

## THE FACTORS AND CONDITIONS OF NETOHOLISM IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE DIAGNOSTIC RESEARCH

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### *Abstract*

This paper is an excerpt from the research conducted by the authors in cooperation with the Regional Educational Authority in Katowice (Poland). The analysed problems involve the phenomenon of new media addiction from the perspective of school pupils in the Bielsko-Biała poviat. The issues commented herein are an attempt to present the conditions that determine uncontrolled computer and Internet overuse in the context of the popular e-services as well as self-awareness of children and youth in this area.

*Key words:* internet addiction, polish young citizen, information society

### **Introduction - characteristics of research methods**

The object of the diagnostic research was the diagnosis and characteristics of the phenomenon of addiction of school youth to modern information technologies. The research problems revolve around the analysis of netoholism /1/ and the main causes that determine its occurrence among the school youth. They also focus on determining the educational role of parents in effective prevention of IT addiction. The factors that characterize the quality and the way of using computers and the Internet by gymnasium (lower secondary school) and upper secondary school students have been the starting point for the analysis of the empirical data. The diagnostic research were carried out within the pilot program by the research fellows of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Higher School of Administration in Bielsko-Biała with the active support of the Regional Education Authority in Katowice (Kuratorium Oświaty w Katowicach). This support involved cooperation in three areas: consultation of the research tools, providing access to the Authority's official website with the link redirecting the respondents to the online questionnaires and encouraging the teachers to promote the research among their students. The selection of the sample was realized

in two stages. The first stage involved the arbitrary decision of the project's authors to limit the potential group of respondents to the students of gymnasiums and upper secondary schools. This limitation had resulted from the conviction that if netoholism is a real threat to the Polish youth, it would be observable primarily in the aforementioned age groups. The aim of the research in the cognitive aspect is to explain whether there are any risk factors for netoholism in those age groups and to describe their style of functioning in the net regarding the risky behaviors that (usually unconsciously) increase the odds for occurring the real threats of IT addiction. The practical goal that was based on the qualitative analysis of the results, is to design a diagnostic tool that would serve to determine the risk scale of Internet addiction of a pupil (netoholism). The research conducted in the form of diagnostic pole involved filling out the electronic questionnaire via the Kuratorium Oświaty website. As a result 398 questionnaires have been filled out by the students of the gymnasiums and upper secondary schools from Bielsko-Biała and neighboring locations. During the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the gathered data it turned out that not all of the questionnaires have been completed correctly. The research team assumed then that the incomplete, illogical and posing no value to the re-

search forms were not taken into account. After selection of the material, 339 questionnaires that met the method criteria have been obtained /2/.

### Internet as a space of shaping pupils' social experiences

Internet is a space of various social experiences of the youngest generations in today's society. The main factors shaping these experiences include the possibilities to enter into bi- and multilateral interactions between the users, participation in network communities, access to educational, information, entertainment, administrative-institutional content and also active cooperation in realizing certain individual and group objectives. One of the important and constantly growing in significance forms of network activities of youth is the possibility to correspond systematically

with other network users. According to the research, practically all pupils exchange messages at least occasionally while for 22% of them e-correspondence is a vital element of their daily network activities, as follows:

- 22,2 % exchange messages every day,
- 7,4 % exchange messages once a week,
- 70,4 % exchange messages occasionally.

The results of the research presented in the table 1 corroborate the thesis about the reality of those social experiences gained in the virtual reality. It is clear that the possibility to enter into various forms of social contacts in the cyberspace is for pupils an important source of social experience. Of course, the value of this experience is found in both serious dialoguing and symbolic playing someone else (creating an identity) /3/. However, the individual impressions and experiences of pupils derived from the single communication acts are important here.

