 164.

²⁹ DEKAY, S.: Are business-oriented social networking Web sites useful resources for locating passive jobseekers? Results of a recent study. In *Business Communication Quarterly*, 2009, Vol. 72, No. 1, p. 101-105.

³⁰ SMITH, T.: The social media revolution. In *International Journal of Market Research*, 2009, Vol. 51, No. 4, p. 559-561.

³¹ ALVES, H. et al.: Social Media Marketing: A Literature Review and Implications. In *Psychology & Marketing*, 2016, Vol. 33, No. 12, p. 1029-1038.

³² KAHF, M.: *Strategic Trend in the Islamic Banking Finance Movement*. Paper presented at Harvard Forum on Islamic Finance and Banking on 6th April 2002, Harvard University, Cambridge, Boston.

³³ HENRY, C., WILSON, R.: *The Politics of Islamic Finance*. Edinburgh University Press, 2004 [online] [2012-08-22]. Available at: <www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r27cw>.

³⁴ KAHF, M.: *Strategic Trend in the Islamic Banking Finance Movement*. Paper presented at Harvard Forum on Islamic Finance and Banking on 6th April 2002, Harvard University, Cambridge, Boston.; HENRY, C., WILSON, R.: *The Politics of Islamic Finance*. [online]. [2012-08-22]. Available at: <www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r27cw>.

³⁵ ALVES, H. et al.: Social Media Marketing: A Literature Review and Implications. In *Psychology & Marketing*, 2016, Vol. 33, No. 12, p. 1029-1038.; KAHF, M.: *Strategic Trend in the Islamic Banking Finance Movement*. Paper presented at Harvard Forum on Islamic Finance and Banking on 6th April 2002, Harvard University, Cambridge, Boston.; HENRY, C., WILSON, R.: *The Politics of Islamic Finance*. [online]. [2012-08-20]. Available at: <www.futureislam.com/20050501/insight/Rodney_Wilson/The_Politics_of_Islamic_Finance.asp53k>.

³⁶ *Khaleej Times: Why Gulf's lenders need to bank on social media*. [online]. [2016-05-20]. Available at: <[https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/banking-finance/why-gulfs-lenders-need-to-bank-on-social-media](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/banking-finance/why-gulfs-lenders-need-to-bank-on-social-media)>.

³⁷ *Gulf News: UAE bank introduces banking via Twitter*. [online]. [2016-04-25]. Available at: <<https://gulfnews.com/business/banking/emirates-nbd-introduces-banking-via-twitter-1.1585093>>.

³⁸ *MIFC – Malaysia's Islamic finance Centre. Social Media an Opportunity for Islamic Finance. Bank Negara Malaysia Report*. [online]. [2016-04-25]. Available at: <[https://www.mifc.com/index.php?ch=28&pg=72&ac=126&bb=uploadpdf](http://www.mifc.com/index.php?ch=28&pg=72&ac=126&bb=uploadpdf)>.

for social media for customers interaction and engagement, however there is a lack of academic research conducted in this area. Realizing the gap in the academic literature, this research attempts to investigate and explore the existence of eight effective features of the Facebook pages and YouTube channels of Islamic banks in Pakistan and the UAE.

At a national level, Islamic banks’ market share of Pakistan (10% assets) and UAE (22% assets) have been impressive; as a result both countries are making noticeable presence at the regional level. Recognizing the emerging growth of Islamic financial products in Pakistan, the UAE established a subsidiary of the largest bank (Dubai Islamic Bank) in Pakistan in 2005. Due to the sturdy growth of the Islamic banking industry in both countries, it will be interesting to identify the social media marketing practices of Islamic banks in Pakistan and the UAE.

According to the ranking sites,³⁹ YouTube is the second most visited website, while Facebook ranks fourth in Pakistan and the UAE. Therefore, it was interesting to explore how Islamic banks utilize these social mediums to connect with their customers. Considering the usage of social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) in the UAE, a study⁴⁰ determined that social media has gained recognition recently and UAE firms utilized social media for three main reasons: awareness, advertising, and feedback. Though, overall the “picking up” pace of social media is still slow in the UAE.

In this research, we explore social media activities of four fully-fledged Islamic banks in Pakistan and seven fully-fledged Islamic banks in the UAE. A list of Islamic banks was obtained from the Central Bank of Pakistan and the UAE (Table 1). The information was derived using the qualitative research method of observing social media activities, we visited the homepage of said Islamic banks from January 2020 - February 2020.

| Name of Islamic Banks in Pakistan | | Name of Islamic Banks in UAE | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|------------------------------|--------|
| AlBaraka Islamic Bank | (AIB) | Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank | (ADIB) |
| BankIslami | (BI) | Al Hilal Bank | (HB) |
| Dubai Islamic Bank | (DIB-PK) | Ajman Bank | (AB) |
| Meezan Bank | (MB) | Dubai Islamic Bank | (DIB) |
| | | Emirates Islamic Bank | (EIB) |
| | | Noor Bank | (NB) |
| | | Sharjah Islamic Bank | (SIB) |

TABLE 1: Full-fledged Islamic banks in Pakistan and UAE

Source: List of Islamic banks Pakistan and UAE from Central bank

During the observation, the placement of Facebook and YouTube icons on Islamic bank web homepages were noted (ease of icon accessibility?). Upon accessing their official social media pages and channels, the number of Facebook followers, YouTube subscribers and activities were observed and recorded. We filtered out YouTube activities, by identifying the most popular videos (views count). The descriptive information is summed up in table 2 of the finding section.

Additionally, the effectiveness of Islamic banks’ Facebook pages is presented in Table 3 of the findings section, corresponding to the eight key features and characteristics extracted from the literature.

³⁹ Alexa. [online]. [2017-02-05]. Available at: <<http://www.alexa.com>>.

⁴⁰ TENAIJI, A. A., CADER, Y.: *Social media marketing in the UAE*. In *European, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Conference on Information Systems: Global Information Systems Challenges in Management*. Abu Dhabi, UAE: ISEING, 2010. p. 1-14. [online]. [2017-02-05]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/1180767/SOCIAL_MEDIA_MARKETING_IN_THE_UAE>.

- 1. Product marketing:** The identification of most common products marketed through social media, the products demonstrated a higher level of customer interest and received the most likes and shares on Facebook pages.
- 2. Financial education:** The use of social media to educate consumers about the importance of financial savings or the structural elements of Islamic products.
- 3. Online security information and support:** The online safety and security of information and its concern through the use of social media platforms.
- 4. Customer reviews and presence of bank customer service representatives:** The customer reviews and comments on the Facebook page and presence of Islamic bank representatives and their efficiency in handling customer enquiries and responses to comments. Observations about the common comments shared by customers on Facebook walls.
- 5. Customer engagement activities:** The customer engagement activities posted on their Facebook page such as icebreaking questions, open ended questions, games, competitions and the customers' responses to interactive posts.
- 6. Career Advice / Online recruitment through social media:** The use of official Facebook pages to post job openings, recruit potential candidates or provide career advice to graduates.
- 7. Survey and polling:** Facebook posts related to surveys or polls about the product development and services for customers.
- 8. Other posts:** posts related to bank updates, achievements and greetings were found on the Facebook page.

To explore the effectiveness of Islamic banks using Facebook among the eight elements discussed in the literature, a descriptive analysis and coding method was used. For example a pattern of customer comments on Islamic bank Facebook pages was observed for a month (January 2020 - February 2020) and coded accordingly. Coding was measured by considering the textual content of negative expressions focused on bank service (worst, pathetic, awful, horrible, unprofessional, disappointed, delay, bad experience), product-related concern (application process and charges on car/home/credit card charges), call centre bad service (late, delay, not answering, query not dealt through the call center).

