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## The Role of Social Networks in the Psychosocial Functioning of Students in Selected Polish Primary Schools

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### Abstract

Internet is a “guru”, the latest achievement of modern times, an unlimited range of topics, a source of phenomena and world events, as well as an irreplaceable tool of entertainment. It is a very convenient form of contact, aimed at replacing traditional correspondence, telephony, and even in the “busy world” of traditional meetings. It allows you to send files containing texts, sound, image and movie. Growing young people focus on the same topics, interests or hobbies, creating virtual communities. Social networks, which are one of the types of such a community, are becoming more and more popular among Polish cyberspace users. Their task is to make new contacts possible, find old friends and acquaintances, and share information about themselves. Therefore, they satisfy the needs arising from human nature, such as affiliation, being with others, friendship. In connection with the constantly growing popularity of social networking sites, the aim of the empirical research was to find out the role they play in the psychosocial life of 750 8th grade students in Polish primary schools. Particular attention was paid to interpersonal relations, initiated both in the virtual world and beyond. Empirical research has made it possible for us to verify theoretical knowledge about social networking sites and confront it with the actual participation of websites in building interpersonal bonds among young people, constructing their activity and showing the positive and negative aspects of using them.

**Keywords:** social networks, students, network, internet user.

### 1. Introduction

The modern world does not exist without access to new communication and information technologies. The development of information technology and telecommunications is accompanied by the availability of new information exchange media, there are completely new opportunities that favour the development of all kinds of activities. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the way of using the Internet changed, which used to be a place of collecting information. At the end of the 20th century, the style of presence on the Internet of users who contributed to Internet resources underwent a metamorphosis. The Web 2.0 ideology made the web a living environment for a human being, who is an active creator of its resources and participant in communication (Łuszczek, 2011: 129; Rizk, Hillier 2020).

One of the most visible examples of this phenomenon is the rapid growth of social media around the world (Snelson, 2016; Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart & Madden, 2015). Today, the number of social networking sites is huge and is constantly growing (Popiołek, 2015: 61-62).

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In the subject literature and in common use, there are many terms related to social media, including social networks and social networking services. In this study, they will be used interchangeably. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) define social media as a group of web applications, based on the ideological and technological foundations of Web.2, enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The Oxford Dictionary of English defines the term social network as a network of social interactions and personal relationships, as well as websites belonging to individuals that allow users to communicate with each other by posting information, comments, messages, photos (Kotyśko et al., 2014: 178).

Social networking sites are divided into user-oriented (the main entity with which the system function is related is the user, i.e. Grono.net) and group-oriented (the main entity is the group of users, i.e. Nasza-Klasa.pl). On the basis of nature, we distinguish professional networking sites (i.e. GoldenLine.pl) and social networking sites (i.e. Nasza-Klasa.pl). Due to the interaction the user enters with the system, social networking sites are distinguished with a high degree of interaction with the user (i.e. Myspace.com), with a medium degree of interaction with the user (i.e. Grono.net) and with a low degree of interaction with the user (i.e. MojaGeneracja.pl) (Szewczyk, 2011: 384-385). There are over 200 social networks around the world. The most popular of them is undoubtedly Facebook, which globally has over 2.44 billion monthly users, of which 1.59 billion use this website every day (Statista, 2018; Snelson, 2016).

## 2. Materials and methods

The main motive for taking up the topic of social networking sites was the desire to realize how important they are in life of a young person. Empirical research conducted in Poland (2018) by EU Kids online II among children aged 8 to 14 shows that the average year of first-time login to a social network is 9 years. As many as 60.4 % of Polish children of this age had a profile on a social networking site, 97 % of young Internet users used the Internet at least once a week, and 75 % of respondents logged in several times a day.

The quantitative and qualitative empirical research was conducted in 2018-2019 in ten Polish primary schools – grades VIII in the Lesser Poland voivodship in the following cities: Kraków, Oświęcim, Wieliczka and Zakopane, and in the Kraków Salesian Youth Care Movement. A total of 750 students were examined, including 350 boys and 400 girls. The selection of the group was deliberate. The subject of the research was the diagnosis and analysis of social networks and showing the role they play in the psychosocial development of students.