Table 1 The attitude of pupils towards the possibilities to interact with other net users in the perspective of their own social experiences in the real world

Do you think that conversations via the Internet:	Yes		NO	
	N	%	N	%
ensure anonymity	189	55,9	149	44,1
allow to pretend someone you are not	163	48,2	175	51,8
allow to make contacts with new people	226	66,9	112	33,1
provide unforgettable experiences	80	23,7	258	76,3
give a sense of free dialogue with other network users	212	62,7	126	37,3
are important source of knowledge about life and the world	181	53,5	157	46,5

source: authors' own compilation

It is worth to notice that the highest results were in the category of possibility to make contacts with other people and free dialogue with them. It also characteristic that the Internet space is important for pupils in the aspect of keeping anonymity and creating fake identity. In spite of appearances, the entertainment of this kind, if it does not become the permanent behavior covering lack of acceptance for oneself or repressing complexes, is of a significant meaning in developing communication and social competencies. It can be referred to classic socialization mechanisms, such as individual or group games, which shaped the understanding of social roles and served to relate oneself to them /4/.

It is also interesting that barely 23,7% of the respondents found contacts made in the virtual world to be particularly meaningful or special. The conclusion could be drawn that pupils, even though they value cyberspace experiences, keep the distance towards them. However, more than half of the respondents (ca. 53,5%) state that conversations with other users are important source of knowledge about life and the world and almost half of them (ca. 47%) admit they got to know in the "real" at least one of their Internet acquaintances. It is worth to notice that meeting someone outside the cyberspace requires an emotional involvement in the relationship with that person and treating them as a significant other. Besides, it involves the risk connected with the necessity

to confront this “virtual” friend in the “real” environment /5/. The involvement does not mean, however, the intellectual distance and thorough reflection. The Internet is a space that facilitates the aware participating in network communities and initiating individual contacts which are even more often transferred to the real world. Then, the contacts the pupils enter in the cyberspace shape not only their social competencies but first and foremost their life experiences and, consequently, their self-perception, how they view their own attractiveness in the relations with others and their readiness to develop interpersonal skills and their subject identity /6/.

### **The primary forms of pupils’ activity in the Internet**

The pupils who took part in the research the most frequently visit entertainment (N=320) and social (N=316) websites. Slightly less information (N=171) and trade (commerce) (N=49) websites are visited. Pornographic (N=4) and file share (N=5) sites visits are of marginal occurrence. Apart from these answers there were quite a lot of single listings of URL addresses to the websites offering computer games, on-line shopping, comparing prices, news services or to popular artists’ web pages. It is worth to point that the studies show the vast significance of the social websites which occur in the same proportion as the entertainment ones. The phenomenon of growing popularity of the social portals and network games translates into the change of the forms of activities among the children and youth generation, who want to play and at the same time stay in contact with other people they consider to be their web friends. This tendency fits the social needs of contemporary men. If they organize their time and activities in the Internet space to even more degree, resigning from traditional forms of leisure outside the new technologies, they will intuitively chose the services that are the substitute of the natural forms of social life that develop in peer groups /7/. The analysis of the presents results also prompts to reflection on the rate of popularization of the social portals. Two years ago the respondents did not listed Facebook which

had already been very popular among the older users. It should be expected that the analogical research that will surely soon be conducted in the same age group, the answers regarding social media would change. Firstly, local social networks (like *nasza-klasa.pl*, *facebook*) would not be as attractive as Facebook. Secondly, the proportion between the entertainment and social websites may change for the benefit of the latter.

### **Internet applications and services in the perspective of pupils’ IT competencies**

In this context the answers given by the respondents to the questions regarding active participation in e-space e.g. via discussion forums are interesting. Unlike other websites, forums require the willingness to actively engage into a certain discussion and readiness to respect the forum rules. Each forum had its administrators who control the content. Users who do not obey the rules may be “banned” and this way be unable to take part in the discussions. Additionally, the forums allow active (by entering a discussion) and passive (by just looking through the content) participation. The analyzed group consists of the respondents for whom this form of cyberspace activity is not the key one, there is however quite big, yet not dominant, group of internauts who are active creators of the virtual space. In regards to previously recalled matter where the respondents listed popular social websites, it is noticeable that those indications do not align with the most popular Internet forums. Maybe the reason for this disproportion is the age of the questioned school youth more interested in looking to fulfill their need for entertainment in the interactive cyberspace environment or their need for contacts with other network users without entering into direct interactions (discussions). In the social networks the primary fact is the one of existing, presenting oneself to others in an original way, drawing their attention with one’s profile and it is measured by the large number of visitors. The possibility to participate in a forum does not “magnetize” the minds and hearts of the internauts enough to elevate their status among the other social network users. It seems these are not the only

possible interpretations of this occurrence. Quite big disproportion has been noticed also among the aforementioned numerous listings of the entertainment, social and information websites and rare pointing to specific applications used on the daily basis by the pupils. This disproportion reveals quite large spontaneity and intuitiveness of the pupils in using new technologies. It means they are usually not interested in the structure or the whole range of certain applications installed on their PC, nor even in their names but they just "click" the proper options to get what they want. The access to a certain game, social or information portal is what counts, not the program that is the mean to reach the goal.

