W edukacji akademickiej

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Mass media as a source of pupils' aggression
Środki masowego przekazu źródłem agresywnych zachowań uczniów

Key words: mass media, youth aggression, forms of aggression.

Słowa kluczowe: środki masowego przekazu, agresja młodzieży, formy agresji.

Streszczenie. Media są obecnie nieodłącznym elementem kształtującym osobowość ludzką. Oddziałują głównie na ludzi młodych, będących w okresie kształtowania osobowości, postaw. Media kreują określone wzory zachowania, prowokują do określonego postępowania. Dają współczesnemu społeczeństwu wiele możliwości, ale niosą ze sobą także wiele zagrożeń, szczególnie dla dzieci i młodzieży. Jedno ze znaczących zagrożeń to agresja dzieci i młodzieży. Celem opracowania było określenie wpływ mediów na pojawianie się zachowań agresywnych wśród młodzieży.

Introduction. The mass media are an integral part of our life and functioning. 21st century is the age of computers, the Internet, cinema and television. There appear still newer technologies which change the system of communication modifying the way people think and experience the world, and extending our cognitive capabilities. Due to their range, omnipresence and regularity the mass media have become an indispensable element of modern societies. They are now an inherent factor shaping human personality. They affect mainly young people who are in the course of character and attitude formation. The mass media both create some behaviour patterns and provoke certain behaviours.

Among the mass media that permit large-scale communication are computers and the Internet, multimedia games, books and press, the radio and television, film, cinema and advertisements. They constitute an integral part of our life and functioning in the modern world. Mass media provide many opportunities but they also pose a risk, particularly for children and the youth. One of the significant dangers is children and youth aggression connected with their access to the mass media.

The aim of the paper was to collect the opinions of junior high school students on the role of the mass media in their life. A questionnaire survey was thus conducted among students.

Agression in the source literature. Scientific literature often holds the view that the term "aggression" is ambiguous. However different the definitions of aggression are, they do not exclude but complement each other.

Aggression and violence have accompanied mankind since the very beginning. The term "aggression", in Latin *agressio* means an assault, an incursion. Earlier aggression served the purpose of procreation and reflected the will to survive. Nowadays, aggressive behaviour is considered to be asocial and is seen as highly abnormal deviation in relationships (T. Nesterek, 2012, p. 5–7).

Wincenty Okoń defines aggression as „behaviour aiming at doing harm to other people which cannot be justified from the social point of view" (2007, p. 19). We now often deal with aggressive behaviour and the fact that mainly school children grapple with this problem is really disturbing.

Aggression among young people is a form of unloading bad emotions, school and family problems. It compensates for indolence, reluctance to studying and becomes a kind of entertainment or even lifestyle. An aggressive student has a sense of domination and imposes his or her rules upon other people (K. Linowski, I .Wysocki, 2012 p. 18–19, Z. Barankiewicz, 2010, p. 105–109).

In common understanding aggression is considered to be a purposeful doing harm to another person and the behaviour connected with damaging and devastating public and private property.

Concluding, aggression has always gone with us. Originally it was connected with the will to survive, to procreate and to earn a place in the society. Nowadays it reflects social behaviours far from the accepted norms and patterns of social conduct. The term 'aggression' is used to describe a conscious behaviour intending to harm, inflict pain or damage property as well as the lack of action that results in unpleasant consequences, aggressive thoughts and wishes directed to other people.

The reasons for and manifestations of aggression among students. Aggression coexists with almost everyone from a very early age. It prevails among students in a difficult period of transition between childhood and adulthood (A. Farrel i in., 2007). Pupils aged 11-15, who are gathered in senior years of elementary schools and junior high schools also grapple with this problem. It is the group of young people that teachers and educators have most problems with, as frequently reported by the media. It is important, then, to watch the students in order to understand their improper behaviour and accurately recognize its causes. This, in turn, will enable us to eliminate the after effects of aggressive behaviour and properly assess the reasons for aggression among students (B. Pilczuk, 2011, p. 4).