The same negative expression stated twice, by the same individual, was considered as one. Sometimes the issue of product / call centre or bank service mentioned in one post, in that case, was considered as 1 point for each category. Messages in Arabic or Urdu were translated and the text context was categorized accordingly. Considering the bank's image and reputation, the name of the bank was not mentioned in the negative comments. Furthermore, this research suggests ways to enhance marketing activities and develop effective relationships with customers using social media tools effectively.

3. Findings

Due to frequency, usability, and immediacy factors, as research suggested the implementation of social tools initiates a powerful connection with customers.⁴¹ On a similar note, developing connections using interactive communications channels assist businesses in understanding and satisfying customers' needs.⁴² Even though the buzz about social media is optimistic and positive, it has its style, protocols, and etiquette that require learning for survival and these criteria have to be meticulously maintained.

⁴¹ CROWE, A.: The Social Media Manifesto: A Comprehensive Review Of The Impact Of Social Media On Emergency Management. In *Journal of Business Continuity & Emergency Planning*, 2010, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 19-42.

⁴² MORGAN, N. et al.: *Social Media. The Complete Guide to Social Media, from the Social Media Guys*. [online]. [2017-02-05]. Available at: <<https://rucreativebloggingfa13.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/completeguidetosocialmedia.pdf>>.

Tables 2 and 3 provide an overview of the Facebook and YouTube activities of four fully-fledged Islamic banks in Pakistan and seven fully-fledged Islamic banks in the UAE. The research findings suggest that there is a need for Islamic banks to improve the style and fine-tune the flair of social media activities with sophistication. Islamic banks should not use social media merely for the purpose of broadcasting messages, rather leverage it as two-way communication. Social media must be utilized as an effective tool to listen to the consumers and gain insights, moreover, provide customized financial solutions, and to address concerns about the Islamic aspect of financial products.

3.1 Ease of accessibility - Social media icons on Islamic bank's homepage

The observation, as per Table 2, shows that YouTube channel icons were not seen on the three UAE and one Pakistani Islamic banks' homepages. Most Islamic banks (around 7) placed social media icons at the 'bottom right' of the main webpage (Table 2) whereas, few banks placed social media icons twice (on a sidebar and at the bottom) on their main webpages. Instead of scrolling to the bottom of the webpage to look for the icons, this research suggests that the placement of icons should be visible on the 'upper right side' as the goal of social media icons are to encourage the consumers to click, visit and share.

To assess usability of web information, visual, and consumer response effectively, literature believes that eye-tracking technology can be applied.⁴³ Islamic banks can take advantage of neuro-imaging, eye-gazing and psychological assessment techniques to provide accurate evaluation, which cannot be measured by conventional testing methods.

3.2 Product marketing approach through YouTube videos

The YouTube icon was not found on three UAE Islamic bank's home page, as seen in Table 2. The videos of two UAE Islamic banks' (NB and SIB) with the highest number of views are considered old and were posted in 2017.

Meezan Bank (Pakistan) and Emirate Islamic Bank (UAE) have higher numbers of YouTube subscribers. Overall, Home finance (UAE) and lecture series on Islamic banks (Pakistan) were popular videos posted on YouTube (Table 2). In addition, it has been noticed that a bank in Pakistan, utilized a celebrity marketing approach in which famous cricket players endorse Islamic bank products. Interestingly, the marketing technique coupled with fan following was considered attractive amongst consumers and rated as the highest viewed YouTube video on the bank's channel (Table 2).

It was noted that YouTube videos marketing of the Islamic banks channels (Pakistan and UAE) missed showcasing the various stages of real-life segments to foster human connections.

The US bank (Ally Bank) featured real-life retirees in a video, their decisive financial turning and current retirement lifestyle. It has the highest number of views on YouTube (viewed more than 75,000) and highest engagement rate using Facebook (60,000 people liked, commented on or shared). Islamic banks should portray realistic life issues of local customers and offer the appropriate banking solutions through social marketing messages.

On a cautionary note, this research suggests that a logical balance is needed in social media marketing campaigns as too much emotional content will cause havoc on reasoning and excessive theoretical information can be overlooked.

43 QIN, L., ZHONG, N., SHENGFU, L. V.: Interaction effects of web content appeal strategies with user tasks and their influence on eye-movement patterns. In *Journal of Guangxi Normal University: Natural Science Edition*, 2012, Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 30-35.

| | 1-Facebook icon easy to locate on webpage | 2-Facebook followers | 3-YouTube most popular video views | 4-YouTube Subscribers |
|----------------|--|----------------------|--|------------------------------|
| PK 1-AIB | Facebook icon was not on the main webpage, it was found on clicking the contact us page. At the bottom right, it was found, only Facebook and LinkedIn social media icon was found | 59 661 | Youtube Icon was not found on the main bank webpage (only Facebook and LinkedIn) | - |
| PK 2-BI | Facebook and YouTube icons were found twice: at the bottom of the webpage as well as the right sidebar | 940 245 | The highest viewed ad was 535 110 posted on Feb 8, 2020. The ad feature a former cricketer explaining about transaction possible with thumb impression | 3,69k |
| PK 3-DIB-PK | Facebook and YouTube icon was found at the left bottom of the webpage | 366 570 | Most viewed YouTube video was about a lecture by late Junaid Jamshed (singer turn to more religious) last lecture at Dubai Islamic Bank-views 161k posted three year ago | 7,79k |
| PK 4-MB | Facebook and YouTube icons at the bottom right of the webpage | 2 000 519 | Most viewed video about: the best bank in Pakistan-bank product and services (1,1m) posted a year ago | 10,7k |
| UAE 1-ADIB | Found Facebook icons twice at the bottom right and another one as a sidebar but it is asking to like the Facebook page and not accessible further | 1 164 858 | no YouTube icon on bank website | - no YouTube icon on website |
| UAE 2-HB | Facebook and YouTube icons were at the bottom left of the webpage | 59 670 | no YouTube icon on bank website | - no YouTube icon on website |
| UAE 3-AB | Facebook and YouTube icons were found twice top left and right sidebar | 8 494 | no YouTube icon on bank website | - no YouTube icon on website |
| UAE 4-DIB | Facebook and YouTube icons were at the bottom right of the webpage | 225 979 | The most popular home finance video 323 posted a year ago | 2,59k |
| UAE 5-EIB | Facebook and YouTube icons were found at the bottom right of the webpage | 585 950 | Time change value remain the same posted a year ago 317k | 2,06k |
| UAE 6-NB | Facebook and YouTube icons were found at the bottom right of the webpage | 79 919 | Legacies Are Forever: Taking traditions, leaving marks and sharing legacy posted 37k views posted 3 years ago | 734k |
| UAE 7-SIB | Facebook icons were found left top sidebar | 9 663 | Video was about apartments and facilities at Burj Asas real estate. 3,7k 3 years ago | 231k |

TABLE 2: Social media Islamic banks activities-Pakistan and UAE in 2020

Source: Author collected from Facebook page and YouTube of Islamic banks Pakistan and UAE

3.3 Product Marketing through Facebook

Estimating and measuring the success of social strategies in terms of return on investment is time-consuming and quite difficult.⁴⁴ Therefore, as an alternative, the effectiveness of product marketing on Facebook can be measured by the number of views (seen by people), followers (people's interest to receive updates), engagement (response to the messages), and results (achievement of campaign goals). Islamic banks should also consider effective marketing strategies to attract and increase the number of new visitors to their corporate Facebook page, as each user is seen as a potential brand ambassador to invite and introduce the bank's

⁴⁴ COSTIN, D.: Banking Business and Social Media – A Strategic Partnership. In *Theoretical & Applied Economics*, 2015, Vol. 22, No. 4, p. 121-132.

page to hundreds of their friends and followers. As per Table 2, Meezan Bank (Pakistan) and Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank (UAE) have the higher numbers of Facebook followers, therefore, the said banks can interact with their followers to outreach to the larger audience and maximize marketing impact.

