

CYBERBULLYING AS A NEGATIVE PHENOMENON OF SCHOOL LIFE: STUDY RESULTS

^[1]GULMIRA RAKISHEVA, ^[2]DIANA SABITOVA, ^[3]AINAGUL ISMAGULOVA

^[1] Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, Sh.Ualikhanov Kokshetau University, ^[2] Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, Sh.Ualikhanov Kokshetau University, ^[3] Department of English, Sh.Ualikhanov Kokshetau University

^[1] gulmira_rakisheva@mail.ru, ^[2] dianasabitova@yahoo.com, ^[3] ismainagul@mail.ru

Abstract— Discussions about the extent to which the school is responsible for the emergence of cyberbullying cause a strong public reaction. Researchers have a unanimous opinion that it is the educational organization that should take on the functions of combating this phenomenon and its prevention. Cyberbullying is possible not only in the field of education, but also in any other field where there is a hierarchy and the possibility of establishing relationships of subordination.

But the school, as an important component in the system of "psychological ecology" of a person, occupies a special place, since it purposefully influences the formation of values, the perception of social norms and principles of the child, who, having become an adult, will be guided by them in making decisions both in personal and professional spheres. The purpose of the research is to provide a theoretical explanation of the mechanisms of the "Cyberbullying" phenomenon emergence and to determine the role and place of parents as predictors of its occurrence based on literature review, the results of previous studies and the empirical data obtained. The authors identified risks and markers of cyberbullying, presented a scheme for analyzing the aggressive behavior of schoolchildren, and determined the level of psychological culture of parents regarding cyberbullying among children and adolescents.

Index Terms— cyberbullying, markers, psychological health, risks.

I. INTRODUCTION

Violence is a significant problem all over the world. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, school bullying is a common manifestation of aggression and cruelty in children and adolescents, undermining their psychological well-being and the right to education. Cyberbullying as a social phenomenon began to spread actively as the Internet penetrated into all spheres of human life, which significantly affected the scale of violence in schools. A school being responsible for the development of children must certainly have a safe and supportive environment. Schoolchildren, as a vulnerable group, can be victims, perpetrators or witnesses of school violence.

The United Nations Children's Fund in Kazakhstan UNICEF conducted a study "Assessment of violence against children in schools in Kazakhstan". According to the study, the following forms of school violence exist in Kazakhstan: psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual statements and harassment, extortion, cyberbullying, peer intimidation, discrimination and the use of corporal punishment by school personnel [1, p. 14-15]. It should be noted that the above listed types of violence include cyberbullying and the combination of them negatively affect the level of psychological health of schoolchildren. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation.

The research group analyzed a number of studies by scientists from different countries. German researchers conducted a nationwide COPSYP (Corona and Psyche) study on the psychological health and quality of life of children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which children, adolescents and their parents were interviewed. The goal was to indicate the impact of the crisis on the psychological health and quality of life of children and adolescents [2]. Developmental vulnerabilities in children and adolescents have been identified, making COVID-19-related contact restrictions especially stressful for them [3].

The results are similar to studies conducted in China [4], India, Italy, the USA and Germany [5], which also revealed an increase in depressive, anxiety and stress responses during the pandemic. Studies show that the problems of the pandemic reduce the quality of life and psychological

well-being of children and adolescents and increase the risk of psychological disorders.

In 2021-2022, we also conducted a study "Assessment of the level of psychological health of subjects of the educational process." The study involved 11,200 people, including

- 4,211 schoolchildren (20% of the total number of participants)
- 1,926 secondary school teachers
- 5,063 parents whose children study in grades 1 to 11 (20% of the total number of participants) from 25 secondary schools in the city of Kokshetau (Kazakhstan).

The results obtained in the study were the following:

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine, teachers acutely manifested chronic fatigue, chronic stress due to overload, non-compliance with time management, lack of time for their family members, imbalance between energy costs and resource replenishment;

2. The problem of self-regulation of the teacher's state was identified due to negative pressure from the parent community within social networks. Teachers began to use stressful pedagogical tactics, which led to didactophobia among students - a mental state characterized by a student's fear of learning, teachers and schools.

3. Persistent decreasing social communication skills among teachers was revealed, which led to the spread of the phenomenon of "Zoom-exhaustion" or "Virtual meeting exhaustion" in the educational environment.