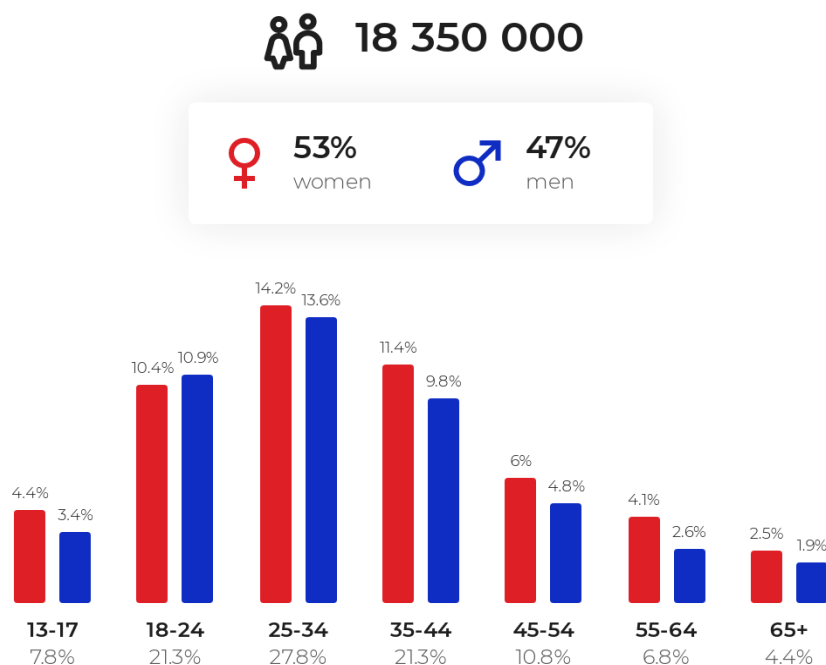
The aim of the research was to characterize the most popular social networks and to analyse the positive and negative effects of using them. The main research problem is included in the following question: What is the role and importance of social networking sites in the psychosocial functioning of students? Detailed problems were selected for the main problem: 1. What social networks do they choose most often? 2. How much time do they spend on portals? 3. What are the ways of presenting oneself online? 4. What are the positive and negative effects of social networking sites on the psychosocial functioning of primary school students? The research used the diagnostic survey method supplemented with an individual case study. Technique of the research was a questionnaire and interview, and research tools were a questionnaire survey for primary school students (reasons for setting up accounts on websites, time, types of activity) and an interview questionnaire with primary school teachers belonging to the Salesian Youth Care Movement (ways of functioning on portals, correlation of the impact of virtual communities on contacts with peers in reality).

## 3. Discussion

The main motive for taking up the issue of social networking sites was the desire to realize how important role they play in the daily existence of modern school children in the world. In the light of the latest global research on technology and social media, conducted using qualitative-quantitative methods (interviews, focus groups, survey methodologies) and mixed (convergent parallelism and explanatory sequence) combinations of the many researches (Creswell et al., 2011; 2014), Castellacci, Tveito, 2018; McDool et al., 2020; Bulman, Fairlie, 2016; Snelson, 2016; Reid et al., 2016; Tandoc et al., 2015) (2017 NASK, 2019, 2020 Digital Mobile and Social Media 2020 Poland, CBOS, IAB Poland) Facebook leads the way (18 million 350 thousand Internet users) the following portals are in the next places: Nasza-Klasa.pl (6.188 million users), Twitter (2.449 million). Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are in the top ten worldwide (Statista, 2018).

In 2005, YouTube.com was created – a popular website that allows its users to upload and play videos for free. Users add 100 hours of new videos here every minute. YouTube is hosted on Google, which is the largest and most-used search engine in the world. In 2019, YouTube had 1.900 billion users worldwide, while in Poland 24 million users. Another Polish social networking site is Fotka.pl, very popular among young people, gathering internet users who post their photos, comment on and evaluate photos of other users, take part in various contests and games (Warzecha, 2017: 87-89). Instagram – another portal – is a photo hosting website. Its users share their photos, videos with friends and family (Moreno et al., 2016). Various types of mobile applications with which you can quickly communicate are also extremely popular among young people. An example of this is, among others, Snapchat, used for sharing photos, videos and text communication, an application that allows you to send short videos – 10 seconds, photos with captions, after a set time limit, the information sent is automatically deleted (Uhls et al., 2017) and Ask.fm (Questions and Answers social network, where registered users can ask questions). Tinder – a social dating application is becoming more and more popular. With its help, you can evaluate and meet new people. Their proposals are selected, among others thanks to the criteria of distance and age.