Tables 3 and 4 depicts that the highest number of customer ‘comments’ are found for the Islamic bank ‘products’ and the higher number of ‘Likes’ are for ‘other posts’ (such as bank updates and achievement). It has been further noted, from the table below, that more comments with simultaneously more likes for a single post is a rare combination. The table below shows that two posts (recruitment branch trainees and word/pic of UAE leaders) were attractive to the customer and received more ‘Comments’ as well as higher number of ‘Likes’ (Table 4).

Moreover, it has been observed that the most frequently common post on the Facebook pages of Pakistan Islamic banks was ATM/debit or student card deals (Table 3), whereas the UAE Islamic banks repeatedly posted messages about the saving plans/accounts and credit/debit accounts that offer appealing features (winning air miles and reward incentives) for their customers.

| Highest comments, share & likes Products/Services on Facebook page - Pakistan | | Comments | Share | Likes |
|---|--|----------|-------|-------|
| 1) | Easy money instalment for phone | 402 | 299 | – |
| 2) | Cash ATM withdrawal limit increase 50,000 RS | 402 | 187 | – |
| 3) | Recruitment for branch trainee | 37 | 42 | 121 |
| 4) | Protect your iman (faith) by banking with us | 0 | 57 | – |

| Highest comments, share & likes Products/Services on Facebook page - UAE | | Comments | Share | Likes |
|--|--------------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| 1) | Skyward mile competition | 127 | 37 | – |
| 2) | Words of UAE leaders | 1200 | 1100 | 1100 |
| 3) | Saving plans | 73 | 4 | – |
| 4) | Mobile App | 79 | 75 | – |

TABLE 3, 4: Highest comments, share/like on Pakistan and UAE Facebook page

Source: Author collected from Facebook page of Islamic banks Pakistan and UAE

3.4 Financial literacy, education and advice on Facebook Pages of Islamic banks

Table 3 reflects that through a Facebook page, a bank in UAE chose to take up an interactive financial literacy approach by correlating the habits of saving with different personality traits. To induce customer interest the bank announced 10,000 AED for taking personality tests, and also encouraged the customers to post results on the corporate Facebook page and tag friends to qualify for the prize.

This research suggests that Islamic banks can design proper strategies for financial literacy and marketing through YouTube and Facebook to connect with confused consumers seeking personalized financial solutions. Such as the U.S. based subsidiary of Canada’s (TD Bank) created a social space for financial literacy (managing credit, investment, and retirement) through open consumer interactions with financial experts and peers.⁴⁵ It helps to address the specific needs of customers across distinct segments. Similarly, Islamic financial experts and scholars can be incorporated into the literacy session for greater impact.

⁴⁵ Deloitte: *Who says banks can't be social?* [online]. [2017-02-05]. Available at: <<https://www2.deloitte.com/lk/en/pages/financial-services/articles/banks-can-be-social.html>>.

3.5 Online security information on Islamic banks' Facebook pages

All four of Pakistan's Islamic banks displayed an elevated concern toward online security information and data protection initiatives. However, only two out of seven UAE Islamic banks posted about online safety precautions on the corporate Facebook page (Table 3).

3.6 Customer reviews and comments on Islamic banks' Facebook pages

On the corporate Facebook pages of Pakistani Islamic banks, query-based questions regarding banking branches or ATM service, remittance, deals, and discounts on cards were commonly found. Among customer complaints, most common comments were related to branch service, internet, ATM, and App (Figure 1). Two Islamic banks representatives in Pakistan were efficient and prompt in replying to the customers' comments about bank products and services. A few negative comments by the users of Islamic banks in Pakistan are shared below:

- *„This card has become useless as it can't be used internationally anymore due to the reason it's no more a VISA card.“*
- *„Worst banking experience with this bank from the last 2 months, unable to use any facilities due to link down, no transfer, no Western Union, and no compliance to any complaint. Hopeless banking.“*
- *„Indeed they have the best service but in some areas they have very bad heads in some North region branches. Very abusive to their juniors. Which is very sad and disappointing. Must remove such managers immediately. It will damage the image of the bank.“*

It has been noticed that on UAE Islamic banks' Facebook pages, the higher number of positive comments were for the pictures of UAE leaders. Furthermore, it is revealed through observation that UAE corporate Facebook pages had limited communication between customers and the bank's representatives (Table 2).

The UAE consumers express their lack of satisfaction with banking service as amongst the total of 115 negative comments, 35 posted comments were about the worst /poor banking service experience. 22 consumer comments indicated the unfriendly and rude behaviour of bank staff. 10 negative comments referred to the slow customer service, 5 negative comments pointed out that their e-mail was not answered (Figure 1). Some UAE Islamic bank customers' Facebook comments are shared below:

- *„..... Islamic Bank your customer service is very poor and unprofessional, And your supervisor they don't know how to make the customer satisfied and They disrespectfully treat customers. I will share my bad experience in the social media and e-commerce and I will send an email to your COO and I will raise a complaint in the central bank to have my money back.“*
- *„Don't even think about this bank guys -They will add any charges they like even it's not applicable and they just try to convince you it's your mistake, if u didn't convince so it's your mistake and they will charge it anyways.“*
- *„For God sake how can someone raise a complaint on your worst customer service ever!!! Nothing in your list when I try calling your 600 number!!!“*

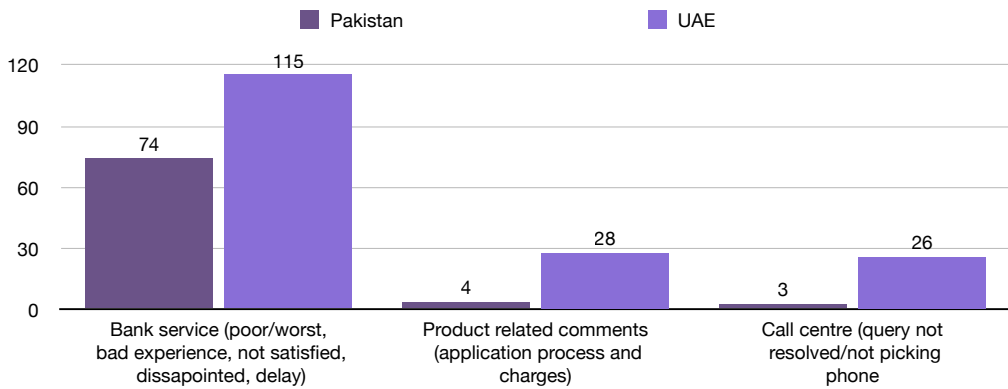


FIGURE 1: Analysis of negative comments on Islamic banks' Facebook pages-Pakistan and UAE

Source: Author collected from Facebook page of Islamic banks Pakistan and UAE

3.7 Customer Engagement activities on Islamic banks' Facebook pages

The Islamic banks' social media posts are not only to increase the number of clicks and views, but to create awareness, engagement, and goodwill for generating in-depth customer relations. During the observation process, it was noticed that customer engagement posts were found on the Facebook page of the UAE Islamic bank, however no such posts were seen on any Islamic bank in Pakistan (Table 3).

Islamic banks can encourage customers' engagement for product feedback, suggestions or service testing through social media platforms. For instance, in 2012, Barclaycard launched a feedback experiment for credit card holders on Facebook, where users were opinionated and were welcomed to suggest and vote on new product features.⁴⁶ Likewise, Barclays used social media to conduct a product test of their first mobile application through social media to save time (usually takes 18 months) and made necessary changes on application based on customers' feedback.⁴⁷ Similarly, an icebreaker-style question can be posted on the Facebook page of Islamic banks to increase customer engagement and interaction, for example TD Bank (U.S. based subsidiary of Canadian bank) posted „If you're looking to unwind this summer, what's the one thing you have to have?“ , this post resulted in more than 35,000 likes, shares, and comments, and promoted the use of the bank's debit card for summer time purchases.