4. During the period of compensation for learning losses, schoolchildren experienced negative emotional, behavioral, cognitive manifestations (loss of interest in learning, dogmatic thinking, conflict in communication with adults and peers, inadequate self-esteem), which led to a decrease in the quality of knowledge. For this reason, many schoolchildren developed signs of school phobia and neurosis, i.e. didactogeny.

5. A direct relationship between the psychological health of schoolchildren and the psychological culture of parents was revealed. The socio-psychological well-being of the child and the parent directly depend on each other, influence and can cause changes [6].

Forced long-term online communication provoked stress among schoolchildren and teachers, caused the increase of cyberbullying in schools, and served the subject of the next study "Improving the psychological health of Kazakhstani schoolchildren as a factor in reducing the risks of cyberbullying in the process of online socialization".

The study's purpose is scientific and theoretical substantiation of strengthening schoolchildren's psychological health, including children with special educational needs, and its impact on reducing the risks of cyberbullying in the context of online socialization using Digital Humanities methods.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is carried out on the basis of systemic, structural, interdisciplinary and informational approaches using the methods of Digital Humanities. At the stage of designing the research program, the scientific and methodological concept of studying objects, which are the systems of L. von Bertalanffy and the theory of the human socio-ecological system of W. Bronfenbrenner, were taken as a theoretical framework [7]-[9].

The systematic approach made it possible to consider the phenomenon of "Cyberbullying" from different aspects - socio-psychological, psychosomatic, social and legal, which expanded the understanding of the phenomenon under study and made it possible to develop a psychodiagnostic technique.

An American psychologist W. Bronfenbrenner believes that the existence of a person is determined by the systems in which he is included, and the nature of the influence of these systems on each other. He substantiated social environments as systems and their influence on the development of the child: macrosystemic, exosystemic, mesosystem, microsystemic (Fig. 1):

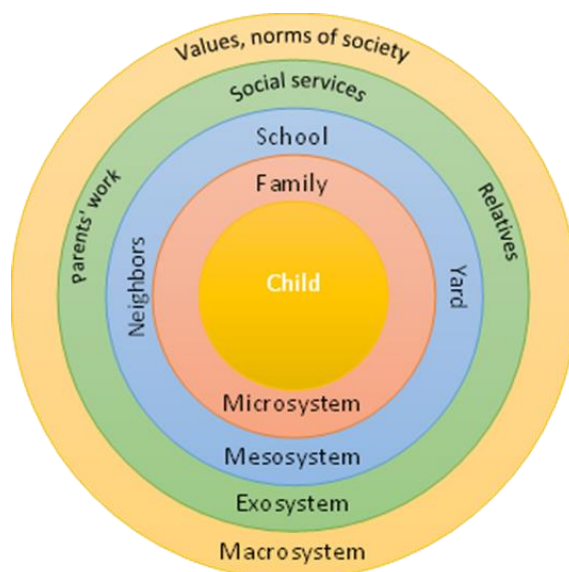


Figure 1 - Model of human development\development of a human being (W. Bronfenbrenner)

American researchers Johnson, Puplampu supplemented the theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner. In the context of digital transformations, researchers have proposed an independent stage in the ecological system - the so called "Technosystem" (Fig. 2). A technosystem is understood as the process of a child's interaction with real (family, peers) and virtual (Internet, applications, gadgets) elements [10], [11].

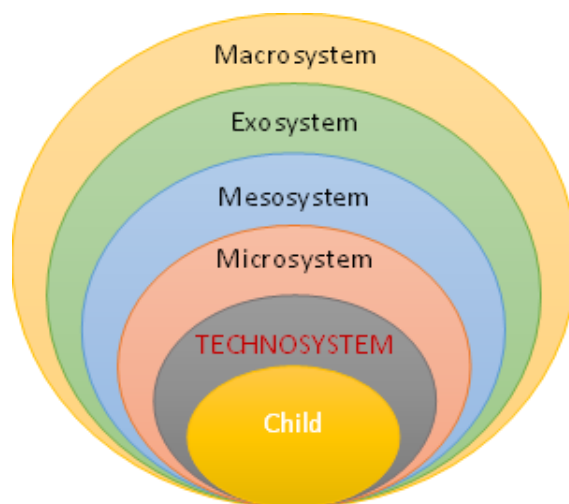



Figure 2 - Theory of ecological systems (Johnson, Puplampu)

Based on the results of the literature review, quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis and evaluation were used, and a survey was conducted according to the author's methodology "Evaluation of the influence of cyberbullying markers on the level of psychological health of schoolchildren." This technique is based on the concept of the self by C. Jung and the socio-cognitive theory of A. Bandura.