In most cases, social media is not intended for the youngest children. The chart below was presented by a Polish IT specialist and a Facebook user in Poland in 2019. According to the presented data, 7.8 % of all users of this website are people aged 13-17, and therefore also children attending primary school.



**Fig. 1.** Facebook users in Poland in 2019

Source: <https://www.whysosocial.pl/uzytkownicy-social-media-w-polsce-i-na-swiecie/>

Children's participation in social networking sites is the result of a natural tendency to look for friends and acquaintances. Successful friendships are a priority especially for young people and are favour achieving life satisfaction. The Internet is now primarily a meeting place, the use of mobile applications is for many an opportunity and a way to improve communication functioning. You do not need social skills to make contacts online. This type of communication allows you to mask your feelings and views. On the one hand, it is communication openness, and on the other hand, it is a convenient anonymity (Reid et al., 2016; Wolski, 2009: 155).

As users of social networking sites, young people encounter marketing activities aimed precisely at their age group. This applies to the sale of certain goods and brand promotions. The brand becomes close to the user, which is an element that facilitates making consumer decisions. Relationships on a social network are less formal and more interactive. Young people, and more and more often also school-age children, transfer a large part of their activities here. Cyberspace becomes a form of exchange of knowledge, thoughts, gossip and goods. Unfortunately, a strong commitment to this type of reality is often associated with a decline in activity in the real

world. It can also lead to a greater sense of loneliness. One should also be aware that “non-physical” contacts make it impossible to maintain real bonds. It is hard to talk about attachment to someone without physical contact. Additionally, non-verbal language is extremely important in mutual communication, while communication on social networks prevents this type of exchange. This type of communication largely consists in communicating with oneself and with one’s own ideas, it is not a person-person communication, but a person-person project (Łuszczek, 2011: 134).

All the above-emphasized issues related to the use of social networking sites prove that using them plays a huge role in the psychosocial functioning of children and adolescents (Fawzi, Mothes 2020: 335-347). Research shows that the use of social networks, despite their undoubted advantages, may have a negative impact on their users. It turns out that various problems in psychosocial functioning of young people, such as the feeling of loneliness and depression, may be related to the excessive use of social networks (Makaruk, 2013: 69-70; Tandoc et al., 2015). Spending many hours on social networks, comparing oneself and own ordinary life with the world created on the Internet can make schoolchildren feel depressed and worthless. The uncritical assimilation of the “norm” offered by social media may lead to a growing sense of inadequacy and failure to meet social expectations. Unrealistic requirements set by social media distort self-esteem: they lower it and often lead to the pursuit of perfectionism. As a result, anxiety, depressed mood, and even depression may occur. Presence on social networks is often associated with symptoms of social phobia. Research has shown that spending more than two hours a day on social networks is associated with mental health problems. Very young users of portals often use them by devoting the time they should spend on sleep. This has a direct impact on their well-being, lack of sleep and fatigue make it difficult to concentrate on everyday tasks. Another sphere of influence of portals is related to external appearance, which is very important for adolescents. There is a cult of a slim body on social media. Message is reinforced by filters and photo processing programs that allow to change the real look. An attempt to catch up with the standards that usually have nothing to do with reality may result in disturbed body image and expose to, for example, eating disorders (Borkowska, Witkowska, 2017: 16).