3.8 Recruitment method or Career advice through Facebook page of Islamic banks

Facebook has proven to be one of the most effective ways of promoting banks' events within the community as well as to attract talent.⁴⁸ Royal Bank of Scotland and HSBC UK used Facebook and other social media platforms to advertise jobs openings and career opportunities.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ MORGAN, N. et al.: *Social Media. The Complete Guide to Social Media, from the Social Media Guys*. [online]. [2017-02-05]. Available at: <<https://rucreativebloggingfa13.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/completeguidetosocialmedia.pdf>>.

⁴⁷ QUESENBERRY, K.: *Social Media Strategy: Marketing and Advertising in the Consumer Revolution*. Lanham, Maryland, USA : Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, p. 213.

⁴⁸ MARCIA, D., DENISE, S.: *Ethical Practice of Social Media in Public Relations*. London : Routledge, 2014, p. 43.

⁴⁹ *Innovalue Management Advisors*. [online]. [2015-04.02]. Available at: <https://www.innovalue.de/publikationen/INNOVALUE_LockeLord_SocialMediainFinancialServices2015.pdf>.

Our findings indicate that three Pakistani banks and three UAE Islamic banks used Facebook to post job fairs and recruit graduates (Table 3). A bank in Pakistan has the highest comments and shares for the post, which was related to vacancies for the position of Branch trainees (Table 4). However, none of Islamic banks utilized an innovative approach in hiring the suitable candidate or talent through their Facebook page (separate career content page, getting referral, simple application process, 60-seconds video pitch).

3.9 Survey and Polling on Islamic banks' Facebook pages

Surveys and polls were not conducted through the Facebook page except for one Islamic bank from Pakistan; the polling question was 'who will win the cricket game'? (Table 3). For more customer input, all bank managers (relationship managers, sales managers, product development managers, and senior managers) should hear the publicly expressed customer voice through comments, feedback and surveys.⁵⁰ By asking questions or conducting polls, banks can expect customers to initiate discussions on the post (likes, tags and shares), thereby increasing followers, traffic and engagement.

3.10 Other posts (Islamic bank activities, achievements and greetings)

In the category of other posts related to bank activities and achievements, the result showed that the claim 'Best bank' was posted by one Islamic bank in Pakistan and one Islamic bank in the UAE. Two banks in Pakistan posted about their financial performance using the term (after tax profit/excellent profit result) and three banks in UAE posted about 'net profit' and 'financial result'. Quranic verses, hadith references and Islamic quotations were posted by two Islamic banks in Pakistan. Along with that, the presence of cricket players endorsing Islamic products was observed in Islamic banks in Pakistan. In the case of the UAE Islamic bank, photographs of their leader and their quotes were frequently posted. Two Islamic banks in the UAE posted about employee health and fitness activity and trips to local site-seeing places. We further note that Islamic banks use the Facebook platform to update and communicate their corporate social responsibilities. According to Table 3, the four Islamic banks in Pakistan posted appeals for donation, support for education in rural areas, cancer support and awareness. One Pakistani bank posted about winning an award on CSR environment and health (receive higher number of 'likes'). In addition to that, two banks in the UAE posted about CSR specific activities (donation appeal for the Red Crescent, blood donation by bank employees, social initiative partnership, donations to Medicine University and rehabilitation activities). For CSR, engaging opportunities can be used, such as UBS encouraged customers' participation in community service and social welfare projects through Facebook.⁵¹

⁵⁰ QIN, L., ZHONG, N., SHENGFU, L. V.: Interaction effects of web content appeal strategies with user tasks and their influence on eye-movement patterns. In *Journal of Guangxi Normal University: Natural Science Edition*, 2012, Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 30-35.

⁵¹ *Innovalue Management Advisors*. [online]. [2015-04.02]. Available at: <https://www.innovalue.de/publikationen/INNOVALUE_LockeLord_SocialMediaInFinancialServices2015.pdf>

4. Discussion: Harness the power of social media to enhance Islamic financial brand

Based on the findings of observation and coding, this research asserts that Islamic banks have to define the purpose of using social media – is it only used for routine marketing or utilization of the social media accounts to seek consumer inputs, educate and guide customers through their financial decision-making journey? The analysis of this research established that the interaction and communication of Islamic banks on the Facebook platform is limited/restricted, the reasons have to be identified (Table 2 and Table 3). The literature pointed out that the main reason for Islamic banks to refrain from use of social media could be the customers' reduced preferences for bank interaction through Facebook; due to safety concerns about sharing sensitive information; and the lack of alignment with current marketing strategies.⁵²

The research findings reflect that Islamic banks are required to fine-tune their social media marketing pitches according to the requirements of existing audiences concurrently addressing the needs of personalized financial solutions for new customers. Observations conducted through the Facebook pages, show that banks of both countries use Facebook posts to share information about their products and discount deals (Table 3). Islamic banks should consider that excessive self-promotional posts will detour users. Banks can share opportunities to enrich their social media content by financial literacy/education/advice, online recruitment and online security support in the form of success stories, Thank you videos for customer loyalty, articles, tips, tools, and infographics.

To overcome negative customer concerns, Islamic banks can evaluate the efforts and effectiveness of existing social media by measuring complaint resolution. Negative customer attitudes can cause harm to the corporate image, marketing, advertising, and ethical activities of the firm.^{53,54} Since social media provides an exposed platform for customer's interaction, Islamic financial institutions should be concerned about the lack of control over negative comments posted on their social media page.⁵⁵ Anyone can connect and log-in to social media pages, and can share bad comments or negative experiences about products or customer service.⁵⁶ False or negative information spreads rapidly, causing confusion and disruption. In the case of a Facebook wall attack, research⁵⁷ suggested to enact immediate action and rehabilitate the company's online reputation. Facebook-based customer service should be developed specifically for the UAE Islamic banks to pay more attention to negative views that may pose a potential threat to the brand. Expatriates living in the UAE (88,5% of the country's total population)⁵⁸ might have a different set of financial product or service issues, their concerns should be heard and resolved through proactive Facebook customer service. ICICI

⁵² MITIC, M., KAPOULAS, A.: Understanding the Role of Social Media in Bank Marketing. In *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 2012, Vol. 30, No. 7, p. 668-686.

⁵³ KAPLAN, A. M., HAENLEIN, M.: Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. In *Business Horizons*, 2010, Vol. 53, No. 1, p. 59-68.

⁵⁴ ARLI, D., DIETRICH, T.: Can Social Media Campaigns Backfire? Exploring Consumers Attitudes and Word-of-Mouth toward Four Social Media Campaigns and Its Implications on Consumer-Campaign Identification. In *Journal of Promotion Management*, 2017, Vol. 23, No. 6, p. 834-850.

⁵⁵ MIFC – Malaysia's Islamic finance Centre. *Social Media an Opportunity for Islamic Finance. Bank Negara Malaysia Report*. [online]. [2016-04-25]. Available at: <<https://www.mifc.com/index.php?ch=28&pg=72&ac=126&bb=uploadpdf>>.

⁵⁶ YASA, E., MUCAN, B.: Paper presented at 12th International Marketing Trends Conference with subtitle Turkish Companies Value Creation through Social Media Tools: Analysing Fortune 100 Turkey. Paris, presented on 12th Jan 2013.

⁵⁷ CHAMPOUX, V. et al.: Corporate Facebook Pages: When Fans Attack. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 2012, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 22-30.

⁵⁸ *Global Media Insights. United Arab Population Statistic 2020*. [online]. [2020-01-05]. Available at: <<https://www.globalmediainsight.com>>.