Studying the phenomenon of cyberbullying, an analysis of the essential characteristics of the desired concept was carried out (Table 1):

Table 1. The essential characteristic of the concept of "Cyberbullying"

<i>Authors</i>	<i>The essential characteristic of the concept of "Cyberbullying"</i>
Sonia Livingstone [12]	Bullying using digital technologies
Bogatyreva Yu.I. [13], Lakhmytko N. M. [14],	Deliberate insults, bullying, threats, defamation and the communication of compromising data to others using modern means of



Parfentiev W. [15], Jones B. [16]	communication, usually over an extended period of time
Ivanova A.K. [17]	Aggressive harassment, blackmail and psychological harassment of another person
Khlokov K. Bochaver A., Khlokov K. [18]	Aggressive harassment among schoolchildren in situations where they preferred not live interaction, but a technologized method of bullying
	Attacks with the intent to cause psychological harm are carried out through email, instant messaging services, chat rooms, social networks, websites, and mobile communications. Such repeatedly repeated aggressive behavior is aimed at harming a person and is based on an imbalance of power (physical strength, social status in a group)
Bengina E.A., Grishaeva S.A. [19]	A new form of threat to the psychological health of the a teenager personality
National Bullying Prevention Center [20]	Using technology to repeatedly and intentionally harass, hurt, embarrass, humiliate, or intimidate a person

The authors think that the nature of cyberbullying is aggression, and the condition for its maintenance is the digital environment.

We have developed the definition of cyberbullying, which is a type of aggressive network violence, due to anonymity, lack of control, having no time limits in the virtual space, which is based on the satisfaction of the aggressor's needs for self-presentation and self-realization of his network self through harming the chosen victim.

Thus, we believe that the social-cognitive theory of A. Bandura can be a methodological basis for justifying the influence of behavioral, cognitive and environmental factors on the aggressive violent behavior of schoolchildren in the context of network interaction.

Children about bullying/cyberbullying.

The authors used empirical research methods, conducting surveys and observations, collecting data through questionnaires, and analyzing the data obtained. The focus group "Students" consisted of 312 respondents.

Here are some excerpts from the teenagers' replies. The spelling, punctuation and the style of the respondents are preserved:

"... you sit quietly playing an online game and something doesn't work out for you. How they immediately begin to humiliate you, spread rot, they say that they will follow, that they know where you live and will find you, touch on the topic of parents ... " (boy, 15 years old, grade 9).

"At the moment, I myself experience the feeling of bullying. My classmates do not like me, they can call me not very decent and pleasant words for no reason. For example: "Fat", "Slut", "Dumb" and similar vocabulary in this form.

Because of the bullying, I can not accept myself, I always try to please everyone so that they feel good, but in the end I turn out to be guilty and just as a fallback. This summer, I got into a fight with my best friend, who I've been friends with for almost six years. While I was sick and did not go out for a walk, she found a replacement for me. After that, of course, I tried to make friends with this girl, but it was noticeable that I was the third wheel. Even at the moment, I have a very bad relationship with my classmate, he is very aggressive towards me, for example, in the first quarter, he hit me twice in the face. Almost every lesson he calls me useless, stupid, fat, etc. At the end of the first quarter, he wanted to throw a bottle of water at me. At the end of the lesson, he aimed at the head, but I was lucky that I bent down and the bottle flew past. I have almost no friends left. And sometimes because of this, it's really sad, because you will never forget this. But I will still try to achieve my goal, so that in the class I would be at least a little considered a person and respect me "(girl, 11 years old, 6th grade).

"I had such cases when they tried to offend me on social networks with some kind of statement, but I tried to fight back, but it was still insulting" (girl, 15 years old, grade 9).

"To be honest, I used to do this too. But no one offended me, it was just funny to me, well, I changed my mind and stopped doing it "(boy 13 years old, 7th grade).

