CHILDREN, ONLINE DANGERS AND SOLUTIONS *

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1. Introduction

At the turn of the 20–21. century changes occurred in production, economy, and society, in which information played the most decisive role. This process has not finished yet; it continues today. Digitalization is embracing every aspect of our lives, rewriting our communication, our learning processes, our work, administration, shopping habits, and human relationships. This continual change at the global level can be traced to the lives of families, to the ever-widening gap between generations, and the changing situation of children. Nevertheless, it has not avoided the everyday life of educational institutions, too, including more and more challenges to solve and contradictions.

2. New generations, new challenges

The information explosion has brought the emergence of new generations who are already on a completely different path of information gathering and personality development than their predecessors. Before analysing the dangers of the digital world, it is inabitable to get to know better the characteristics of children of the new generation and all the occurrences, which help us to understand them and all the situations that threaten them.

It is a natural phenomenon that the older generation will always see the next one differently, and this statement is increasingly valid today. The question that arises is that we really only have to think about the misunderstanding between eternal generations, or the situation is much more serious and have more serious consequences than the stylistic separation of generations.

The youngest members of the information society are "born in the digital world", "digital natives", the net generation, the download generation – to mention a few of the names they are entitled to – who have never lived without computers and the internet. Members of the Z Generation Z and the Generation Alpha are

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skilled at the technical level and technical achievements are a natural part of their daily lives.[1]

Today's children's digital brain can handle an incredible amount of information processing simultaneously, and their perception has accelerated significantly. The vibrant online environment, providing new information in every second, may have made it necessary, for example, they need more images per second to sense a series of images in motion. Thanks to the continuous stimulation of their ability to process multiple operations at the most responsive age of 1–4 years, multitasking becomes a natural requirement for them in their daily activities.

However, the question arises that if, at a time when the neural network of the brain is developing at its most intense and the child is in the most receptive state, does not have enough real interaction, but digital stimuli actively surround it, does not distort too much his perception of reality or his compassion. It can be stated that while previous generations are interested in new technology, they use new tools, are represented on social networks, yet they are able to create real interactions and can separate their online life from offline situations. On the other hand, members of the Generations Z and Alpha often have a major problem distinguishing their online and offline personalities. Emotional incontinence among young people is intensifying through impersonal communication via the Internet.[2] They avoid situations that require personal, verbal communication, because it is difficult for them to recognize the meaning of facial expressions and gestures in face-to-face situations, and they also struggle to cope with their own verbal and emotional toolkits to express their emotions.

Consequence of the excessive use of the Internet by today's children is sensory overload, which can lead to sleep disorders, sudden mood swings, and outbursts from an early age (electric screen syndrome). It is believed that excessive Internet use in early childhood leads to tissue loss and tissue wasting in the gray matter of the brain, and as a result, empathic skills, detection and integration of compassion are not well developed.

We cannot go beyond the contradiction either, that comes with changing the situation of children. Based on decades of research by Jean M. Twenge and Stacy M. Campbell[3], the following observations are formulated. From the 1960s onwards, the role of individuality, self-fulfillment, and the need for a spectacular individual career gradually increased. As a result of this phenomenon, people's self-esteem and narcissistic personality traits were extended as well. In parallel with the rise of individualism, the desire to conform to social expectations has diminished and the formerly strict rules of social behaviour have loosened. In families, child-centered

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[1] Marc PRENSKY: Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *MCB University Press*, Vol. 9, No. 5, October 2001; Generation Z: born between 1995–2009; Generation Alpha: born after 2010.

[2] Annamária TARI: Bátor generációk #SzorongokTehatVagyok. Tericum Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2017.