Among the reasons for aggressive behaviours are the factors of a personal character connected with the student. In the period of adolescence young people often feel the need to be accepted, especially in the peer group. Moreover, teenagers begin

to take responsibility for their actions which very often results in the feeling of helplesness and anxiety. They do not have enough family support and there are also factors connected with the family environment. Children seem to lack warm approval of their parents who are often emotionally cold and distant. Parents prefer the authoritarian way of raising children. Living conditions, the family economic situation and various disfunctions that disturb family relations such as alcohol addiction, violence or conflicts also lead to the emergence of aggression.

Another set of factors that trigger aggression is connected with a peer group. Young people often copy from each other norms, values or group goals that show the acceptance for or even promote aggressive behaviour.

Another aspect of aggressive behaviour that is connected with school environment is the subordination to the teacher. In this case the reason for pupils' aggressive behaviour is the lack of understanding on the part of the teachers as well as their excessive demands.

The risk factors relevant to the local environment are the following: the lack of help and support from institutions, the abuse of power by the authorities, and conflicts on the political scene.

The last group of danger factors is associated with the mass media, i.e., television, cinema, video, magazines for teenagers, computer games, the Internet and mobile phones. They all affect the behaviour of children and adolescents. The acts of violence seen on the Internet and TV as well as brutal computer games contribute to young people's aggressive behaviour. What is more, the mass media lower the level of compassion for the victims and raise the level of tolerance towards the acts of violence (B. Pilczuk, 2011, p. 4–5).

Taking into consideration the reasons for aggressive behaviour presented above we can enumerate its manifestations such as acts of hostility, getting into fights, verbal aggression, quarrels, insults, threats or swear words.

To sum up, aggression is any purposeful, intended activity aiming at doing harm to someone, inflicting pain or suffering as well as acts of vandalism such as damaging public or private property. There are many reasons for aggressive behaviours and due to their accessibility the mass media largely contribute to the dissemination of negative behaviour patterns among increasingly younger recipients. Aggressive behaviours are manifested in the form of fights, swear words or rebellion against adult people, irrational hatered or hostility towards the whole world, the feeling of guilt or even criminal acts.

The mass media as a source of pupils' aggressive behaviour. Violence in the mass media is defined as „graphic visualization of acts of physical aggression directed at characters visible on the screen by the heros endowed with human features" (J. Izdebska, 2007, p. 179).

Do children really copy negative behaviours from the TV, computer or mobile phone screen? Do they try to transfer such behaviours to real life? These questions can be partially answered through the analysis of the scientific research results. The contents of TV programmers or computer games often impinge on emerging

aggression among children and adolescents. They also have negative effect on the life of adults (C.A. Anderson i in., 2003, p. 81; B. Furlow, 2017, p. 91–92).

The Media coverage is full of aggression, vulgarisms and violent scenes .Acts of violence, brutal murders, bloodshed, vulgar language, rapes, robberies, battery, abuse and humiliation are now the major source of attraction that appear in the mass media. In popular programmes, cartoons, computer games or action films pupils can see their favourite heros suddenly come back to life after they were killed in this way or the other. Such behaviours become attractive for children and they often try to imitate them in real life. Moreover, the dynamics of the media coverage characterised by aggressive music, quick changes of action shots and high intensity of colours cause that children find it difficult to quickly interpret the coverage which makes them angry and frustrated.

Television is an element of the mass media that is stuffed with aggression and violent scenes. Fairy tales and cartoons also show aggressive behaviours, and information programmes present reports about assaults, murders, vandalism or acts of terror. Watching violence in the media results in copying verbal aggression. Children often use the bad language they remember from TV and they want to behave like their favourite black characters.

Although computer games appeared in Poland relatively recently, they have received a lot of attention from adults, adolescents and children. Unfortunately, they are also full of aggressive behaviours. Most games contain excess violence, vulgarisms, thefts, fights and murders. Contrary to television, computer games permit the players not only to watch brutal scenes of violence but also participate in them. And although on the part of the player it is but a simulation of aggression, it does not change the fact that it accustoms the player- who can thoughtlessly damage, inflict pain to or kill people-to aggression.

Additionally, the players often try to identify with the vandal hero of the game who uses violence and murders people.