“... there was a girl who was in my friend circle, she was a very good person, it was never clear from her that she could have any problems, she was cheerful and always came to our aid. But one day I found out that this wonderful person is no more ... Later it turned out that she had very severe problems with her parents. She was a constant person for ridicule. On the Internet, everyone rotted her very much, they poisoned her, and brought her to such a point that she had no reason to live. People on the internet said that she was ugly, that she had a terrible face, and that she was very fat. And no one will ever love her in her life, she had problems with her parents, her parents drank very heavily and beat her, she had a terrible injury that she received because of such parents. But she did not give any signs that something bad was happening to her, she was only 12 years old. The last thing that finished her off from this life was a strong persecution on the Internet, in which she completely huddled in herself. She began to believe that if they talk about her like that, then she is not worthy to live in this world. (girl 15 years old, grade 9)

“... cyberbullying is a very unpleasant thing, and it has a very bad effect on a person's well-being, both physiologically and morally, and can even lead to suicide. Now children believe everything, and at the same time, parents do not watch their children either, they are, so to speak, busy with their work, affairs in general ... ”(girl, 13 years old, 7th grade).

“In my opinion, cyberbullying is very serious, I have experienced this myself. Indeed, in the 21st century, everyone has a phone, even small children. Imagine a boy or a girl playing a game, for example, Minecraft on a server with other people does not play when she doesn't touch, she writes in a chat, help me figure it out and they call her names and swear just imagine how insulting it is, I know from my own experience - I didn't touch anyone ... ” (boy 13 years old, 7th grade).

“...actually, the ensemble and I were once cyberbullied ourselves, and we were depressed and upset, but we dealt with it together” (11-year-old girl, 5th grade).

“I have a friend, and once sitting on another site, in the user chat, he saw one swearing user, and decided to ask why he was so aggressive, he began to insult him, my friend called him “Mad”, but he turned to threats and said that he would still pay for his words. Then he sent a link to one group on a social network, a friend followed it, the aggressor in a short time by the user's nickname, recognized all the social networks where my friend was sitting, and began to publish all the photos of my friend, and promised to come. My friend was very frightened, confused” (12-year-old boy, 7th grade).

“I have always played online games, especially with the ability to talk to other players right in the game, it was in games that I constantly encountered insults, attempts to humiliate or threats in my direction. Anything could humiliate me, for a too bad level of play, for poor communication skills with other players. Also, often insults go beyond the game, I was insulted for a child's voice, nationality, the language I speak, for my age, etc. Alas, not everyone can endure it as easily as I do ... ”(15-year-old boy, 9th grade).


The above schoolchildren's statements evoke an unequivocal reaction in an adult: anxiety and fear for children's mental state. The children, as objects of bullying, cannot stop it themselves; there is an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim. There should be a comprehensive plan to create a psychologically safe environment through preventive and prophylactic measures, which includes the school staff, teachers and parents.

In general, the alarming tendency of the problem scale, the assessment of the destructive consequences for children, calls on the scientific community to recognize the problem of bullying as one of the priorities.

Thus, literature review and the empirical data obtained made it possible to identify the risks that affect the acquisition of social experience in the sociocultural environment of the Internet (Table 2):

Table 2. Risks affecting the acquisition of social experience in the sociocultural environment of the Internet

<i>Risks</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Manifestations</i>
Socio-psycho logical risk	It is associated with an unfavorable external influence on the psychological well-being and psychological	Transformation of a person's negative self identity through the mechanism of deindividualization of the personality, as a partial loss of one's own individuality and the transformation of the personality's self-identity in network socialization, which creates a network self, the so-called "Cyber-I".



	security of the individual, which can cause an intrapersonal conflict and is accompanied by social disapproval	
Psychosomatic risk	Associated with psychological, emotional, social and bodily negative manifestations due to continuous partial attention, overloaded brain function, chronic fatigue, chronic stress due to non-compliance with the psychohygienic requirements of being online	Negative effects on the physical health of adolescents, including sleep disturbance, decreased vision and tachycardia, can cause anxiety and depression
Legal risk	Associated with violations and inconsistencies with legal norms (laws, by-laws, rules, etc.), consisting in inappropriate content in relation to human rights and its safety	Inappropriate content that violates human rights through the publication of personal correspondence; distribution of videos containing acts of violence against a person; degrading comments; distribution of child pornography; drug trafficking and distributing other legally prohibited goods and content

The authors drew a scheme for analyzing the aggressive behavior of schoolchildren in a virtual communication environment to determine the markers of cyberbullying based on the social-cognitive theory of A. Bandura. The following factors influence the occurrence of acts of aggression:

- 1) biological (hormones, features of the nervous system)
- 2) learning (direct experience, observation)
- 3) the impact of patterns (excitement, attention)
- 4) unacceptable treatment (attacks, frustration)
- 5) incentive motives (money, admiration)
- 6) instructions (orders)
- 7) eccentric beliefs (paranoid ideas)
- 8) external rewards and punishments (material reward, unpleasant consequences)
- 9) vicarious reinforcement (observations of how others are encouraged and punished)
- 10) mechanisms of self-regulation (pride, guilt) [21].