With such interpretation perspective, the discrepancy between the already presented results and the next ones referring to the application structures is not surprising. The data indicate that:

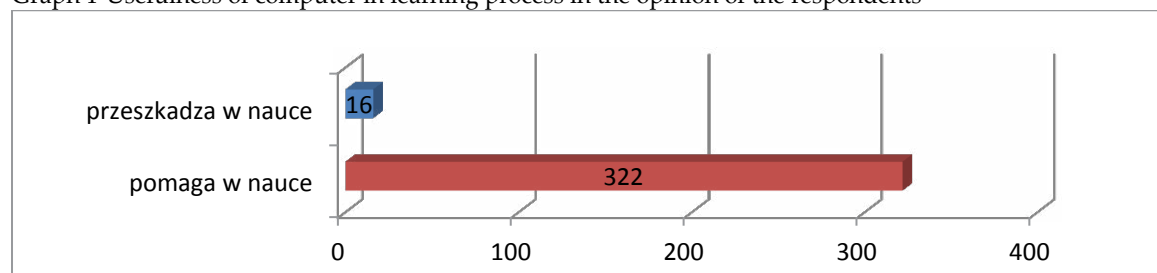
- pupils relatively rarely use the operation system tools (9,7% of all respondents) such as: Paint (N=17), calculator (N=8), notebook (N=8);
- software from the Microsoft Office application package is much more often used: Word (N=79), Power Point (N=22), Excel (N=13), Publisher (N=3), also 29 pupils declared they use the whole package. However, it is barely 43% of all respondents;
- only single respondents are aware of which programs they use to browse the Internet. Only 11,8% listed certain applications: Mozilla Firefox (N=22), Internet Explorer (N=13), Opera (N=5);
- translation programs (N=8) and dictionaries (N=9) are rarely used;
- applications allowing listening to the music like Winamp (N=9), Real player (N=3), Win-

dows Media Player (N=2) are used to a small degree – by 4,1% of respondents;

- graphic processing applications like Gimp (N=11), Picasa (N=9), Photoshop (N=7), Corel Draw (N=4), Blender (N=3) are also rarely used (by about 10%);
- communicators such as Gadu-Gadu (N=17) and Skype (N=9) are also rarely mentioned (about 7,7%);
- for some respondents (15,3%) the term *computer program* is unclear as 33 pupils included Wikipedia in this category and 19 people listed web addresses that are not applications;
- 43 pupils (ca. 12,7%) do not use any computer applications, which seems unlikely considering the present education requirements, not mentioning the typical ways of communicating among the gymnasium and upper secondary school youth. In this picture, a few (less than 4% of the respondents) answers of those pupils, who showed to have advanced IT competencies, stand out:
- there were single indications of programming tools for creating applications in the object and structural mode (N=4);
- several answers showed more complex problem in the form of advanced skills in illegal file downloading that contain full installation versions of applications without license registration required by the law (N=15).

Recognizing the possibilities of the new technologies for entertainment, social interactions and information by the pupils draws a picture of their "computer daily life". Therefore, attitude of pupils towards computer as an education tool is interesting. Thus, quite provocative problem: "Does computer help you or... disturb you in learning?", which remains unsolved despite the unequivocal answers (see graph 1).