[3] J. M. TWENGE–S. M. CAMPBELL: Generational differences in psychological traits and their impact on the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 2008, 23 (8), pp. 862–877.

education has taken over, and the basic principle of education has been to allow the individuality of the child to unfold, resulting in fewer restrictions and more freedom for children. Human relations have become democratized. The increase in self-esteem and narcissism over the past decades has been well understood, which has been only strengthened by technological developments (e.g., selfie, social networking). The "I think I'm a special person" (self-marketing, "personal branding"), "I can live my life the way I want" attitude, self-centered self-love, overestimation of my abilities make it very difficult for both school and community, but at the same time they have higher expectations of both employers and educators. Members of previous generations (Baby Boomer, X Generation), due to their "old-fashioned" upbringing, take a different view of today's age, including children, and have the same expectations that their parents had previously set for them, although these two generations are different. So not only the old standard but well-established traditional education methods are ineffective against them. Generational differences in mentality cause a great deal of tension and misunderstanding in the workplace and between teachers and students. In the eyes of young people, the teacher, and generally the older generation, is no longer the only and unquestionable source of knowledge. Celebrities, media personalities, "youtube-gurus", vloggers are much more prominent in their role models today. For a long time, the general phenomenon whereby the younger learned from the older has fallen. Nowadays, digitalization has reversed the direction of socialization.

Schools are in a particularly difficult situation, not only because of the generational differences already mentioned but also because of the increased demands placed on them. The exciting opportunities offered by the consumer welfare society, the online space, all socialize children to demand and expect this stimulating entertainment in all walks of life. Thus, it is a requirement for schools and teachers to deliver useful knowledge in an exciting, entertaining and diverse way. Many parents and students are increasingly beginning to interpret school as a service and expect high-quality, student-centered education. Parents and students are less and less willing to meet the requirements of the school, and it is noticeable that parents no longer look at the teacher in a traditional sense, and there is a growing need for teachers to meet the individual needs of parents and children.

Well, whatever we consider being decisive, we have to realize that as the world evolves, the characteristics of generations will change, and the development of the brain itself will take different paths today, as it will be subjected to completely different stimuli. The Internet has become a medium of socialization. Digitization has begun a process of value change and value rearrangement that poses many problems to be solved for generations.

3. Dangers and Deviances

With the opening of the online space, many new tools and opportunities have been created to make everyday life easier, and as technology advances, the number of novelties and opportunities approaches infinity, bringing new threats to life. It is a

major challenge for the legislator to keep up with the dynamically evolving technology and to solve the problems it brings to light with the same degree of legislative regulation as digital development would require.

By exploring the risks inherent in online communication, we can get closer to understanding the psychology of the virtual environment and its deviations and exploring treatment options. The online world is a space where you can take advantage of many attractive opportunities, where you can easily connect with unfamiliar people, share opinions, and information. Anonymity, one of these key risk factors, raises many dilemmas. By hiding your real name and identity, not only can you keep your personal information safe, but the online identity that you create can help you live up to the potential of the online world. Without name and behind a mask not only facilitates networking, but can also cause many abuses. Secrecy, the physical distance from the other party (the victim), all provided by the Internet, allows for dehumanization, emotionless, all self-controlled actions, reduces empathy and creates the appearance of irresponsibility and accountability. This has a profound effect on the relationship between the individual and the environment. Through these interactive processes, the individual's relationship with himself/herself and the world is transformed. If this process becomes pathological, psychiatric disorders, personality disorder, addictive behaviors and online deviations will develop.

So while on the one hand, we need to look at anonymity, which can provide scope for different forms of online harassment and abuse, on the other hand, we also need to talk about personal data circulating uncontrolled in the virtual world, by which may also put the individual at risk. In the network, user existence begins with the provision of personal information, while others are hiding, while others voluntarily disclose their data, photos, and current mood on social networking profile pages. Based on this information, the possibility of linking profiles is enhanced. Data circulating uncontrolled in virtual space can often be easily used for purposes beyond the data subject's original intent.

While researching the dangers of the Internet, we cannot go beyond content – typically sites that are violent, pornographic, suicidal, drug-taking, or malnutrition – that adversely affect the physical and mental development of minors and young people. They also have the risk that access to harmful content is not necessarily a matter of intention, and the user may accidentally open such pages.