Conclusions based on the results of the above-described research methods made it possible to determine the markers of cyberbullying that affect the level of psychological health of schoolchildren (Table 3):



Table 3. The markers of cyberbullying that affect the level of psychological health of schoolchildren

<i>Markers</i>	<i>Manifestations of cyberbullying</i>
Psychological markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - search for online identity; - switching attention from real to virtual world; - avoidance and isolation of a teenager; - a sharp decline in academic performance
Psycholinguistic markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - verbal aggression (insult; hostile remark, threat, censure, rude demand, ridicule, rude refusal, quarrel); - typical speech patterns of the victim, aggressor, observers in accordance with the subculture; - paralinguistic means of communication (smilies, emojis, gifs, symbols, etc.)
Ethnocultural markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - race; - gender identity; - ethnicity; - religious identity; - sexual identity
Psychosomatic markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - violation of food culture (loss of appetite, overeating); - negative physiological changes (sleep disturbance, decreased vision, tachycardia, causeless headaches, fever, abdominal pain, tremors in the limbs); - violation of the psycho-emotional state (anxiety, depression, irritability, phobias, mania)
Antisocial markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - theft of personal information; - deliberate damage to the image (outing, cyberstalking, fraping, dissing, trolling, catfishing, etc.); - harassment; - deception

Sharing the opinion of the Canadian psychologist A. Bandura, we believe that aggression is a learnable form of behavior. In turn, cyberbullying is also a behavior, albeit a complex one that can be changed by changing the conditions aimed at reinforcing it.

Thus, the main provisions of the socio-cognitive theory explain the nature of the emergence and maintenance of cyberbullying, in particular:

- aggression is formed throughout life in the process of socialization, including network socialization;
- the family as the primary institution of socialization is a model of both socially positive and socially negative behavior;
- due to the lack of the ability to adequately respond to aggressive behavior, the increasing level of aggressiveness in children is directed to peers;
- the behavior of the aggressor can act as a psychological defense, adaptation to social conditions, an instrument of influence;
- the environment of peers as a factor of socialization acts for schoolchildren as a kind of experimental field for testing socially approved or illegal behavior;
- the Internet as a social institution is able to start the process of searching for online identity and lead to intrapersonal conflict, which, in turn, can result in acts of violence.

III. RESULTS

Cyberbullying always takes place within a certain social context in which such behavior is encouraged and supported in every possible way, which contributes to its repetition in the future. The situation can be reversed by zero tolerance for violence, which can be formed only by the joint efforts of the pedagogical and parent community, if the students themselves are actively involved in this work.

In this article, we would like to focus on parents and the level of their psychological culture, since

child-parent relationships and the nature of relations between children in a family, are predictors of a child's involvement in cyberbullying. By psychological culture, we mean a socio-psychological construct, the structure of which includes intellectual, practical, and value-semantic components, expressed in the ability to understand a child, adequately determine his emotional state, and constructively build parent-child relationships.

Mothers showed higher interest, their participation was 95.8% in comparison to fathers whose interest makes 4.2% of the total number of survey participants (Fig. 1). This causes some concern and gives reason to conclude that the social activity of fathers is much lower and they are practically not involved in the process of education and maturation of their own children.