Graph 1 Usefulness of computer in learning process in the opinion of the respondents



source: authors' own compilation

This problem, even though it seems to have already been solved in the literature of the subject, is internally complex and in practice it can be viewed from many dimensions /8/. A computer can be a distraction for those who prefer reading books and other source materials or prefer learning by carrying out projects, experiments. It can disturb those who, when they switch on their PC, chose other activities rather than formal education. Similar ambiguity occurs when a computer helps in learning. It is not clear whether it helps due to the potential of information gathered in the net or due to constantly increased possibilities of using pseudo-educational solutions. It involves, of course, copying available content and presenting it as a result of one's own work without even reading it first. The declared educational usefulness of computers prompts to reflections on how much it is connected with the real use of electronic media to increase one's knowledge and develop individual interests. It is known that having a PC with the Internet connection grants easy access to important information, yet this factor does not determine but only supports the process of knowledge increase. Exploration of this issue in order to determine the range of computer usefulness as an educational tool allowing to

acquire knowledge and the limits after crossing of which it becomes an obstacle is undoubtedly worth of further research /9/.

### Behaviors of pupils on the cyberspace in the perspective of family environment

An important aspect that translates into the quality of pupils' activities in the cyberspace is the level of parents' interest and the character of communication regarding this area of activity. Showing interest in what their children do in the net is as important as showing interest in how and with whom they spend time in their peer groups during schools classes, free time, parties etc. Being aware in this matter helps parents to protect their children from potentially difficult situations or even dangers. It is also the starting point for educational work within the family environment. It is analogical with the children's activity in the cyberspace. Only then can the parents properly and in the right time educate children about the possible consequences of their actions and, what is more important, help them to recognize and act according to the values in certain situations experiences in the virtual world.

Table 3 Interest of parents in the content of programs and movies downloaded by their children

Do your parents:	Yes		NO	
	N	%	N	%
are interested in the programs and movies you download from the Internet?	100	29,5	238	70,5
should be interested in the programs and movies you download from the Internet?	104	30,6	234	70,4

source: authors' own compilation

The obtained results are alarming. As much as 70% of the respondents declared lack of interest of their parents in the content of the Internet downloaded programs and movies. This means that in case of these pupils parents are not involved in such important area of their life. They are not aware of their children's experiences gained in the cyberspace. They do not create a common language with them which is the natural link in reaching the mutual understanding and sharing experiences. Lack of interest in this area of life of their own

children impoverish the knowledge about themselves, their experiences, needs and expectations, it also limits the possibilities of real educational impact /10/.

The behavior of pupils confirms this observation, as with time they more consciously separate their parents from the information regarding their Internet activities. Lack of time spent together in the cyberspace leading to lack of common net experiences and, consequently, common language leads to the situa-

tions where parents do not ask their children about their Internet activities. Children, in

turn, are less willing to initiate such conversations either.

Table 4 Transparency of communication between parents and children regarding children's Internet activities

Do you hide before your parents the contents:	Yes		NO	
	N	%	N	%
downloaded from the Internet?	56	16,6	282	83,4
received from other people?	78	23	260	77

source: authors' own compilation

Such state, in a small range, is shown in the table 3 where the respondents declare the fact of hiding before their parents the materials downloaded from the Internet (16,6%) and received from the other people (23%). Strengthening this types of behaviors in family environment deprives children of a real educational and guardianship support from their parents. It brings, on one hand, the consequences in shaping pupils' personality and their moral sensitiveness. On the other hand, it entails the risk of infringing the legal regulations and bearing the legal responsibility for one's cyberspace actions. In the first case it is worth to emphasize that children who are used to observing any kinds of behaviors presented by the other cyberspace users, with time lose their inner resistance to the deviant behaviors and even more often found them "normal" /11/. Lack of reaction from unaware parents may only confirm that separating the moral significance of acts and events happening in the virtual and real world is right. One cannot expect, however, that abandoning moral evaluation of one's own behavior in the virtual world would not have a negative effect on the overall of one's behavior in the "real" world. Experiences gained in the virtual reality are not a fiction, they remain in human consciousness, influence what a person thinks about themselves and others, how they react to others and how they judge their own actions in the perspective of relations to others. What a man becomes in the digital space, puts a mark on who he is in the "real" and who he wants to be. It affects his life choices. In the other case the consequences are tangible. Everyone who infringes the law and gets caught "in action" must be punished accordingly to the range of his misdemeanor. Of course, for the violations