Bank successfully launched a Facebook-based customer service approach that transformed its reputation from negative to a net positive bank's service image in 15 months.⁵⁹

Along with above considerations, Islamic banks may require social media leaders, Islamic e-scholars, and marketing technologists, (1) to formulate social media strategies (governance and policy) for protection of brand image, (2) to test and manage the various content for higher traffic and more followers, (3) to assess and evaluate social media strategies from different platforms and monitor target audience responses and their sentiments, (4) to track and measure performance against benchmarks and key indicators to excel among the local, regional, and national banks, (5) to design innovative service by integrating information technology with creative marketing to enhance customer experience, (6) to expand brand outreach collaboration with Islamic social media influencers for brand awareness and to attract new audiences (7) to revise and consistently modify social media strategies in line with evolving trends for greater impact, (8) to mend the damaged relationship, train conversational strategies to bank representatives for amicable customers service (9) to clarify the Islamic aspect, inclusive presence of Islamic e-scholars for establishing credibility with potential or confused customers.

For optimizing the effectiveness of social media activities, this research suggests that Islamic banks can use web analytics and ranking tools (such as Social Bakers, Unmetric, Quintly, Cyfe, Simply Measured, Like Analyzer, Rival IQ), to get data analytics of financial brands that market on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram.⁶⁰ Some online digital marketing analytic platforms and ranking tools are free, while some charge fees for providing detailed analysis reports. These consulting and analytical tools can create a list of best performers, such as how 'The Financial Brand' listed and ranked the top 100 banks based on an engagement rate on their YouTube (video views and subscribers) and Facebook page (likes, shares, and comments). Interestingly, the table below indicates that for Facebook engagement, only one Islamic bank (Meezan Bank - Pakistan) ranked 19th among the top 100 international banks (Table 5). Information from these sources can assist Islamic banks to set benchmarks against competitors, and to track key performance indicators of social media for improving their social media marketing success and performance. Monitoring the social media activities of local Islamic banks, regional and international Islamic banks as well as conventional banks can definitely assist to design unique and differentiated social media marketing strategies.

| Facebook Ranks-Banks Q4 2019 | | | | | YouTube Ranks-Banks Q4 2019 | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|------|---------------|----------------------|
| Rank | Bank | Area | Facebook Likes | New Likes in Q4 2019 | Rank | Bank | Area | YouTube Views | New Views in Q4 2019 |
| 1 | State Bank of India | IN | 18 153 662 | 68 907 | 1 | State Bank of India | IN | 311 068 260 | 23 672 721 |
| 2 | YES | IN | 7 168 746 | -41 452 | 2 | ICICI | IN | 241 914 981 | 1 746 829 |
| 3 | GT Bank | NIG | 6 309 464 | -73 512 | 3 | Kotak Mahindra | IN | 209 332 098 | 67 352 475 |
| 4 | Zenith Bank | NIG | 5 890 666 | 221 494 | 4 | Axis | IN | 201 767 738 | 34 231 049 |
| 5 | BBVA Compass | USA | 5 563 630 | 30 293 | 5 | TD Bank (Canada) | CAN | 136 078 164 | 15 602 170 |
| 6 | ICICI | IN | 5 460 888 | -17 046 | 6 | CIMB | MAL | 133 078 164 | 5 764 039 |
| 7 | Capital One | USA | 4 207 625 | -10 692 | 7 | RBC | CAN | 122 125 378 | 11 799 599 |
| 8 | Chase | USA | 4 004 023 | -10 699 | 8 | HDFC | IN | 115 961 424 | 16 454 808 |
| 9 | Axis | IN | 3 690 817 | -3 841 | 9 | Wells Fargo | USA | 106 851 273 | 20 656 466 |
| 10 | BDO | PHI | 3 526 149 | 8 348 | 10 | Goldman Sachs | USA | 105 517 344 | 12 956 041 |
| 11 | BofA | USA | 2 845 819 | -7 596 | 11 | BDO | PHI | 84 461 026 | 2 913 971 |

TABLE 5. The Financial brand website listed Top 100 banks on Facebook & YouTube

Source: The financial brand 2019

⁵⁹ *Innovalue Management Advisors*. [online]. [2015-04.02]. Available at: <https://www.innovalue.de/publikationen/INNOVALUE_LockeLord_SocialMediaInFinancialServices2015.pdf>.

⁶⁰ ICHA, O., AGWU, M. E.: Effectiveness of Social Media Networks as a Strategic Tool for Organizational Marketing Management. In *Journal Internet Bank Commerce*, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 6, p. 4.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Islamic banks in Pakistan and the UAE have to realize the benefits of social media for improvements in business authenticity and impact of their corporate image. Islamic banks must consider that the social media platforms enable them to offer a wider range of privileges than to simply market their products or services.

Thus, the key is not to ignore the significance and prevalent nature of this medium; there is a dire need to channelize active social platforms aptly. Islamic banks need to review the purpose of social media, the ease of locating media icons on the bank webpage, monitor activities on social media pages and identify customer sentiments and reactions to the post. In order to handle negative customer comments on social media and to safeguard brand reputation, Islamic banks managers and leaders should actively monitor, react and govern social media strategies. For establishing strong presence and impact, Islamic banks require consistent revision of social media initiatives based on emerging trends. Moreover, they can offer enhanced user social media engagement opportunities such as online surveys, job openings, and provide realistic human connection features in video marketing.

This research calls for further study on the usage of social media as a corporate marketing communication tool in Islamic banking. Furthermore, customers' perspectives can be investigated according to cultural and socio-economic differences to enhance exclusive users' engagement and participation on the Islamic banks' social media platforms.

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a historical discourse on the development and the political framework of television broadcasting in Nigeria. It also explores the influence of politics in the emergence of the medium of television, and its imperative in Nigerian politics. It argues that the political gimmick, culture and counterculture characteristic of the Nigerian polity was germane to the establishment of television stations in Nigeria. I utilise the literary and descriptive methodological investigative approaches to investigate the imperative of television in the Nigerian political landscape. Among other findings, the study reveals that the birth of television in Nigeria is rooted in the Nigerian political situation of the First Republic, and that television is imperative in the growth and positive change and development of Nigeria. This research concludes that television and politics in Nigeria intersect. In Nigeria, this medium of communication is a force to reckon with. Hence, the study recommends that positive reforms and modifications should be made by the National Broadcasting Commission in the operation of television broadcasting. Furthermore, these reforms should be adhered to, so that the aim and objectives of the positive transformation in television broadcasting in Nigeria can be achieved.

KEY WORDS

Television. Nigerian Politics. Imperative. Political cum Broadcasting.

1. Introduction

Of all the media of mass communication, television is one of the most highly utilised. In fact, in 2013, 79% of the world's households owned a television set. Besides the urban areas where television has taken a strong foothold, most families in rural areas can also claim ownership of the medium. Its capacity to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct culture cannot be overemphasised. As a medium of communication, it is functional in disseminating information, providing entertainment and education. In the light of this functionality, Newton Okoh in *A handbook of radio and television presentation*, submits that „*the content of the medium could also serve as a tool for stimulation.*“¹ Okoh's submission is an extension of the multi-functionality of the medium. The wide ownership and popularity of the small screen-television is not farfetched from the fact that its consumers are dispersed in the comfort of their homes, not only to be handed what the cinema supplied, but to be acquainted with the latest events in society. Furthermore, television has also affected and influenced the trends of world politics.

In postcolonial Africa, television played a major role in the political revolutions. Paradigms of such are the political uprising in Egypt, the Libyan war which led to the death of President Muammar Gaddafi and many others, surmised as the „*Arab Spring.*“ Furthermore, modern and postmodern Nigeria has also engaged in the utility of the medium in political engagement. This has created spaces for various dimensions in the electoral process. Against the backdrop of the above, this study engages in a historical discourse on the development and the political framework of television broadcasting in Nigeria. It also explores the influence of politics in the emergence of the medium of television, and its imperative in Nigerian politics.

It argues that the political gimmicks, culture and counterculture characteristic of the Nigerian polity was germane to the establishment of television stations in Nigeria.