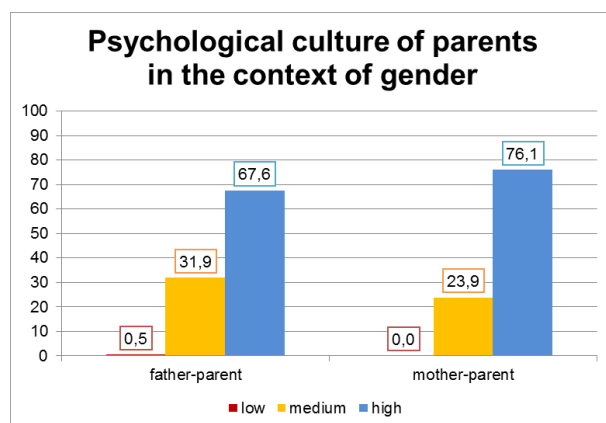


Figure 1 - Ranking by gender of survey participants. Focus group "Parents"

Considering the gender aspect of psychological culture, one can notice that the mother-parent has a higher rate (76.1%) in comparison to the father-parent (67.6%). It can be inferred that it is the mother who has a greater influence on the emotional background of child-parent relationships in the family and accepts her child unconditionally. In turn, a parent-father with a high level of psychological culture seeks to build a relationship model based on cooperation, obligations and consistency in their actions and decisions.

The average level of psychological culture of the parent-mother (23.9%) shows that there is increased control over the behavior of their child, which indicates an increased background of anxiety, a low level of trust and excessive demands on him.

Parents-fathers have an average level (31.9%) higher than that of mothers. This can be explained by the fact that fathers have an overestimated level of expectations from the child's achievements, which means that fathers are more likely to look for their child to do more and better than they are currently doing.

Let us consider the level of psychological culture in terms of age (Fig. 2).

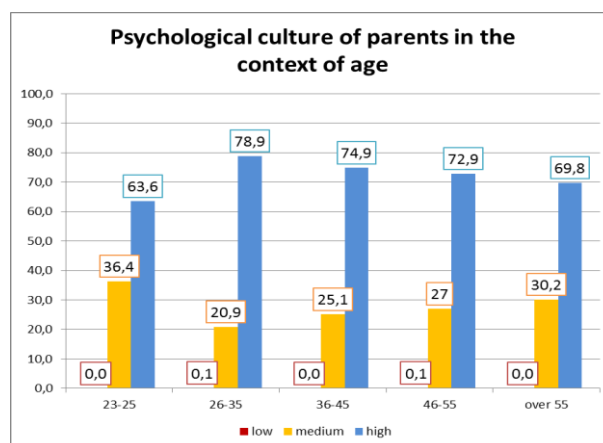


Figure 2 - Psychological culture of parents by age

26-35-year-old parents demonstrate the highest indicators of psychological culture with the following number (78.9%). These parents have a low degree of conflict in the family, a high degree of cooperation with the child, a formed parental position, and a positive emotional attitude towards the performance of parental functions.

23-25-year-old parents have low indicators of psychological culture because young parents have insufficient comprehension about the ideal images of a “loving mother”, “loving father”, insufficient knowledge about the personal characteristics and needs of their children. This is the age of searching for the meaning of life, self-determination in family relationships, financial instability, in the parental positions of “Mother”, “Father”.

It should be noted that the level of parents’ psychological culture tends to gradually decrease to 30.2% by the age of 55 years and older. This can be explained by changes in the body’s functioning, its hormonal status, which often manifests itself in a decreasing ability to regulate one’s own mood and behavior. These manifestations directly affect the relationship with the child, i.e. disagreements with children become more frequent, at the same time care and supervision over them increases; difficulties in perceiving changes and rejection of the opinions, views, and principles of the younger generation.

To the question, “Do you know what applications (sites) your child uses?” 65.4% of parents answered that they know; 7.7% respondents do not know; 26% are not sure (Fig. 3).

Do you know what applications (sites) your child uses?

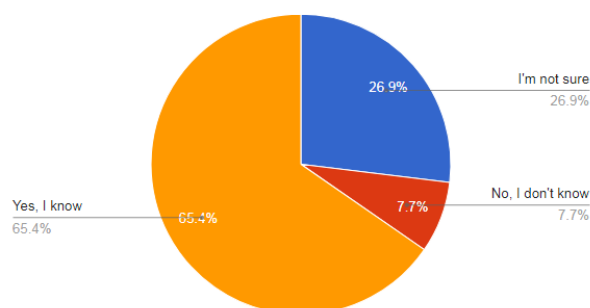


Figure 3- Question, “Do you know what applications (sites) your child uses?”

40-50-year-old parents do not know what applications their children use, and the category of 30-40-year-old parents turned out to be the most aware of their children’s interests (Fig. 4).