In most cases, children have a low sense of danger, which means that minors appear on both the victim and offender side of online deviations. The best example of this is online harassment. With the rise of the Internet, bullying has become an act that can be committed in online space, which can take place through a variety of offending behaviors and in many places it is more dangerous than offline bullying. The cyberbullying, which most affects the 10–16 age group, always starts with some personal motivation. The perpetrator harasses his or her victim repeatedly or continuously over time, harnessing some form of a power imbalance to evoke fear, stress, or anxiety in his or her target, harming or compromising his or her safety.

However, these harassing behaviors may vary. The most common forms of presentation are flaming, denigation, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, cyberstalking and the online cyberthreats. Burning refers to an online fight in which mass messages are sent to the victim in an angry, threatening or vulgar manner. Significant amounts of denigation also occur. In this case, online messages are sent that are capable of violating the victim's reputation (for example, sending despicable drawings, testimonials, comments to the person's sexual abilities and dimensions to the school website). The purpose of impersonation is to destroy a friendship, love, and social relationships by sending messages and texting on behalf of the victim (e.g. taking care of their password). The talk is not negligible either, and in doing so, the perpetrator fraudulently obtains and shares the victim's secret, or embarrassing information, secret feature. We also need to talk about deliberate exclusion when someone is deliberately excluded from a particular online group (e.g. chat rooms). During cyberstalking, the victim's online habits were monitored and sending threatening, intimidating messages and using them to arouse fear of the other person's own security. Cyberthreats are direct threats or unsettling statements that suggest that their author is emotionally upset and is considering hurting someone or himself/herself or committing suicide.[4]

While formerly school-based bullying has ceased to exist, the victim remains in the victim's position at home due to the continued availability of the Internet. Each of these offenses can have a very significant impact on the development of the minor victim's personality. It is not an easy task for the victim to deal with long-term online abuse not detected by the environment in time, finding a way out which can lead self-harm to suicide. It is not unusual to become a victim again or even the victim becomes an offender.

Sexual overheating and experimental behaviour characterized by teenagers, or the lack of awareness of the severity of their actions, may be behind the spread of so-called sexting. Sexting refers to the transmission of erotic images or videos via Infocommunication devices, which has become a fashionable phenomenon among young people in recent years. Reproduced images can be transmitted without further permission or other restrictions, thus allowing for abuse. In addition to irresponsibility, the desire for revenge can be a powerful motivator in certain situations. Usually in cases where after a breakup, one of the parties – usually a male – discloses footage of the couple. In relating sexting, two problems appear: abuse of prohibited pornographic material and also misuse of personal data, but there is no common understanding of how to deal with the cause of the problem. The only problem is judging by the fact that, in many cases, the recordings are made and transmitted by the data owners themselves.[5] Cyberbullying does not respect others' privacy while sexting as the user opens his/her private section, giving up protecting voluntarily. Thousands of child pornography ads are placed on Hungarian dating

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4   Government Decision 1488/2016. (IX. 2.) – Digital Child Protection Strategy.
5   Zoltán SZATHMÁRY: Bűnözés az információs társadalomban, Alkotmányos büntetőjogi dilemmák az információs társadalomban. Doktori disszertáció, PTE-ÁJK, Pécs, 2012.

sites every year. According to data from the second project of the Eu Kids Online[6] survey, almost 16% of Hungarian children aged 9–16 have encountered sexually explicit images or videos.[7] Most of the sexually explicit content reaches the young generation by chance or is sent via messaging. Commonly, young people can witness the sexual actions of other persons on the Internet. In most cases, this is a specific message, but it is also sometimes the case that someone is asked to engage in sexual dialogue or to share photos of their intimate body.