2. A Retrospect of Television Broadcasting in Nigeria

„In our age when all languages are confused as in the tower of Babel, when all aesthetical genres intermingle, death threatens the theatre as film and television encroach upon its domain...“

Jerzy Grotowski

The first electronic medium of mass communication in Nigeria was the sound box-radio. The British colonial government wanted a concrete link between its colonies and mother Britain, hence the establishment of a radio station in 1932 in Lagos. It was a wired broadcasting service called the Radio Distribution Service. Most programmes broadcast at this time were products of the British Broadcasting Service (BBC). In other words, the move for the Nigerianisation of the content of radio was still out of place.² Radio broadcasting was controlled by the post and telegraph service department. Though the Second World War disrupted the development of broadcasting, it was revived after the war. At the end of the war, the British capitalised on the positive Communication impact made by radio broadcasting in the western world, and extended the tentacles of the RDS to Kano, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode, Port Harcourt, Enugu and Zaria in 1944.³

The establishment of other RDS stations was extended to the above places. To realise a total growth of the medium, more had to be done as Akinwale makes us understand that Nigeria was the first to adhere to the Tyron-Byron report. The Tyron-Byron report was a pragmatic research exercise aimed at advancing the utility of radio in the country. With the execution of the final

¹ OKOH, N.: *A handbook of radio and television presentation*. Warri : Jolo Publishers, 2009, p. 1.

² MACKAY, I.: *Broadcasting in nigeria*. Ibadan : University press, 1964, p. 200.

³ AKINWALE, A.: *The Nigerian broadcaster: a professional or a civil servant* in AKINFELEYE, R. (ed.): *Issues on Broadcasting in Nigeria*. Lagos : Spectrum books, 1990, p. 26.

research made by two BBC workers, Tom Chalmers and Murray, the Nigerian Broadcasting Service was established in 1951, but started transmission the following year after numerous difficulties. Chalmers became the first Director-General of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. Radio broadcasting went through many revolutionary changes as numerous investigations were carried out by BBC personnel such as Mr. Chalmers, where radio stations should be located and how it can be proliferated. The Radio Distribution Service was modified into the Nigerian Broadcasting Service in 1952. Due to the upsurge in the number of political parties and political consciousness, the NBS was labelled a tool, used by the colonial government. Daniel Omatsola in *Television film production in Nigeria: A critical source book*, notes that „the NBS was criticised for its monopoly by the colonial government.“⁴

The Macpherson constitution of 1951, paved the way for the emergence of regional broadcasting stations which included radio stations located in Eastern, Northern and Western Nigeria. According to Elo Ibagere, it is now that the political life, social life and social development of the Regions (of Nigeria) will mean that regional broadcasting will play an even more important part than was originally anticipated.⁵ The critique of the monopoly of radio stations in Nigeria, and its politicisation, watered the ground for the evolution of the television medium in Nigeria. It was not until 1953, when the political terrain was in a rigorous tempo that the major event which led to the call for a revolutionary change in the broadcast world in Nigeria, occurred. The call for independence spurred these issues. Citing Elo Ibagere, Moses Oghenevizie in *Reality television and African aesthetics: a study of big brother Africa*, reveals that in 1953, Chief Anthony Enahoro, an Honourable Member of the Action Group from the Western Region, moved a motion calling on the House of Representatives to accept the attainment of self-governance in 1956.⁶ The representatives of the North in the house rejected this decision and Chief Obafemi Awolowo led Action Group (AG) to walk out of the house. The British Governor General that same evening, along with the Nigerian Broadcasting Service, severely criticised the action carried out by some people in respect to governance. Though he did not mention names, the message was already decoded. He was referring to the action of the Action Group. Chief Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the Action Group went to the Nigerian Broadcasting Service to demand equal opportunity to go on air and refute the position of the Governor, but was denied. It became obvious that that the federal government was exercising a stronghold on the operations of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service.⁷

When Obafemi Awolowo requested time to reply to the claim of the Governor General, he was refused air time and the die was cast. This event led to increased campaigning for converting the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. This crusade for change, made the colonial government give the issue consideration. Although the above event, along with the need for a wider coverage, led to the establishment of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation which was to be modelled on the British Broadcasting Corporation in Mother Britain and would serve to nigerianise its content, the Western Nigerian Government did not stop in its quest to set up its own radio broadcasting station. It went ahead in 1959 to establish the first television station in Nigeria. It was not only the first in Nigeria, but it was the first in Africa. This was the birth of the Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service (WNBS) and Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) which was the brainchild of a collaboration with an overseas company. Citing Obaro Ikime, Oghenevizie states further that: The Western Region, which was most articulate in their resentment against

⁴ OMATSOLA, D.: *Television film production in Nigeria: a critical source book*. Warri : Abotu Research Publishers, 1997, p. 13.

⁵ IBAGERE, E.: *Social Development, Television and Politics in Nigeria*. Ibadan : Kraft Books, 2009, p. 101.

⁶ OGHENEVIZIE, M.: *Reality television and African aesthetics: a study of big brother Africa*. [An unpublished Masters Thesis]. Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka : Delta State University, Abraka, 2012, p. 13.

⁷ IBAGERE, E.: *Social Development, Television and Politics in Nigeria*. Ibadan : Kraft Books, 2009, p. 101.

the NBC, became the first region to establish its independent broadcasting station, but rather than radio, it opted for television. Thus the first television station to be established in Nigeria and the African continent was owned by the Western Region. It was called Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) with its slogan, „*First in Africa*.“⁸

The WNBS station which started its operation in October 31st 1959 ended the monopoly of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. More broadcasting stations emerged in the other regions much later. Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the then Premier of the Western region, who established the station, said that broadcast media will serve as teacher and entertainer and as a stimulus to us all to transform Nigeria into a modern and prosperous nation. The Northern Nigerian regional government did not bother to establish a broadcasting station unlike the Eastern Nigerian regional government that established its own the following year. Thus, Eastern Nigerian Television (ENTV) as it was called, adopted the slogan, „*second to none*.“ It is pertinent to note that Western Nigerian Television had previously coined the slogan, „*First in Africa*“, hence, Eastern Nigerian Television claimed they were second to none. The Northern regional government established its own in March 1962 with the name Radio Kaduna Television (RKTV). The Nigerian Television Service followed a year after, but initially its service was confined only to Lagos. The threat from WNTV and later, the other regional television stations perhaps energised the quest of the federal government to establish a television station. Herein lies the political dimension of broadcasting in Nigeria.

Television broadcasting stations became counter-tools. They became tools with which the Action Group criticised and countered policies made by the central, colonial government. The broadcasting stations continued with their service till there emerged another phase in the development of broadcasting in Nigeria. This phase was also influenced by the change in the political terrain of Nigeria: The military regime which culminated in the creation of twelve states by General Yakubu Gowon. The military government and subsequent military governments coveted the regional television stations for their own use. Thus, these television stations became federal government controlled.

The proliferation of the Nigerian polity in 1967 facilitated an increase in television broadcasting stations. Precursory to this time, when the Mid-Western region was created, a radio and a television station was established. Mid-West Television, Benin, was created in 1978, with a radio station as well. Benue-Plateau State had its own in 1974. The station established by the then Benue-Plateau state government had begun transmitting in colour. It is therefore a fact that BPTV, Jos was the first television station in Nigeria to transmit in colour. Rivers and Kano also followed suit. There is the presupposition that the multiplicity of the Nigerian society also led to that of television broadcasting stations because every state craved for one so as to serve as a mouth piece as well as to succinctly and easily disseminate their policies to the populace. By this time, there had been an influx in the number of televisions, especially in urban areas in Nigeria where the upper and middle classes lived in. One factor that also led to the popularity of the medium was the introduction of drama programmes such as Wole Soyinka's *My Father's Burden* which was the first drama series on Nigerian television, as Segun Olusola in *The Advent of Television Drama* argues that: A remarkable feature of the 1960 affair, one which differentiates it from the 1980 incident which I referred to above in my introduction was that the play, *My Father's Burden*, a very incisive criticism of the emerging Nigerian bourgeoisie bribing and corrupting its way through was televised... Wole Soyinka never wrote for television again.⁹

⁸ OGHENEVIZIE, M.: *Reality television and African aesthetics: a study of big brother Africa*. [An unpublished Masters Thesis]. Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka : Delta State University, Abraka, 2012, p. 14.