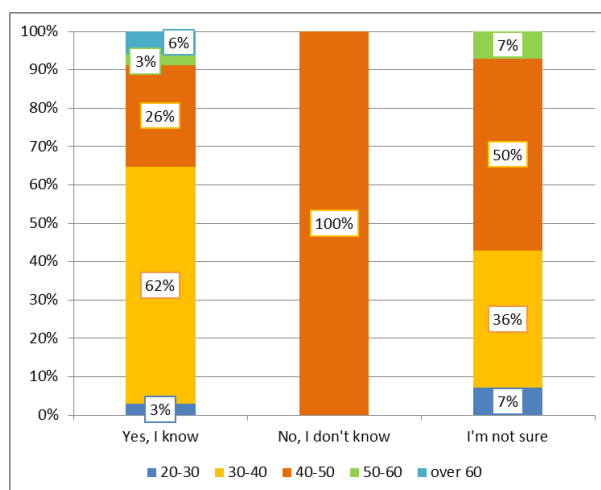


Figure 4 - The question “Do you know what applications (sites) your child uses?” in the context of parents’ age

When asked “Do you know what cyberbullying is?” 76.9% of respondents answered “yes”; 17.3% answered “no”; 5.8% were not sure they knew about cyberbullying (Fig. 5).

Do you know what cyberbullying is?

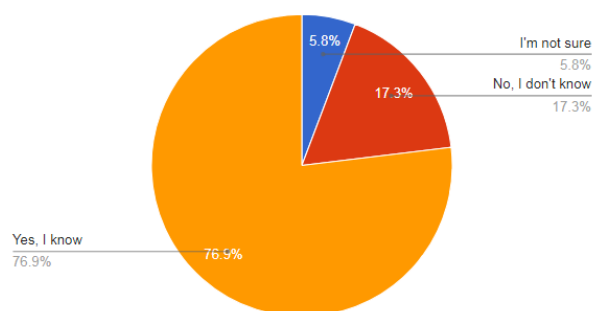


Figure 5- Question "Do you know what cyberbullying is?"

The study found that only 44% of parents knew about cases of bullying/cyberbullying which their children shared with them (Fig. 6).

Does your child share with you about bullying/cyberbullying?

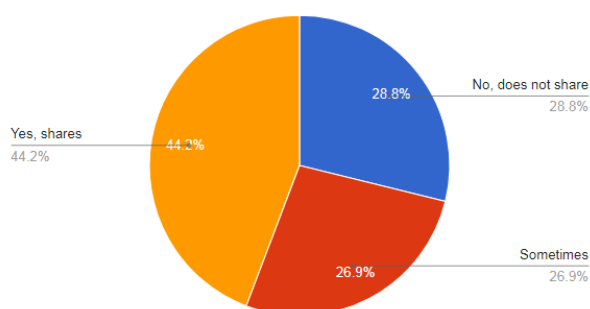


Figure 6 - Question "Does your child share with you about bullying/cyberbullying?"

When analyzing this question in the context of gender, there is not a single affirmative answer received from men, which indicates that children are more willing to share cases of bullying/cyberbullying with women (Fig. 7).

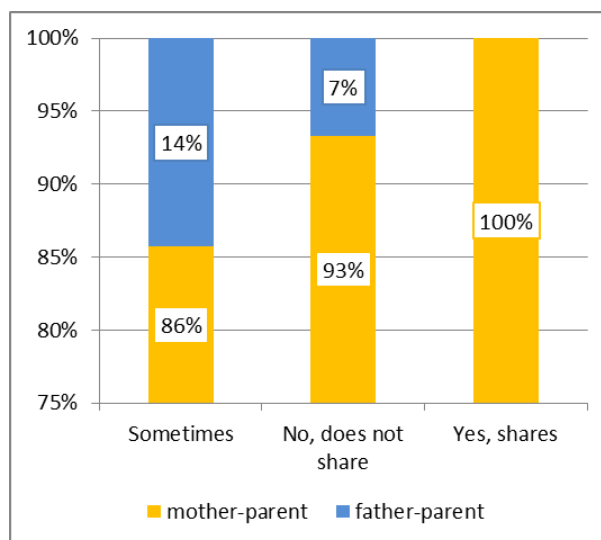


Figure 7 - Question "Does your child share with you about cases of bullying/cyberbullying?" in the context of gender

Only 38.5% of parents pay attention to anxiety in a child (Fig. 8).