made by the adolescents the responsibility lays also on their carers. The legal regulations are rather precise and restrictive: „under the Polish law popularization of files downloaded from the Internet is treated more restrictively than the downloading itself. It is considered as so called „intellectual“ theft and the person distributing such files is charged with criminal offence. According to the Copyright Act such offences are liable to: fine, restriction of liberty or imprisonment up to 2 years, and in case of acting to derive financial profit up to 3 years. The punishment is more severe to those who derive a constant profit from this offence - the offender is liable to imprisonment from 6 months to 5 years. The amount of fine depends, among others, on personal conditions of the offender, his criminal record, his financial condition and employment and it can amount from 100 PLN to 720 000 PLN. The restriction of liberty, from 1 to 12 months, involves unpaid, court controlled social works for the time of 20 to 40 hours per month and it is imposed by the court" /12/. Additionally, the juvenile offender or his legal guardian might be subject to penalty under the civil code as "these persons only illegally downloaded files from the Internet but did not shared those resources from their computer. Such persons are responsible to the author under the civil law. The author may claim that the person who infringed his rights stops downloading files, removes them from their computer's disc, returns the profit gained from illegal obtaining work/works of the author, remedies the damage according to the general rules (art. 415 of the Polish Civil Code) or by paying a pecuniary retribution of twice, and in case of willful infringement – three times of the copyright remuneration which would be due on the day

of its claim. Apart from the aforementioned penalties the court may impose confiscation of the devices with which the infringement was done, for example the computer” /13/. The legal sanctions resulting from the proved infringement of the law influence the social status of the offender and shape his identity as computer pirate, hacker or cybercriminal. They initiate the process of negative labeling of such person and therefore often close the door to the range of opportunities identified with normal development and functioning in the social environment /14/.

**Pupils’ awareness of the threats connected with netoholism**

One of the most important matters in the conducted diagnostic research was to determine to what degree the pupils are aware of the threats of improper participation in the Internet space. Two categories were adopted as vital: a) understanding the phenomenon of

computer or/and Internet addiction; b) the suggested ways of supporting others (e.g. friends) prone to become addicted to the network information technologies. The analysis of free statements made by the pupils shows pretty accurate, yet mainly intuitive understanding the phenomenon of netoholism. When placed in the scale of all respondents’ answers they reveal the complex structure of netoholism which is considered by the pupils in the specific aspects: identifying computer and network with the environment that gives meaning to one’s own existence; loss of control over time spent at the computer; disorganization of the basic needs of an addict, lack of motivation to “exit” the virtual reality; neglecting typical home and school responsibilities; increased aggressive behavior, inability to discern between the real and the virtual world; difficulties in interpersonal communication and repressing the need to contact with peers for the benefit of virtual experiences. The exemplary answers are presented in the table 5.

Table 1 Computer and/or Internet addiction syndrome in the opinion of respondents

Symptom	Exemplary answers
Computer and the Internet as a main life environment that gives sense to human existence	<p>„you cannot switch off computer and go without it for 3 days holiday, this is already addiction”</p> <p>“giving yourself completely to computer, nothing else matters, you cannot live without it”</p> <p>“when you can’t live without it”</p> <p>“I think a person addicted to computer is the one who can’t live without it and sits in front of it all the time”</p> <p>“totally crazy about the computer, man can’t live without it”</p> <p>“people addicted can’t find anything else to do but computer”</p>
Loss of control over the time spent for the interaction with electronic media	<p>„an addicted man sits long at the computer”</p> <p>“loss of sense of time, crossing so called “invisible time barrier”. If nobody controls the time you spend at the computer, you can get addicted very much and very quickly. Not many people can control their time at the computer.”</p> <p>“sitting at the computer several (6-7) hours a day”</p> <p>“spending lots of time at the computer, lack of control of time you spend in the net”</p> <p>“it means that a person organizes everything in such way so he/she can spend as much time as possible at the computer”</p> <p>“it means obsessive spending time at the computer more than 10 hours a day”</p> <p>“it is when we cannot limit the time spend with the computer”</p>
Disorganization of the basic needs: the need of contact with media prevails over the physiological needs	<p>„addiction is when you cannot leave the computer even to eat dinner”</p> <p>“complete inability to leave it even for a moment, even to meet physiological need. You totally forget you’re hungry or you’re cold”</p> <p>„spending too much time with the computer so you don’t care about your hygiene”</p> <p>“depending on the degree of addiction, people strongly addicted can-</p>