⁹ OLUSOLA, S.: The advent of television drama. In OGUNBIYI, Y. (ed.): *Drama and theatre in Nigeria: A critical source book*. Lagos : Nigeria Magazine. 1981, p. 372.

The village headmaster, *Masquerade*, *Song of a Goat*, *Winds against my Soul*, *For Better For Worse*, *Case File*, as well as *Hotel De Jordan* followed. „Other dramas that came up later were Peter Igho’s *Cockcrow at dawn*, Lola Fani-Kayode’s *Mirror in the Sun*, Zeb Ejiro’s *Ripples*, Ken Saro-Wiwa’s *Basi and Company*...“¹⁰, among others. The popularity of these dramas culminated in the purchase of television sets which determined social status and prestige especially in rural areas at that time. The second republic saw an upsurge in the propagation of more television stations since the ruling political parties used the available ones for their personal interests, for propaganda and for dissemination of policies. These stations became engrossed in political issues, that they soon lost focus on the purpose of their formation and establishment as Elo Ibagere avers that: As it was a prophecy of doom, after the NPN won the 1979 election, pressures were mounted on the NBC by the party to the detriment of other parties. Consequently, the programmes of the other parties were blacked out of NBC’s daily broadcast. Even, radio station in states controlled by opposition parties, began to broadcast in favour of the NPN controlled federal government, and to the detriment of the opposition parties controlling those states.¹¹

In other words, the Second Republic saw the emergence of Alhaji Shehu Shagari taking the mantle of leadership in his defeat of political stalwarts such as Mallam Aminu Kano, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. At this time, the ruling party, which was the NPN, completely politicised the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. It could be remembered that the military governments had taken charge of all broadcasting stations and therefore by the time Alhaji Shehu Shagari became President, the television and radio broadcasting sector was already under the control of the federal government. Without doubt, the aim of the NPN in monopolising the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation was to boost their chances in winning subsequent elections. This was the birth of propaganda broadcasting in Nigeria. The broadcasting personnel, who refused to succumb to this despotic act, were either demoted, or sacked to act as a deterrent to others.

Based on the fact that Lagos state was been controlled by the UPN, a major opposition party, it was decided to set up a state owned television station. The federal government refused to allow the station to operate. This case was contested in court. The Lagos state government lost at the lower court, but won at the Appeal Court so they were given the permission to operate. Hence, Lagos Television emerged.

Like the old Western Nigerian regional government that broke the jinx of the monopoly of the British colonial government thereby establishing the first television station, a state situated in west-Lagos had again established a state owned television station. The audacious action of the Lagos state government spurred other states into action. The stations set up by the opposition parties were organised to challenge the unfriendly policies of the federal government. In fact the Owerri based Nigerian Statesman quoted Governor Sam Mbakwe of Imo state as saying that the Imo Broadcast Station was established to inform citizens of the state of the activities of the government and to counter the many mischievous propaganda of the federal government against the state by the federal government owned broadcast stations.¹²

With the proliferation of more broadcasting stations, the state owned television stations began to preach their policies as well. The political parties in charge of the states therefore coveted the newly established television stations for their own use. With this, television became a pencil in the hands of the government. In 1977 the Nigerian Broadcasting Service became the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA).

¹⁰ AYAKOROMA, B.: Trends in the Development of Contemporary Nigerian Video Film Industry. In ONI, D., AHMED, Y. (eds.): *Trends in the Theory and Practice of Theatre in Nigeria*. Ibadan : JFR Publishers, 2008, p. 76.

¹¹ IBAGERE, E.: *Social Development, Television and Politics in Nigeria*. Ibadan : Kraft Books, 2009, p.106.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.107.

3. Towards the Deregulation of Television and its Imperative in Nigerian Politics

For several years, the government did not consent to giving the go ahead for the ownership of broadcasting stations by private individuals. There are many reasons for this. It could be recalled that the first media of mass communication to encroach on Nigerian society was the print media. This was when Rev. Henry Townsend began the publication of a newspaper called „*Iwe Irohin Fun Awon Egba ati Yoruba which started publication in 1859.*“¹³ Subsequent newspapers such as *The Lagos Weekly Record*, which was a militant newspaper, made it very popular. Payne Jackson succeeded in laying a solid foundation for the Nigerian press. He also set the pace for Nigerian nationalists who eventually used the press as a strong instrument to fight colonialism. The *Weekly Record* became an organ of reference for budding journalists.¹⁴

Other radical newspapers such as the *West African Pilot* were established by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and they also served in the struggle against Colonial rule. Some radical editors at that time were Ernest Ikoli and Peter Pan, among others. Upon the attainment of independence, the print media was duly used to check the excesses of the government but it was too late for the government to curb what they called a menace. Thus, the government could not risk liberalising the broadcasting sector. Putting television broadcasting in private hands would cause more threat than the print media had done because the government was aware that as a potent force for mass mobilisation and stimulation, it would be tragic to let private individuals join the broadcasting train. However, in 1992, the military government of Ibrahim Babangida finally deregulated the broadcasting sector, through the creation of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree. A new era for private broadcasting had begun. Ibagere articulates that the actual deregulation of television broadcasting commenced in 1992 via the promulgation of Decree 38 on August 24, 1992. This decree established the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). It was the Babangida administration that succumbed to the demand for the deregulation of broadcasting.¹⁵

Consequently, the door became open for individual investors to become television station owners. For a television station to be established, it had to be registered with the National Broadcasting Commission, the body responsible for regulating broadcasting stations and their content. The new privately owned television stations included African Independent Television (AIT) Lagos, owned by a Marine Engineer, Chief Raymond Dokpesi, Galaxy Television, Channels Television, and a host of others. This was what Bisi Adanri in *Fundamentals, ethics and effects of television* referred to as the democratisation of the electronic media.¹⁶ The new private broadcasting stations, being competitors in the mass media market, made the government owned stations buckle up as the competition in the media space became stiff due to the proliferation of television stations.

The Nigerian political space had been greatly influenced by television. There have been cases where the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation shut down state and privately owned television stations on the grounds that they acted contrary to the rules and regulations guiding the nation's broadcasting code. In fact, in a larger framework, television had played a vital role in world politics. In the United States of America for example, it served as a medium for debate among presidential candidates. With the television medium, the young John F. Kennedy was able to defeat his opponent, Richard Nixon, in series of debates. He eventually won the general elections. One would not categorically forget the role it played in the 2016 American election.

¹³ ADANRI, B.: *Fundamentals, ethics and effects of television*. Akure : Linda bee publishers, 2005, p. 70.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁵ IBAGERE, E.: *Social Development, Television and Politics in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2009, p. 110.

¹⁶ ADANRI, B.: *Fundamentals, ethics and effects of television*. Akure: Linda bee publishers, 2005, p. 18.

The two contestants, namely, Donald Trump of the Republican party, and Hillary Clinton of the Democratic party, made their manifestoes well known through the Cable News Network (CNN), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and other television broadcast stations, in a series of debates. However, the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Cable News Network were critical of Donald Trump, but sympathetic towards Hillary Clinton. Hence, these two global television stations were politicised in the process.