And this is how we came to the issue of Internet paedophilia. A paedophile is an adult who has a sexual desire for children due to personality disorder. The social perception of paedophilia is extremely negative and its various manifestations are punished by criminal law in several states of affairs, such as sexual abuse or child pornography. Offenders naturally keep their activities secret, and the Internet is an excellent forum for experiencing paedophile desires through anonymity. Beyond individual crimes, online crime is also well suited to the realization of organized crime, as it is much faster to obtain and transfer child pornographic images through the network. The internet works as a tool for offenders to dating for sexual abuse, to build relationships, or to obtain pornographic material that seriously violates the real intent or interest of the victims. It is also a serious problem that in many cases, the victim himself/herself unintentionally facilitates the collection of pornographic images by voluntarily uploading the image of himself/herself.

In relation to Internet paedophilia, we have to mention so-called grooming, which can best be described as hacking. In this case, the majority of perpetrators hunt for months, with a consciously built strategy, for young people, girls, and boys on social networks. They gain their trust, cheat on their personal information, engage them in their sex games via the Internet, and ultimately get them to meet in person. In the beginning, children, through a well-built relationship of trust, do not even recognize what is happening to them, nor does it cause them to fracture that the person who initially pretended to be peer, but it is not true in reality. The excitement and curiosity in children are much greater. Because of their shame, they usually do not ask for help or they do it too late.

Adam Alter writes in his book, titled Irresistible. Why you are addicted to technology and how to set yourself free? that in the 1960s, young people had to maneuver between a few traps, which were cigarettes, alcohol, and expensive drugs that were generally difficult to access. In 2010, however, there are many more sources of danger that leads to the emergence of new addictions. These "traps" are Facebook, Instagram, porn, online shopping and online games. Addictive behaviors have long existed, but have become more prevalent in recent decades and are much

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[6]   In 2011 the National Media and Infocommunication Authority has commissioned Eu Kids Online I–III projects, with the overall aim of discovering and understanding the characteristics of using the Internet by children and the risks and dangers associated with them.

[7]   *EU Kids Online II. A magyarországi kutatás eredményei*. Made for the National Media and Communications Authority. Ed.: ITHAKA Nonprofit Kft., September 2011, http://nmhh.hu/do kumentum/3886/ITHAKA_EU_KIDS_Magyar_Jelentes_NMHH_Final_12.pdf (downloaded: 20 March 2019).

harder to resist. We do not need to inject any substance into our body to develop these new addictions, and although they do not directly inject chemicals into the bloodstream, they do produce the same effect because of their compelling effect and excellent structure. And professionals who develop technologies, games, and interactive experiences precisely build on these effects. Full-immersive technologies like the virtual world evoke such an intense emotional experience that almost made for misuse Once you skillfully overcome the first difficulty in a computer game, and figure out how to handle the game effectively then you can timelessly immerse in the alternation of tension and success. Some games are more motivating to continue than others. In daily multi-hour computing the most seductive games are the ones that allow playing with others through the Internet. Players' thoughts are preoccupied with the virtual world, the desire to be present even when they are offline. Navigating a new world of senses is a fascinating experience for many players.[8] The reward system in the games also provides for long playtime. The attractive virtual gameplay environment, the myriad possibilities for the creation of a custom character by the player, and the adventure of working with other players are all great temptations.

We have to deal with the negative impact of social media interfaces among online threats. In many cases, these surfaces present false images for children, ideas that may be considered to be accepted norms, and followed as an example. The image conveyed in this way creates compliance constraints, which can carry not only privacy but also psychological risks.

The data protection abuse is among the online threats, whereby any breach of data protection rules is considered a data protection abuse. Examples include online phishing, which is a way to deceive users into disclosing their personal and financial information through misleading e-mail messages or websites. Identity theft is an internet crime that is largely linked to phishing and social networking. It is very dangerous as it can have a serious impact on the victim's life. The perpetrators steal the identity of their victim, all their personal information, and in many cases, obtain confidential information about the victim. Risky Internet activities include, for example, careless disclosure of personal information, registration for promising sweepstakes, which can easily lead to data protection incidents.[9]

4. Solutions – Digital Child Protection Strategy

In 2016, as part of the Digital Success Program, Digital Child Protection Strategy of Hungary (DGYS) has become indispensable due to the emergence in recent years of new hazards and concepts in connection with the use of the Internet by children, which require new types of solutions and, to a limited extent, a new system of government instruments. The goal of the Digital Child Protection Strategy is

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[8]   The most popular game software for Hungarian children is an Internet role-playing game, which includes a number of attractive game elements, called the MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game) nails them in front of a monitor.