The European Commission has identified four types of threats that young users of social networking sites may face: illegal content (images of violence against children, content full of hate), age inappropriate content (pornography, violence), inappropriate contacts (adults seeking sexual contact with children), risky behaviour of young website users (intimidation, spreading rumours, sending compromising photographs) and other dangerous behaviours (e.g. disclosing personal data). All these dangerous phenomena have a huge impact on the psychosocial development of children and adolescents (Łuszczek, 2011: 134-139). The family environment is extremely important for the proper development of a child. Unfortunately, it has long been noticed that the Internet has done some sort of “rearrangement” in the modern family. The enormous popularity of social networking sites in all age groups has resulted in an increase in the distance between family members when they are together at home, as they run away from deepening their relationship with each other into virtual reality (Elias et al., 2020). The way of using the Internet often atomizes the family environment, whose members live in other worlds, usually virtual ones, and they listen less to each other.

Another threat to the proper psychosocial development of young social media users is FoMO. It is the fear of “falling out of circulation” (fear of missing out). For teenagers, being on social media is an obvious part of their lifestyle. The more they are present in their daily lives, the more often they fear that they will lose access to information and events. FoMO is the conviction that where they are not there, something particularly interesting is happening that they are excluded from. Very young people are particularly affected by this anxiety, as social media plays a significant role in their lives. They allow to fulfil one of the most important needs of adolescence – the need for social approval. On a social networking site, it is easier for them to become the person they want to be, and relationships from the lives of others, tracked on many profiles, trigger a desire to be better and admired (Borkowska, Witkowska, 2017: 13).

Without a doubt, social media has a huge impact on the lives of its users. It should be emphasized, however, that when used correctly and with reflection, they can positively influence the psychosocial development of young people. First of all, they help to develop mindfulness and critical thinking and teach communication. They also enable contact with peers – groups are an important source of support and positive inspiration, they give a feeling of being accepted and appreciated. They help to develop many real skills in the virtual world, i.e. linguistic and writing

skills – children and young people learn to express themselves briefly, argue, present themselves and their work. By playing computer games, young people improve coordination and motor skills, learn how to find themselves in a group and how to cooperate with others. Being a user of social networks supports the development of social and civic competences. Young people expand their circle of friends and acquire competences that will allow them to find themselves in a modern civil society in the future. Active participation in groups or forums allows you to be aware of political and social events, also at the local level.

Very often it is social media that is the first arena for public activities – charity, social and political. It is here that they often first experience a sense of real influence on the surrounding reality. After all, social media can also inspire. Children and young people can be creators on the Internet and not just consumers of ready-made content. They create, among others, music, movies, websites, blogs, portals and tutorials. Social media allows them to develop their own passions, technical and artistic skills, look for new forms of expression and tools. In social media, teenagers usually find their first audience: fans and critics – they learn to defend their artistic vision, accept criticism, which builds mental resilience and stable self-esteem. Therefore, social networking sites are an integral part of the lives of ever younger users. 9-12-year-old children already have their social accounts. Being a social media user at such a young age can have many negative effects on psychosocial development. However, this does not have to be the case if the use of the websites is under the control of adults. Children of this age should not have unlimited access to the Internet. Therefore, a huge responsibility rests with parents and guardians who are obliged to watch over the right proportions of being online and being offline. Only then will the development of children run smoothly.

#### **4. Results**

The results of quantitative and qualitative research confirm that Facebook is the most popular among adolescent students. 87 % of respondents use it. Google Plus came in second with 52 %, followed by Instagram (32 %), Fotka and Twitter (27 %). Pinterest, Ask.fm, Keek, Tumblr, LOVEit gained recognition among 23 % of Internet users, Nasza-Klasa (15 %) and other social networks in 5 %. In addition to the above-mentioned, the respondents also had the following accounts: gry.pl, rmfmaxx.pl, Skype, Gadu-Gadu, YouTube, e-mail, Zalukaj.tv, which are not portals, but websites or messengers. The intensity of registering on the websites was as follows: the vast majority of the surveyed students logged into virtual communities several times a day (69 %), once a day (37 %), several times a week (32 %), less than once a week (19 %).

Access to virtual communities and a variety of content means that the respondents register for several websites at the same time. This is additionally intensified by the time devoted to the activity of adolescents on the Internet. Over 1/2 of the respondents out of the general population have two or more accounts on social networking sites: 28 % have two accounts, 9 % three, 21 % more than three, 40 % use only one. The amount of time spent was as follows: most people, 66 % in the social network, spent 1 to 2 hours a day, 24 % for 1 hour, the remaining 10 % less than an hour. The obtained data show that there are many accounts set up by 8th grade students and that they spend a moderate amount of time in front of the computer on social networks.