Aggression and the phenomenon of copying aggression by children is also the problem the Internet is wrestling with. Portals contain verbal aggression of internauts who use vulgar expressions and the language of hatered. A lot of Internet messages bear the features of aggression in order to attract as many recipients as possible (K. Ziębakowska-Cecot, 2012, p. 650–666).

Thus, giving children a chance to develop their passions and enlarge knowledge, the Internet poses many threats. Excessive use of the Internet may lead to a situation when the user turns away from relationships in the real world for the sake of those maintained via the Internet (A. Molga 2016, p. 52–62). Undoubtedly, a contemporary pupil is definitely more exposed to the risk of contact with information content for which he is not emotionally prepared than his parents when they were his age (M. Jędrzejko, A. Taper, 2012, p. 97–98).

Every day children use the mass media dominated by aggression and violence for many hours. Excessive use of the Internet, computers, television, computer games, or mobile phones may cause aggressive behaviours in pupils and lead to the increase in aggression towards siblings, peers and even parents.

The mass media as a source of aggressive behaviours in the opinion of young people. Nowadays the mass media are developing rapidly. Due to the technological change and advance in science there appear new solutions and methods of communication. As a result the mass media and multimedia can significantly change the educational, cultural and life situation as well as social status of both adults and children. The mass media absolutely affect children more than adults.

The aim of the paper was to collect the opinion about the influence of media on aggressive behaviour among young people. A questionnaire survey was conducted among pupils and 204 pupils' opinions were analysed. The respondents could choose up to three answers to each of the questions. For the purpose of our research it was interesting to define the kind of media that teenagers use most frequently (Pict. 1).
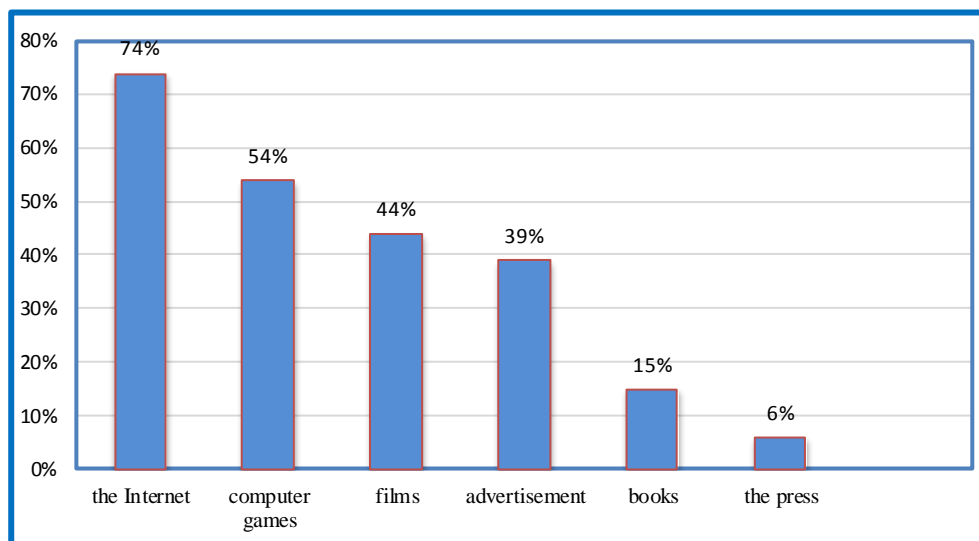
Picture 1. The most frequently used media

The computer is a device that enables us to transform and register any information .Computers have made the access to the Internet easier (J. Izdebska, 2007, p. 120).They allow us to reach certain resources of information and tools which help us to find this information (M. Jędrzejko, A. Taper, 2012, p. 120).

The Internet is now the most powerful type of the mass media outlet as it operates on a huge scale. Modern society considers the Internet perfectly ordinary. Today it is impossible to imagine the world and our functioning without computers and the Internet. It turns out that pupils use the Internet most. 'Yes' answered 74% of the surveyed students. Next in line were computer games with 45% of answers. Nowadays computers are very popular and important elements of children and teenagers' life and education. They have become a source of relaxation as they allow the users, for at least a moment, to move to a parallel world which is more attractive, full of sounds, emotions and action-simply more beautiful (J. Bednarek, 2002, p. 146–149).