[9]   Government Decision 1488/2016. (IX. 2.) – Digital Child Protection Strategy.

to protect children from harmful content and methods on the Internet, from risks and to prepare them, their parents, and their teachers for a conscious and value-creating use of the Internet. In addition to the development of protection methods, the strategy devotes a fundamental role in the development of media education and awareness. In its chapter on Security and Safety, it describes in detail the dangers of online space and explores the possibilities of protection. The strategy emphasizes that the awareness of parents and teachers and educators is key to the field. If people involved in the education of children do not have information about the conscious use of the Internet and do not able to intent and ability to convey this information, this can have serious consequences. In other words, the responsibility and the role of parents (the family) have outstanding significance in terms of consciousness, as in everyday life, they are (rightly) expected to provide a similar amount of help and assistance in the online world. It would greatly facilitate the raising of awareness if grandparents were familiar with the characteristics of children's use of the Internet and their relevant attitudes and habits as the Internet also plays a substantial role in the communication of grandparents and grandchildren. Teachers also have a prominent role and task. It is because the teacher is the adult who is, for example, in a cyberbullying case, in a direct relationship with the victim and often with the perpetrators and victims, too, and may thus be a key factor in detecting and resolving conflicts. The role of teachers is thus manifested in the passing on of information, while they are also responsible for possessing the skills of consciousness as an active participant of discussion and conflict management mechanisms within the framework of the educational system. It should also be developed, where the advantages of the use of the Internet and the related hazards are demonstrated to the target groups by similar-age schoolchildren. Participation in media education training should also be available to parents by organising courses that provide skills relevant to the use of the Internet at a reasonable cost in order to enable parents to use the skills so acquired in raising their children. An effort must be made to provide cost-free training courses, too, through the Digital Success Program Points (DSP Points). People working in the administration of justice, faced with crimes and other offenses against children as part of their job (i.e. people working primarily at the police or the public prosecutor's office and judges) should be trained on an ongoing basis in terms of media education, focusing on the areas relevant for their jobs. The aim is to include digital security issues in the National Curriculum (NAT). The Strategy will also initiate the development of a free-access, Hungarian-language child protection filtering software, as well as the development and operation of a website featuring safe content for minors.

Chapter 3 of the Strategy provides a wide range of sanctions and assistance, from civil and criminal law tools, through the inaccessibility of electronic data, to alternative dispute resolution for school conflicts, of which the use of the latter as a secondary medium, has an undeniably significant educational, personality-shaping impact on the lives of all of us. Some of the conflicts that occur there are inherent in the existence of the community, but the effects of recognizing, identifying, and

successfully or less successfully managing conflicts can go far beyond the school. Domestic and international research has confirmed that the role of the school is not only limited to the education of children but also plays a decisive role in the process of becoming a criminal offender, as it handles conflicts and problematic children. Disorders of integration, learning difficulties, peer rejection, violations of school norms, and responses from school all contribute to alienation from school, which is crucial for later problem behaviors, deviance, and criminalization.[10]