Empirical research shows that there are many reasons why the popularity of social networking sites is systematically growing, and thus the number of users logging in is gradually increasing. When asked about the reason for setting up accounts, the respondents stated: curiosity (57 %), the ability to view and comment on posts posted by others (31 %), the desire to make new friends (24 %), persuasion from peers (27 %), sharing applications and photos with their own peers, comparing quizzes and games, the fashion for having an account (20 %), maintaining constant contacts with internet users from other cities and countries (15 %), the possibility of observing celebrities and idols (3 %). It should be emphasized that from the moment the portals were launched, their founders compete in original and unconventional ideas aimed at gaining the largest number of users and a high level of their activity in the functioning of the website. They improve and introduce previously unknown solutions, often surprising users with new initiatives. The attractiveness and variety of functions offered by the Internet motivate students to actively use social networking sites. Most participants were active in chat (74 %), having private conversations with friends, 53 % appreciated likes received on Facebook. This social plug-in, popular since 2010, allowed the respondents to express their approval for published posts in a simple and quick way. Out of the total, 44 % of respondents used the opportunity to comment on photos, statuses and

links, 29 % systematically read information posted by their colleagues, and 23 % shared interesting information with their peers, published on their own accounts. Finding friends (19 %) and playing games (17 %) were considered not very popular. The analysis shows that a small group of primary school students (13 %) indicated a different purpose of virtual communities – running a Facebook page, searching for information and expanding personal knowledge, analysing various available content.

The obtained data proves the extraordinary popularity of the network and the high activity of respondents on social networks, checking and knowing what is happening in them. These activities are most often expressed by diversified virtual activities, among others: related to developing interests, analysing content, cultural resources, comparing the results of computer games and on-line games, making a career as a YouTuber and other. Social networks offer their users a wide range of possibilities in various areas, especially in multi-directional communication and the presentation of their personal image on the web. In their statements, the respondents emphasized the huge role of portals in their lives. Thanks to them, 57 % of the surveyed students had the opportunity to get to know colleagues deeper. Every third respondent made new friends, 12 % overcame shyness, becoming more flexible and open to new situations and challenges, 7 % indicated popularity in the real world. When asked: How have social networks helped you, 20 % of students indicated other possibilities offered by the portals. They wrote, *inter alia*, “My dreams of setting up a website have come true”, “I’m strong and I got to know people that interest me better”, “I love good entertainment and fun, and portals enable me to do so”, “I develop my interests, acquire and expand the information I need for lessons at school”. Another 7 % emphasized maintaining constant contacts with others, and the same percentage stated that the portals did not bring anything new to their lives. They also do not see any positive aspects of setting up accounts on these types of platforms.

The next questions were open. The first one concerned the positive aspects of using the Internet. Respondents mentioned: active experimentation consisting in creating own accounts, observing blogs, filming with a mobile phone and posting on YouTube, processing, editing, sending etc., communication – free and removing spatial barriers, knowledge exchange, community building (25 %), up-to-date observation of events that happened with friends (15 %), popularity in the real world (9 %), the possibility of getting to know peers deeper (8 %), gaining new friends with common interests (7 %), relaxing, overcoming stress, relaxing, overcoming weaknesses (5 %), a great way to deal with boredom and a virtual way of learning about the world (3 %). The remaining, quite numerous groups constituting 15 %, did not provide any answer. The obtained data prove that portals are a phenomenon of diverse social interactions. In a virtually constructed social space, students satisfy their needs: belonging (contacts and social acceptance) and self-presentation (creating a specific image). The profiles they run can be modified in any way, and this in turn allows to show yourself in a more favourable light. Virtual Village equates social status. The network image, identity, and the way their peers see them is mostly up to them. Young people have the opportunity to emphasize their strengths and “cover up” their weaknesses. Experimenting with own virtual identity in adolescence results from the need to play various social roles and allows the implementation of developmental tasks important for this stage. The respondents show the world of their own values, motivations, appearance, secrets, uncertainty, as well as attitudes and behaviours, create opportunities to meet and achieve specific goals.