Television has kept a young viewer from the cinema. Initially films were associated with the cinema only. Now, there are different forms and methods of playing movies such as the television, media players or the Internet. Due to these changes films still predominate among mass culture producers (T. Globan-Klas, 2005, p. 21–22). 44% of the surveyed pupils pointed at films.

Advertisement is the most manipulative media outlet. Advertisements are emitted during the programmes addressed to the youngest viewers who can this way see from a few to several dozen adverts a day. It may happen that an advertisement carries some didactic values but most often its content shows traits that are negative for the pupils (M. Musioł, 2007, p. 44–45). 39% of the questioned pupils chose the entry 'advertisement'.

Another research category was the press and books which are the oldest mass media outlets .In the realm of the press journalism is the most important although it is also a medium for literature. The book, in turn, is a medium outlet for fiction, scientific literature, journalism and the articles associated with everyday life and functioning (J. Gajda, 2010, p. 76–78). The survey shows that the respondents reach for books and the press the least often (15% and 6% respectively).

The results of the questionnaire indicate that the most popular mass media vehicles are the Internet, computer games, films and advertisements. They gradually displace the so called traditional media outlets such as books or newspapers and magazines. Nowadays, when young people want to gain information they watch TV or use the Internet.
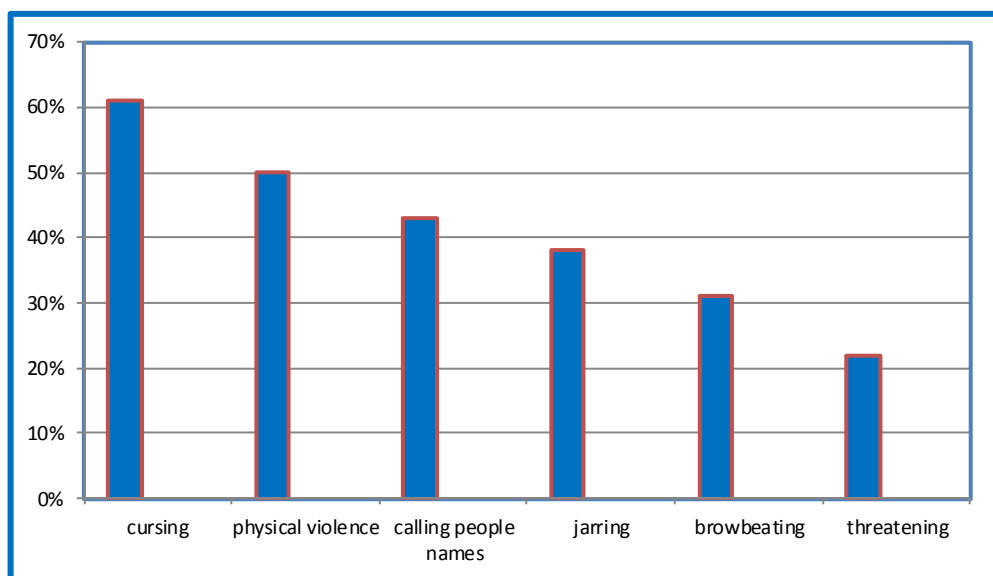

Picture 2. The most frequent scenes of violence and aggression in the mass media

At present even the cartoons for small children contain information that is improper for this age group. Children and teenagers sooner or later encounter different kinds of vulgarisms and bad language. Many TV programmes, computer games or websites just flow with taboo words.

The diagram below shows the acts of violence and aggression that the respondents most often deal with when using the mass media.