The previously described cyberbullying, online abuse, harassment have added a new dimension to school conflicts. Contemporary offenders often do not know how long a "joke" will last and where the boundaries of the criminal category are, and bullying can often be interpreted as a part of their entertainment, which is legalized by the online group norm. So what's going on in the classroom is not the important question for the teachers, but what's going on in the invisible online space! The difficulty of dealing with online abuse is the complexity of the situation, as it combines pedagogical, legal, and IT aspects. The biggest problem is that, in most cases, teachers do not even presume what conflicts in the classroom will develop in cyberspace. Most of them have difficulties handling computer devices, are unfamiliar with "trendy" mobile applications, and do not consider the Internet as an educational place so that they can reflect on situations in the classroom. Detecting cases of harassment committed to the detriment of children, whether by contemporary or other offenders, is difficult precisely because they hide their abuse from their parents. Law as a deterrent is not relevant to young, child offenders. Deterrence does not work because the belief hampers it in online anonymity, which promises the illusion of impunity. The criminalization of Internet-based harassment is also problematic, partly due to age-related difficulties. The concept of harassment itself is not barrier-free, as in many cases, the concept of everyday harassment does not overlap with the concept of criminal harassment. For teachers, the key to this would be to get to know and understand the different attitudes and online habits of today's children. It would be extremely important for them to be aware of and follow up on fashionable social platforms, applications, games, and to set an exemplary online presence for their students.

Decree No. 20/2012 of 31 August 2012 of the Ministry of Human Resources on the operation of public education institutions and their use of names provides the opportunity for conducting, prior to the disciplinary procedure against the student, a conciliation procedure with a view to discussing and assessing the events leading to the breach of duty and reaching, on that basis, an agreement between the person suspected with the breach of duty and the aggrieved party to remedy the grievance [Section 53(2)]. A similar legal institution is a procedure by an educational mediator, which may be conducted if the educational institution is unable to eliminate the threats to children or students by pedagogical means or where this is justified in order to protect the community of children or students. In such situations, the edu-

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[10]   Ágnes SOLT: *Peremen billegő fiatalok – Veszélyeztető és kriminalizáló tényezők gyermek- és ifjúkorban*. Doktori (PhD)-disszertáció, Budapest, ELTE-TáTK, 2012.

cational institution may turn to a conflict management consultant or the youth protection or family law service for assistance [Section 62(1)]. Alternatively, educational mediation may take place in the framework of a conciliation procedure. In other words, of the various forms of alternative dispute settlement, the Decree explicitly addresses the possibility of restorative mediation. Where an educational mediator is involved in the conciliation procedure, an agreement is reached between the parties if a common position has been reached between the aggrieved party and the negligent student concerning the compensation for the damages caused by the breach of duty or the reparation or mitigation of its harmful consequences in another manner [Section 62(9)]. Thus, the use of alternative dispute resolution, the restorative method, is not completely foreign to educational institutions. The Digital Child Protection Strategy seeks to extend the scope of this opportunity to include the resolution of online abuse situations affecting school communities. The various conducts qualifying as bullying or cyberbullying also need to be regulated outside criminal law, i.e. in the law of management and education. The point of such regulation is to increase the responsibility of schools and, as a long-term objective, to require schools to implement an anti-cyberbullying programme or at least a programme to promote the safe use of the Internet, to prepare, in their everyday practice, for managing online hazards in the form of internal protocols and special policies and to adopt an appropriate prevention strategy to ensure the peaceful co-existence of students and teachers according to predictable rules. In cases of cyberbullying, school protocols must also set out the procedure to be followed, possible administrative responses as well as civil law and criminal law consequences as the ultimate solution.[11]

5. Summary

Adolescence is a time of path-finding and experiencing large, sometimes extreme, emotional waves, and thus the most vulnerable period of one's life. The Information Age has brought the possibility of unlimited connection, yet young people, trapped in their own network of relationships, find it difficult to find their own reality, which has real emotions with strong attachments. The emergence of online identity, the negative impact it has on offline personality, the constant need for sharing (oversharing), the increasing narcissism, and the growing online danger require constant attention, preparedness and it is a big challenge for all adults dealing with children. However, shutting down the internet cannot be the solution to the problems, as it is a natural medium for them, and they live most of their days here, no wonder they are trying to resolve their frustrations here. It is the responsibility of the family, the parents, first and foremost, to try to be prepared for these situations, because if children cannot interpret something, it can lead to unresolved tensions. The situation of educational institutions and expectations towards schools has also changed.

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[11]   Government Decision 1488/2016. (IX. 2.) – Digital Child Protection Strategy.