The second open question contained very diverse responses to the negative impact of social networking sites on the life and psychosocial development of the surveyed students. Most – 45 % of respondents pointed to the disadvantages of having a profile and using the Internet, emphasizing: insulting, ridiculing, mocking, calling names, deepening isolation, anxiety, paedophilia, exhibitionism, cyberbullying, hate, threats – 41 %, waste of time – 29 %, the unknown trespassing portals – harassment, neurological changes – multithreaded thinking, inability to reflect, interpret, decreased self-esteem, indifference – 15 %, visibility and availability of data for other people – 9 %, addiction, sleep disturbance – 6 %. The further analyses, 30 % of respondents did not see any negative effects of having their own profile and using social networks. In our opinion, it is disturbing that as many as 25 % of respondents had nothing to say about it.

The above-presented results prove that the individual is quite threatened, which may result in withdrawal from social contacts and cause other developmental changes, such as FoMO – fears that something happens without our knowledge, stress, emotional instability, problems with communicating feelings, understanding someone else’s point of view, maintaining proper social relations, aggression. In the virtual space, the key to adolescents is self-creation and designing a

specific activity. It is also the creation of a cognitive world of reflection by noticing problems, formulating questions, inquiry, reflection, developing multidirectional interests, but also experience, subjectivity and favourable conditions for developing skills and acquiring new information. By entering the world of creating their own "I" on social networks, students learn active and critical thinking, innovation, and online communication. Connecting with internet resources, they look for ways to develop IT competences. Thus, they prepare for self-education in various areas saturated with interactivity, enter into the so-called "magic digital partnership", creating a "scene of shared attention". Cyberspace is also an area of the world where they construct their own world outside of adults, conducting a wide range of communication activities via mobile phones, instant messaging, network games, e-mail, etc. They enter the world of global culture through which they build a specific identity. Image for teenagers online is as important as that in the real world. The posted content shapes the opinion much more strongly than the views presented in public places. To the question: How do your friends perceive you, is it important to you? More than half of the surveyed 8th grade students at primary schools (55 %) gave a negative answer, while 45 % emphasized that what matters to them is the way they are perceived by other users of virtual communities. The surveyed teenagers stated that they are cautious in their online posts and that they carefully create their image. They realize that often and usually saturated with criticality and malice, and often even triggered by jealousy and hatred, peer activity can have undesirable consequences in everyday reality. Moreover, they emphasized that the willingness to appear in the network, the need for acceptance, and the attempt to attract particular attention to oneself contribute to placing imaginary information. The research shows that 67 % of respondents never spoke about themselves or others virtually in this way, 15 % admitted that it happened to them once. The same percentage of respondents lied or made their posts more attractive. In turn, 4 % of respondents did it often.

Further analyses concerned adolescents posting false information online. The question was directed to people admitting to this. And so 5 %, despite the fact that they posted false posts, could not justify why they did so. There were also replies: "out of curiosity", "I had a problem and a difficult situation to solve", "so that the speaker would not end the call", "I did not want to tell the truth", 11 % admitted that the reason for publishing such posts was the desire to make themselves more attractive and gain popularity – "I wanted to be cooler, have more likes". One of the girls wrote that the reason was trying to protect her own privacy, another lied about her age to be able to set up a Facebook profile. Others wrote that they do not always tell the truth. The analysis shows that there were many reasons for confabulating the information published by the respondents – curiosity, inability to deal with problems, the logging routine, the habit of obtaining up-to-date information on events happening with friends. However, the most common motive turned out to be the desire to self-create oneself as an interesting, attractive and fashionable individual.