Do you notice anxiety in a child?

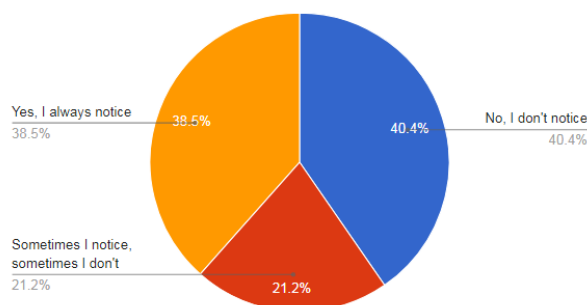


Figure 8 - The question "Do you notice anxiety in a child?"

25% of parents associate somatic manifestations with the child's anxiety state (Fig. 9).

During anxiety conditions, did you observe somatic manifestations in a child in the absence of a disease?

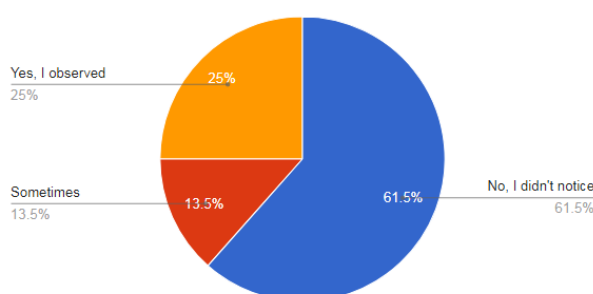


Figure 9 - The question "During anxiety conditions, did you observe somatic manifestations in a child in the absence of a disease?"

According to 67.3% of parents, their child immediately reacts to attacks and accusations (Fig. 10).

How does your child react to attacks and accusations?

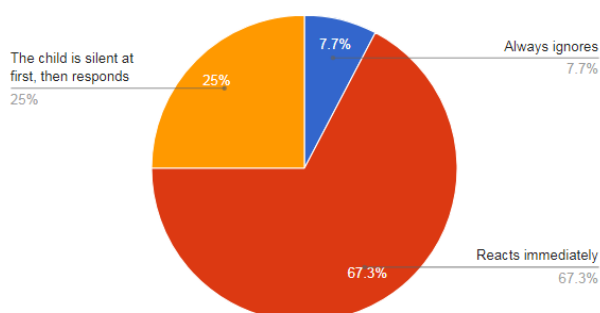


Figure 10 - The question "How does your child react to attacks and accusations?"

This data indicates the lack of parental awareness of the psychological characteristics of children growing up, the mechanisms of socialization, including online communication, the risks and threats of cyberbullying that affect the physical, psychological and social well-being of children. Despite the formation of the image of "I am a parent", there are negative emotions and semantic shades hidden from the parent, which manifest themselves in low self-regulation of emotions and behavior. Gradually, this leads to insufficient interaction and communication with their own child, which leads to his separation and alienation. There is a risk of complete immersion of the child in the virtual world of communication, in which there are different mechanisms of development of the child's psyche leading to various manipulative and aggressive forms of network interaction, in particular to cyberbullying.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this article, we proceed from the scientific assumption that cyberbullying as a phenomenon first

occurs in the context of aggressive behavior (direct or indirect) on the part of parents and the family environment. The study-identified risks, theoretically substantiated the markers of cyberbullying, proved the need to increase the level of psychological culture of parents, since the family can act as a predictor of a child's involvement in school bullying. A parent, who is an authoritative adult, not even being aware of it, often acts as an offender and exerts systematic pressure on the child, which is a sign of bullying. Although parents always deny such facts, justifying themselves with good intentions and a strict approach to education, the so-called "gray zone" begins here, a kind of defect in family education, manifested in the form of violations of family norms and values with a conscious agreement with these violations. The children are not able to independently stop the situation of bullying, change the attitude of the mother or father towards them, and direct the accumulated resentment towards their peers.

Parents are key figures in the prevention of cyberbullying, for this it is necessary to support initiatives to combat bullying at school, closely monitor the behavior and psycho-emotional state of their own child, and actively participate in educational seminars. This will significantly reduce the risk of schoolchildren being involved in bullying scenarios. We are convinced that in order to prevent bullying / cyberbullying, a multi-level program is needed for parents, teachers and schoolchildren in order to create a psychologically healthy environment for the development of the child's personality.

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