Verbal aggression, which in practice takes the form of harmful and degrading attitudes towards other people, was marked by the respondents the most often. It is usually aimed at the target of aggression in his or her presence. Cursing belongs to this category and it was pointed by 61% of the interviewees. Calling people names gained 43% of answers, browbeating 31%, threatening 22% and deriding 17%. The respondents say that they can often see battery and jarring in the mass media. This answer was marked by 38% of the respondents. 31% of the students pointed at physical violence as present both in the mass media and different life situations. The opinions of the young people show that the information content they are exposed to drips with aggression and acts of violence which seems to be unavoidable. The diagram is presented below which illustrates what forms of aggression the respondents themselves aim at other people (Pict. 3).
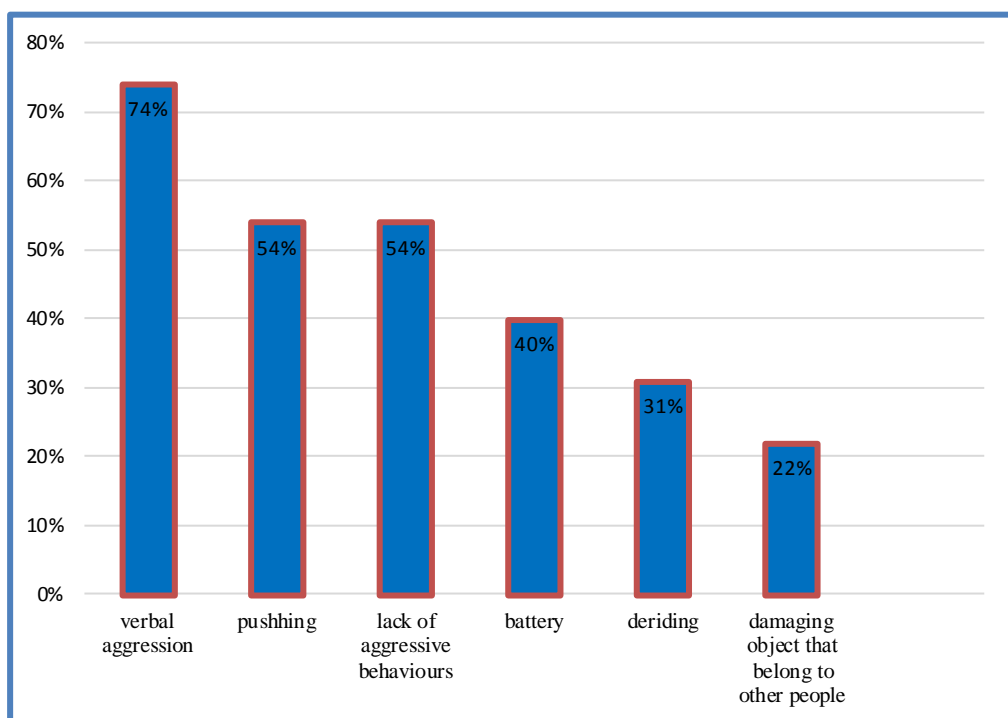
Picture 3. Aggressive behaviours towards other people

Pupils most often verbally abuse other people (74%) and push them (54%). At the same time 54% of the interviewees say that they were never aggressive towards their friends. However 44% happened to hit others and 33% ridiculed them. Only 22% of the surveyed students admitted to damaging private property of other people.

The diagram above presents aggressive behaviours, which according to the interviewed pupils they face when dealing with their peers. Due to the fact that the teenagers are still growing up, shaping themselves and their peronalities, they do not often distinguish between right and wrong and frequently associate themselves with the heros of their favourite games or series even if they are black characters. It turns out, then, that they are both victims and originators of aggression.

Summary. Although the mass media offer us many new opportunities and chances of personal development, it is good to remember about the dangerous repercussions of their improper use.

A lot of research confirms that watching aggression in the media favours raising the aggression on the part of a potential viewer. Frequent picturing aggression in the media may lead to the conviction that it is quite natural and can be used for solving problems. The research and the discussion are but a part ofa current debate over aggression.

The research allowed us to determine what aggressive behaviours are common among junior high school students. The analysis of the research shows that the phenomenon of aggression in schools is a serious problem. In the investigated population physical and verbal aggression is the most intense.

Basing on the conducted research and the obtained results it can be concluded that further research into the scope and intensity of aggression is advisable as it may contribute to the recognition of aggression causes as well as enable us to build a programme of violence prevention in schools.

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