Another research intention was to obtain opinions on posting false information on their profiles. Most of the students (75 %) believed that popularity was the main reason for their presentation on social networks. In the second place (67 %) acceptance and recognition, understanding and appreciation, other people (53 %) indicated their attractiveness and the desire to raise their self-esteem. Respondents (12 %) – unfortunately, they did not know why others modify their image on the web. The social dimension of building joint relations and partnership as well as establishing mutual interpersonal contacts on social networks is an important point of activity for young Internet users. Mutual interactions of connecting and cooperating groups with each other in the network are important. Its semantic determinants are social networks and communities; interaction network; autonomy; network diversity; the network as an open phenomenon of interconnection and interactivity. The diversity of participants in this network, its openness and the ability to ensure interactions between them allow to use their potential by creating network nodes.

While conducting the research, we paid special attention to various aspects of communicating young Internet users through social networks. The research shows that every second student believes that the benefits of communicating via social networks are longer time to think about the answer, freedom of speech, access to information and culture (51 %). A similar percentage emphasized the possibility of maintaining mutual contacts without leaving home, 39 % preferring boldness and openness of statements on various topics, while showing resistance in reality, 16 % emphasized free conversations, appearance issues (no image at a given moment), removing time and spatial barriers, 10 % did not mention any advantages of this type of

communication. The growing ubiquity of the web is a striking feature of modern man, although not all of them engage with such great enthusiasm in building online relationships. The sizes of the individual networks vary. Some students had a few friends on portals, while others had several hundreds. The analysis shows that 43 % of the respondents have over 300 friends, 24 % from 100 to 200, 14 % from 50 to 100, and every fifth respondent (19 %) admitted that no more than 50 friends. Therefore, gathered data show that primary school students are very active in making virtual acquaintances. The easier way to make friends, as well as the lack of space and time limitations, make a fairly large group of respondents prefer online friendships, which does not mean that they replace reality. Therefore, when assessing two worlds: real and virtual, for the vast majority (76 %), relationships and contacts made in reality gain more value. Others (20 %) do not see any difference between a virtual friendship and a real one, while 4 % consider them to be equally valuable.

The obtained data show that young internet users, despite devoting a significant amount of time to activities and friendships in cyberspace, have not neglected the real ones that are the most valuable in their lives, which does not mean that the network is something external to reality, but its element. They live in it and live with it, there is always something going on, it changes, transforms, it is the place of their versatile virtual activities in various fields.

During the empirical research, an interview with Eryk was conducted, a grade 8 student at a primary school in Krakow. The boy comes from a broken family. He lives with his mother and her cohabitant. He has a very good contact with his father who, despite parting with his mother, cares for the boy's proper development, actively participating in his life. He is under the care of the Salesian Youth Care Movement – an association run by teachers, educators, Salesians and volunteers, working with children and young people in the field of educational and preventive activities. The mission of the Movement is to educate young people to function independently in society, to support them in discovering and realizing their passions for the benefit of others. Its activity is based on the educational system of St. John Bosco, appearing in the form of the Salesian trinitarian of reason, religion and love, forming the pillars of the preventive system. The idea of this juxtaposition is presented taking into account three aspects: health – wisdom – holiness, health – science – wisdom, joy – science – piety. This system assumes that the most difficult pupil has makings of good, and the educator's task is to discover them and build a future on them. Eryk has been a member of the association for several years. He ended up there due to low self-esteem and learning difficulties. Thanks to the kindness of the educators working in the Movement, we have obtained information on shaping the boy's personality, his character, behaviour, attitudes, preferences and interests. Eryk is considered a kind, good and open child, he can enter into relationships with his peers and adults. Sometimes he is impulsive and hyperactive, but he does not cause major problems in education. He likes to be in the spotlight. He is characterized by a cheerful disposition, culture and kindness. It should be assumed that the respondent is addicted to social networks. Has 5 accounts on them. These are: *Facebook*, *Fotka*, *Ask.fm*, *Instagram* and *Nasza-Klasa*, where his activity, as he himself emphasizes, is an important point of spending free time every day. The most important for him are *Facebook* and *Ask.fm*. He spends 5-6 hours a day or more on using them. The main reason for setting up his personal accounts on portals was curiosity and filling excess free time with entertainment. The wide spectrum of the offered possibilities and their functionality also contributed to the registration on websites so popular all over the world. The frequency of Eryk's participation in portals does not only result from browsing websites and reading their content, but mainly concerns: systematically publishing posts, photos, videos on YouTube, presenting his views on specific topics, e.g. about what he does, where sometimes, what he intends to do, what his feeling is at the moment, what's going on with him, constructing interesting presentations, commenting on others. The analysis of the statements also showed that for him chat is the most important offer that portals offer and the possibility of communicating with peers, participation and synergistic activities, sharing with them experiences, experiences and successes. Apart from the positive aspects of having accounts on social networking sites, Eryk mentioned the negative effects of using them. He stated that in the course of his virtual activities he had come across critical comments about himself, as well as intimidation, ridicule, ignorance, insults, name-calling and sometimes even threats. Despite his independence and the courage to take up various verbal challenges on the Internet, he sometimes feels lost, but is usually guided by truthfulness, and rarely lies and slander against other Internet users. In addition, in his opinion, the number of likes on Facebook is not a measure of popularity at all and in no way does he feel unnoticed when the posts, videos and processed photos he adds do