	not leave their computer to meet their nutrition needs, to sleep" "people can't leave computer. They don't have time to eat, they don't sleep through the night."
Lack of motivation to leave computer	„you cannot leave computer” „you sit at the computer all the time and keep your eyes on it all the time” “you cannot leave the computer or you feel dragged to sit at it” “you cannot get away from computer”
Failure to fulfill entrusted responsibilities	„you can't leave it and so you fail to fulfill you school responsibilities or do your work” “neglecting all your activities and responsibilities because of computer” “I think when someone sits non-stop at the computer and neglects his responsibilities” “if after coming home from school the only thing you do is computer and you cannot get away from it, then it is probably an addiction.”
Aggressiveness	„you use Internet all the time, run from the 'real', constant but ineffective trying to leave it, aggressiveness” “when someone spends all his time at the computer, without it he behaves aggressively” “when a person cannot free himself from the computer, becomes aggressive when others try to switch it off”
Inability to discern the real world from the virtual one	„I think it is when a man cannot discern the realistic world from the real one anymore and he is not aware of that” “living another life” „addiction appears when the computer world covers the real one” “no contact with the outer world” “you don't tell apart the world from computer reality” “people don't know any other life but living through the Internet!”
Distorted interpersonal communications in the direct and indirect aspect	„if you talk to her and she is staring at the computer that nothing gets to her. You need to say it again several times.” „it means you don't have any contact with others” “you can't make normal contacts with people, addicted people can only talk to others via the net. They spend lots of time at the computer and they neglect themselves and their close ones.” “we get used to talking to friends on gadu-gadu and we cannot finish this conversation!!”
Repressing the need of contacts with peers	„you cannot get away from it, you prefer to stay home rather than meet with friends” “spending every free moment with the computer instead of meeting with friends.” “they don't want to meet with friends because they think they met someone more interesting in the net.”

Source: authors' own compilation

The analysis of the pupils' statements leads to some scientific observations:

- the statement in which pupils describe addiction as the loss of ability to plan and control the time dominate;
- when characterizing netoholism the respondents focused on the single, selected symptoms of computer and Internet addiction but none of them referred to the netoholism in the wider perspective;
- the pupils pointed to addiction in the context of habitual behaviors (e.g. pointless browsing the websites and failure to notice the problem) or disorganization of behaviors (such as lack concentration, overreacting or apathy, unwillingness to act without the contact to media and skipping school in order to spend time in cyberspace);
- the respondents quite often referred to improper behaviors like lying to parents about



the amount of time actually spend at the computer while neglecting physical activities, low marks received at school, failure to do homework, and hiding the fact of increasing distortions in fulfilling physiological needs (especially sleep and eating disorders);

- there were also the explanations about the style of everyday functioning of the cyberspace users and behaviors that do not lead to addiction if the time and frequency of network use do not cause neglecting other activities in the "real". It is worth to quote some of the answers: "If someone does not care about himself and school and family, it may be addiction because even if someone plays even 6 hours and has time for everything and has no problems with anything then it is not addiction" or "it just absorbs you like smoking or alcohol, the problem is about simple addiction. I've been playing since I was little so I'm just used to, I can sit even more than 8 hours and I don't feel tired".

Despite relatively good sensing what netoholism is and what behaviors it entails, the large group of respondents (31,5%) showed little awareness of this significant problem and was not able to list any symptoms of Internet and computer addiction. The observations made by pupils themselves can serve to confirm this, as 52,36% admitted they know at least one addicted person. Of course, such declaration does

not mean that person is actually addicted but it reveals disorganized behaviors in which participation in the cyberspace is valued more than the "real" life. Even if the pupils present themselves as not too sensitive nor oversensitive in this matter, when they identify the disorganization of behaviors of a certain person with netoholism, they reveal the high level of awareness about the problem. Netoholism is not an abstract for the respondents, nor children's fairytale but a real and serious life problem the symptoms of which are to some degree recognizable to them. Lack of such awareness poses a risk of neglecting or even denying the possibilities of the negative aspects of new media addiction. Then, there is a danger of falling into simple observation that "everybody use media everyday and no harm is being done to anyone". The low level of awareness leads to ignorance which increases the risky behaviors in this matter. Only 13% of the respondents take the potential risk of netoholism personally. The rest think addiction is possible in others but they do not link it to themselves. What is alarming is that the conviction of one's own immunity does not translates into the style of functioning in the cyberspace, does not result in behavior that would differ from the one of other users.