The influence of television on voters cannot be overemphasised since a number of media effects studies have shown that apolitical individuals are susceptible to attitudinal or behavioural change as a result of television-media exposure. This is what is called the „*media propaganda model*“ which portrays television as a medium for propaganda. Like its film counterpart, television influences the thought patterns of a people, facilitates cultural integration and promotes change in the traditions of a people. Television therefore, promotes ideologies. Isaw in *Revolutionary Democracy Vs. Liberal Democracy: A belated reply to Yosyas Kifleyesus's*, states that civilly done, debates of various kinds benefit a country such as ours by creating well-informed citizenry. Well informed citizenry in turn facilitates a knowledge-based vote to adjudicate a democratic contest between acutely differing political parties.¹⁷

In Nigeria, the place of television in politicking is sacrosanct. For instance, the origin of the medium cannot be separated from politics. Unlike the radio broadcasting medium which was introduced into Nigerian by the Colonial masters, television broadcasting started as a conception of Nigerian nationalists and a product of regional politics. After having the right to reply to the federal government on the castigation made by Sir John Macpherson on him and the Action Group, turned down by the Nigerian Broadcasting Service, Chief Obafemi Awolowo decided to establish the Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service (WNBS) in 1959. The above named station was the first regionally owned broadcasting station in Nigeria. Chief Awolowo did not stop there, perhaps, in an attempt to send the message of his superiority to the federal government, he decided to establish Western Nigerian Television in Ibadan, on 31st October, 1959. This was the first television station in Africa. In so far, the Action Group, which is the dominant party in the Western region, saw it as a viable tool to preach its party manifestoes, its agenda and democracy.

The above scenario provided the impetus for the establishment of regionally owned television stations, in Nigeria. In the same vein, the quest for political relevance also led to the influx of more state owned television stations as championed by Lagos state in the second republic. Thus, underneath the entertainment, information, education and communication functionalities of the medium, one major function of the medium in the framework of its formation by various governments, was-political statements and ideologies. The medium had also determined the political atmosphere of Nigerian society for some time now, especially during elections. For example, the 2015 elections would attest to the above statement. The populace expected the two major contestants, invariably the presidential candidates of the People Democratic Party (PDP), President Goodluck Jonathan and the All Progressives Congress (APC), General Muhammadu Buhari to indulge in a presidential debate on one of the major television stations, such as the Nigerian Television Authority, the African Independent Television and/or Channels Television, but the APC candidate refused.

By all indications Muhammadu Buhari refused to participate in it for two reasons, the first was that the debate would be organised and tilted to favouring his opponent and that his opponent was a better out spoken person. He knew the power of television in influencing the opinion of the populace. In another state such as Delta state, the People's Democratic Party gubernatorial candidate had a debate with the candidates of the Labour Party and the All

¹⁷ ISAW, A.: *Revolutionary Democracy vs. Liberal Democracy: A belated reply to Yosyas Kifleyesus's*. [online]. [2020-0-25]. Available at: <www.aigaforum.com/articles/Refuting_liberalism.htm>.

Progressives Congress. The purpose of such debates was to speak directly to their supporters and the masses in general, captivate them, and also, to project their manifestoes. In course of the discussions, phone calls are received. This is a process where viewers of the debate are allowed to ask questions, about issues being discussed, to facilitate clarification, with the view to finding solutions to societal and political problems. These questions focused on developmental issues. Text messages are also sent in by viewers. These text messages are question based or statement based. Statement based messages, focus on issues which the populace want the party candidates and eventual winners to tackle, which questions based messages make the party candidate engage in series of oral answers to the problems and challenges typical in the country.

This systemic politicking creates room for the populace to properly decide which political candidates to vote for. In this process, socialisation is also effected. Of all the media of communication and entertainment, television probably has the greatest potential for socialisation, integration and networking. Precursory to the 2015 general elections, a suit was levelled against African Independent Television (AIT), one of the leading television stations in Nigeria by Asiwaju Bola Tinubu for an attempted libel of him and some of his top party (APC) members. Perhaps, he saw the capability of the television to negatively affect his political career therefore it became imperative for him to take legal action. Television also projects politics of hate as Ibagere states that: It is impossible to find the face of any opposition leader on television screens. Even some stations reject adverts from opposition party leaders. The case of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) in Delta State is pertinent here. A candidate was adopted by the party to contest on its platform for the gubernatorial seat in the elections in 2003. Despite paying the broadcast fee of thirty five thousand naira, the news was not carried by the state owned Delta Broadcasting Service (DBS). This compelled the party to threaten dragging the station before the NBC for the commission's regulation.¹⁸

With the digitisation of the television medium, there has been a paradigm shift in the trend of politics in Nigeria. Other transnational, transcultural and transcontinental media of communication, such as social networking sites (which include Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Injoo, Linkdin, Badoo, Eskimi), have changed the direction and enhanced political culture in television. The proliferation of private television stations in Nigeria, such as *TVC*, *Galaxy Television*, *Silverbird Television* among others continue to have an influence on the thought pattern(s) of the electorate towards the electoral candidates of their choice.

4. Conclusion

Television and politics are two inseparable entities. In Nigeria, the medium is a force to reckoned with. Although television and its operation in Nigeria is still being politicised, it is imperative in the growth and positive change and development in the Nigerian political terrain. This study concludes that television and politics are two inseparable entities and in Nigeria, the medium is a force to reckoned with. To this end, this research recommends that positive reforms and modifications should be made by the National Broadcasting Commission in the operations of television broadcasting. Furthermore, these reforms should be adhered to, so that the aim and objectives of the positive transformation in television broadcasting in Nigeria can be achieved.

18 IBAGERE, E.: *Social Development, Television and Politics in Nigeria*. Ibadan : Kraft Books, 2009, p. 142.

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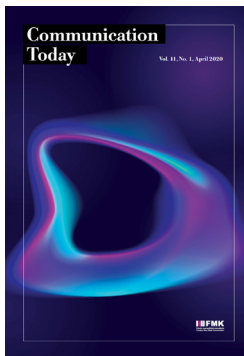
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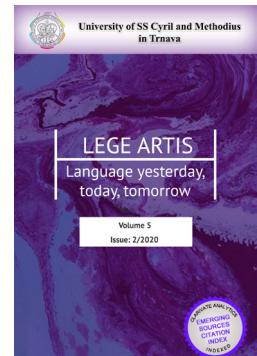
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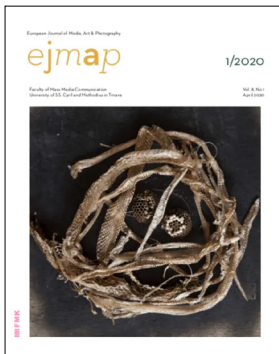
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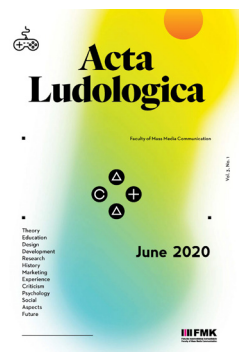
European Journal of Media, Art & Photography

European Journal of Media, Art & Photography (EJMAP) is an academic journal published biannually by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (FMK UCM). The journal is dedicated to publishing photographic collections, works of art and scholarly texts which deal with professional scientific reflection on media, culture, journalism photography, philosophy, literature and theatrical art. European Journal of Media, Art & Photography is indexed in CEEOL and Web of Sciences ESCI.



Acta Ludologica

Acta Ludologica is a scientific journal in the field of digital games. The journal contains professional scientific reflections on digital games; it also offers academic discourses on games, especially media and digital competencies, creation, design, marketing, research, development, psychology, sociology, history and the future of digital games. Acta Ludologica is a double-blind peer reviewed journal published twice a year. It focuses on theoretical studies, theoretical and empirical studies, research results and their implementation into practice, as well as professional publication reviews. The members of the journal's editorial board are members of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, the only faculty in Central Europe which has registered three scientific journals in Clarivate Analytics (formerly Thomson Reuters) Web of Science.



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