not enjoy too much recognition among colleagues. Eryk has 425 friends on Facebook. He admitted, however, that he does not know half of them, but accepts them as friends, because he wants to create a network of relationships limited only to cyberspace. He likes to make contacts only on portals. He also does not see the difference between the knowledge carried out on websites and the real one. Contrary to what the educators of the Movement think about him, he claims that he is shy towards face-to-face meetings, therefore he definitely prefers to establish virtual contacts. He considers the close compatibility of mobile devices, i.e. his smartphone with Facebook, to be innovative trends. It is then not completely dependent on the computer but can connect in a given place and at the moment with its friends. Eryk created a personal territory of culture in an original and imaginative way, he creates a network of active activities in which he participates, develops specific interests and broadens the field of interactive experiences. By designing various quizzes, exercises and practical tasks, he “immerses” himself in an authentic digital environment, interacting with his peers. The accompanying initiative to create new solutions for “existence” in the digital age, a high energy field motivates, activates and revives his planned activity in social network.

### 5. Conclusion

Social networking sites are cyberspace that is becoming an increasingly important part of the life of adolescents. Their creators rediscover the world, a virtual world that tries to reproduce reality at all costs, in which the young Internet user considers himself more interesting for others, a world that is a versatile communication medium, enabling the expression of specific opinions and judgments, eliminating time and space limitations. A world that brings many benefits, innovation, perspectives, but also generates destructive social attitudes, threats and dangers.

The most frequently chosen portal for 87 % of 8th grade students at primary schools is Facebook. More than half of the respondents (60 %) have two or more accounts on social networks. The vast majority of them (69 %) log into their profiles several times a day, spending there 2 hours or less. The main reason for logging in to the network for 57 % of respondents was curiosity and the ability to systematically view and comment on their own accounts. The most popular for the majority of respondents (74 %) was the chat, which enables conversations between the currently logged in users. The portals helped over half of the students (57 %) get to know their friends better. Thanks to them, they had the opportunity to contact their friends and were able to follow and observe the events taking place in their lives. The respondents indicated these benefits as the most important for them.

When it comes to threats resulting from the frequency of staying in social networks, 30 % of the surveyed students were unable to name them, while the remaining 70 % presented different answers proving the negative impact of websites on their psychophysical development. They most often mentioned the risk factors of using them: disturbance of the formation of identity and adequate self-image, identity theft (phishing), which may contribute to the emergence of various mental problems, cyberbullying, paedophilia, exhibitionism, Internet sociomania, mood changes and disturbances in the quality of life, mental attachment to online activity, abstinence (limitation or lack of access to the Internet causes unpleasant mental states), negative reactions that destructively affect self-esteem, less social activity in reality, withdrawal and phenomena of internalization and externalization. Despite having a significant number of friends (300, 200 people and less), the respondents do not know all of them on “their list”, and about half of them are actually in contact. The vast majority of social networks do not affect the frequency of meetings with friends. However, they help in making new friendships. They are very useful in the innovative era of the digital techno system. You just need to use them wisely and skilfully, without becoming addicted. In the future, the factors regulating the relationship between the frequency and intensity of using social networking sites and the type of human bond among other research groups should be examined.

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