The attitude of pupils towards netoholism has been also revealed in the advices they gave to an addicted person. They are presented in the table 6.

Table 6 Computer or/and network addiction syndrome in the light of pupils' suggestions for preventive and treatment support

Type of advice	Advice - quote
Limiting the contact with electronic media	<p>„I would advise him to stop playing”</p> <p>“he should get rid of the computer for some time”</p> <p>“sell the computer”</p> <p>“he should try not to switch the computer on for one day!”</p> <p>“reduce the time you spend in front of the PC by one hour every month until half an hour a day which is 3,5 hours per week”</p> <p>“a shock therapy. Live without a computer for one month”</p> <p>“that life is much more interesting than a computer game”</p>
Change of activities	<p>„go for a walk”</p> <p>„do some sport or something that has nothing to do with computer”</p> <p>“he should spend more time outsider because it is a very nice thing too”</p> <p>„he should go out and ride a bike”</p> <p>„he should meet with friends instead of sitting in front the computer”</p> <p>“he should find another hobby”</p> <p>„he should try to go somewhere for a walk instead of sitting at the computer... and not only live in the game world!”</p>

	<p>"I would advice that he should sit less at the computer and go out more"                  "I would tell him that it is worth to take care of the real matters because at the computer time is often wasted. It's not worth it!)"                  „I would tell ad vice him to find some healthier hobby"                  „I would tell him to get interested in something because he surely has some hobby. I would advise to join a school hobby club or some sport club. If it is possible he should give up computer for some time and then made a plan of using it, for example 1 hour a day. But I don't know if my advices would help. I think that with a big addiction they rather wouldn't."                  "A complete lack of contact with the Internet and computer for a while, finding other things to do and another way of spending free time, finding a girl-friend/boyfriend."</p>
Rational free time management	<p>„to make a day schedule and a proper amount of computer"                  „set the time to use the computer"                  „he should fight with it and gradually reduce the time spent in the net"                  "he shouldn't quit the computer totally but gradually try to use it less and less"</p>
Seek professional help (counseling)	<p>„he should go to a specialist because such addiction can be cured. But the person cannot help himself, even his parents and friends won't do much. He should go for a therapy"                  „he should go to a specialist"                  „he should go to rehab"                  „go for treatment"                  „go to psychiatrist"                  "to take a long break and the best to go to the specialist"                  "that he went to psychologist and not let others use the computer too"                  "that he went to somebody for help"                  „let him go to a doctor"</p>
Sarcastic comments	<p>„he's doing well"                  „play more"                  „let him play till his eye balls jump out"                  „You're doing well;)"                  „he will ruin his sight and go blind"</p>
No advise – individual business	<p>„it's his business ;)"                  „nothing – it's his business"</p>

source: authors' own compilation

These advices can be gathered into four groups of those of supportive character (supportive attitude) and into two groups of answers showing no will to understand the problem nor empathy towards a person suffering from the addiction (rejecting attitude). The supportive attitude, being at the same time a constructive one, is presented in the statements pointing to: a) limiting contact with the electronic medium, b) change of the "computer" activity to other, c) rational time management that would balance the activities related to computer and other actions, and finally d) suggesting that the addicted person searched for a specialist help. The rejecting attitude entails sarcastic comments or open distance towards the problem according to the "everyone

is responsible for himself" principle. This leads to the conclusion that everyone must deal with his problems and weaknesses alone. From the quantitative point of view it must be noticed that the supportive attitude dominates over the marginal statements within the rejecting attitude. More precisely, within the supportive attitude the most frequent advices were those that referred to the change of activity to other "non-computer" one and quite numerous, though not as frequent, suggestions to search for professional help. Then there were advices to reduce the amount of time spent at the PC and to create new forms of planning and organization of leisure time. Each of these groups of constructive answers contains a pedagogical value. First of the aforementioned

proposals reveals readiness to engage actively in finding the right solution for the person who suffers from the negative results of netoholism. One needs to agree, of course, that these suggestions are usually rather schematic and depend greatly on the willingness of the addict to change (what is not often in the real situations). There is, however, an attempt to deal with this problem from the perspective of an individual, which should be considered as a value itself.

The second suggestion show pupils' uncertainty and even confusion in the situation of that kind and, consequently, removing the problem by sending the addicted person the specialist (physician, psychologist, psychiatrist). This is copying the pattern well known to the respondents, the one of their parents, who noticing the symptoms of a disease go to a physician, a person who is prepared to diagnose it and apply a proper treatment. The next two proposals of support refer to the first suggestion and so they involve active participation in the relation with the addicted person. They include:

- a) imposing a restrictive rules of using the computer and the Internet, along with the possibility of complete separation from the computer as well as respecting these rules with consequence;
- b) gradual limiting the time spent in the cyberspace and mental separation of the addicted person from all those behaviors that he/shes was not able to control.

### Final conclusions

The presented results reveal, on one hand, the significant deficit regarding parents' interest in their children's activities in the Internet and, on the other hand, that pupils are relatively much open for the contacts with strangers in the cyberspace. Perhaps, this situation stems from the small competencies of parents in IT use or maybe from their pedagogical ignorance and negative developmental effects in children due to lack of adequate educational actions. Surely, due to their age, the respondent also possess no sufficient knowledge about the threats of new media use and rather naïve delight in the possibilities of

contacting others via the Internet. In this context the numbers are alarming: almost 70% of parents being not interested in the content their children come across in the Internet and the vast number of pupils (almost 47% of the respondents) who have met their network friends in "real". Additionally, the significant number of children (about 31,5%) are not aware of the dangers linked to the systematic and frequent use of computer and the Internet and are not able to describe the behaviors that are the symptoms of netoholism. Among the positive aspects are the commonly expressed readiness (77%-80%) to share with parents the content of the materials downloaded from the net or received from others, as well as relatively large distance towards the contacts made in the Internet (about 76,3%). The positive side of the research analysis is also the relatively good intuitive identification of behaviors typical for netoholism (almost 70% of the respondents).

The analysis of the research results, even though it reveals the dangers which, in case of alleviation of the negative attitudes and behavior of parents and highly irresponsible behavior of children, may lead to the negative consequences, show some potential that can be the source of positive changes. The potential of change in this group of school children entails primarily raising further awareness about the threats of the cyberspace use and the mechanisms of new technologies addiction. In the group of parents it involves, first of all, acquiring by them new competencies in IT use but also increasing their awareness of the threats of the cyberspace use and increasing their pedagogical knowledge that could be used in their family environment. A some sort of solution in this area are trainings on protection of children against network threats, that would equip parents in knowledge and key skills useful in the pedagogical work with children and youth /15/. It is to make parents fully oriented in the basic areas of the Internet activity of their children, identified with:

- on-line communication (including e-mail, chat, social media),
- protection of children against "cyberstalking", sexual abuse and content generally classified as "for adults only",

- methods of securing computers against harmful software and viruses,
- raising awareness about the threats of e-trade and e-commerce /16/.

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## FAKTORI I UVJETI OVISNOSTI O INTERNETU IZ PERSPEKTIVE DIJAGNOSTIČKIH ISTRAŽIVANJA

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### *Sažetak*

Ovaj članak je izvadak iz istraživanja kojeg su autori proveli u suradnji s Regionalnom prosvjetnom vlasti u Katowicama (Poljska). Analizirani problemi uključuju pojavu ovisnosti od novih medija iz perspektive učenika škola u Bielsko-Biała poviat. Rad se bavi pitanjima koja pokušavaju definirati što se događa prekomjerenim korištenjem interneta u kontekstu popularnih e-usluga kao i o svjesti djece vezano za ova pitanja.

*Ključne riječi:* ovisnost o internetu, poljski mladi građani, informacijsko društvo