

**Monika Wojtkowiak**

UJK Kielce

ORCID: 0000-0001-7611-8302

## **Eminent, lost negotiators. Representatives of the young generation in the face of disruptions of the e-world**

### **Wybitni, zagubieni negocjatorzy. Przedstawiciele młodego pokolenia w obliczu zakłóceń e-świata**

#### **Abstract**

The article raises the issue of young Internet users. Representatives of the e-network generation are people equipped with the ability to move efficiently in digital reality, for whom the Internet environment is as accessible as the environment outside it. They navigate effectively, take advantage of benefits of the availability of information and communication on the Internet, but also face difficulties posed by virtual reality. They use skills similar to those of negotiators- openness, communication, manipulation. However, they are also lost in online reality. The article is a contribution to the discussion on how young people adapt to the reality of this “unreal” world and how they deal with “being lost” referred to in the title.

**Keywords:** young people, internet, communication, difficulties, virtuality

#### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł podnosi problematykę związaną z młodymi użytkownikami Internetu. Przedstawiciele pokolenia e-sieci to ludzie wyposażeni w umiejętności sprawnego poruszania się w cyfrowej rzeczywistości, dla których środowisko Internetu jest tak samo dostępne jak środowisko poza nią. Sprawnie nawigują, korzystają z dobrodziejstw dostępności informacji, komunikacji w Internecie, ale także stawiają czoła trudnościom, jakie niesie ze sobą rzeczywistość wirtualna. Wykorzystują przy tym umiejętności podobne do tych, które mają negocjatorzy – otwartości, komunikacji, manipulacji. Bywają jednak również zagubieni w internetowej rzeczywistości. Artykuł jest przyczynkiem do dyskusji o tym, jak młodzi adaptują się do realiów owego „nierealnego” świata i jak radzą sobie z tytułowym zagubieniem.

**Słowa kluczowe:** młodzi ludzie, Internet, komunikacja, trudności, wirtualność

#### **Introduction**

The debate on the impact of media on young people started many years ago. However, when talking about media, it is impossible not to notice that they are perceived as having potential to be used in the transmission of information, expanding the educational offer, and on the other hand, possible threats the environment of

which they become is emphasized. The Internet has a specific place in this discourse, perhaps especially due to its specific nature. It has been described by researchers basically since the beginning of the functioning of the Internet in the perspective of social reality. The Internet is a kind of social experience that corresponds with the perspective of an information society, which was already written about in the 1960s. It was described by Manuel Castells, emphasizing the role of the technological paradigm that dominates, integrates and is omnipresent<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, the post-industrial theory of an information society by Daniel Bell highlights the role of information which, by spreading, acts as a driving force for the development of societies as particularly important<sup>2</sup>. Marshall McLuhan perceived an information society in a slightly different way, considering it as defined in three ways: as a technological “extension” of human activities, as shaped by the nature of media, and finally as changed by media more than by content. “Social changes caused by the emergence of new technologies consist in undermining old ideas and their concepts and introducing new metaphors describing man and reality”<sup>3</sup>. This undermining is much broader than we notice in everyday observations: it affects the way we function, but also the way we perceive ourselves and others, how we communicate, present ourselves, how we define the world around us, perceive values, and choose the framework of our own being.

Today’s young people are the first generation to be socialized by the digital world. Going further, it is possible to risk the thesis that these are also the first generations for whom the digital world is a largely “natural” environment, treated as their own, not burdened (as in the case of earlier generations) with the adjective of artificiality and separateness. As Witold Wrzesień writes: “Since social memory begins around the age of six, we can assume that they were/are the first generation group socialized (among other things) with the help of mobile telecommunications from the beginning of their lives. They do not know reality without a mobile phone, which not only accompanies their lives from the very beginning but has taken a significant/central place in it”<sup>4</sup>. “They”, i.e., the young, do not know the world without the Internet and everything which is associated with functioning in an unreal and yet existing e-world. Anna Andrzejewska writes: “This is a generation that has many opportunities, and at the same time it is the most divided generation in terms of culture, economy, but also mentality since the end of World War II”<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Compare: M. Castells, *Spółczesność sieci*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 80–81.

<sup>2</sup> Compare: Z. Dobrowolski, *Teoria społeczeństwa informacyjnego Daniela Bella* [in:] *Od informacji naukowej do technologii społeczeństwa informacyjnego*, eds. B. Sosińska-Kalata, M. Przystek-Samokowa, Warszawa 2005, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> K. Loska, *Dziedzictwo McLuhana – między nowoczesnością a ponowoczesnością*, Kraków 2001, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> W. Wrzesień, *Pokoleniowość współczesnej młodzieży polskiej*, pokoleniowosc-wspolczesnej-polskiej-mlodziezy.pdf (access: 10.05.23), p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> A. Andrzejewska, *Świat wirtualny miejscem nawiązywania i utrzymywania relacji przez młodzież* [in:] *Edukacja – relacja – zabawa. Wieloaspektowość Internetu w wymiarze bezpieczeństwa dzieci i młodzieży*, eds. A. Wrońska, R. Lew-Starowicz, A. Rywczyńska, Warszawa 2019, p. 74.

The young people discussed in this study grew up in times of greater availability of goods than their parents and grandparents, they also did not experience the limitations that previous generations knew, they are used to broadly understood freedom, which is largely due to the fact that their parents were open to children's needs and perceived, appreciated their individuality more than it was the case of themselves.

When including "eminent, lost negotiators..." in the title of this article, it was decided to adopt the perspective of presenting the young generation with the arsenal of their e-functioning skills as natural for them, and not obvious for previous generations. The focus was on several issues in terms of the specificity of the e-world: identity, communication, relationships, and friendship. Internet communication occupies a special place in this study, and it was chosen as a specific axis of consideration, because communication is treated as a binder and building material of the virtual e-world understood as a space created by people for themselves. The theoretical analysis was carried out in relation to possible threats associated with selected areas of operation. It should be added that "being lost" included in the title is a kind of metaphor, as it contains an element of reacting, including responses to potential threats in terms of remembering the proposition of preventive measures.

### **Identity on the Internet – i.e., who is who and whom they would like to be**

Considerations on identity started by philosophy have been followed by a wide discourse, in which new voices appear about what identity is and how it can be understood. Generally, it can be called the fact of experiencing oneself, which is associated with defining oneself in the course of one's life. This is how it is defined, for example, by Viktor Tausk, who introduced the concept of identity to psychology.

When analyzing the variety of interpretations of the concept of identity, Dagmara Musiał rightly notes that defining one's own self is also based on the process of socialization (here she recalls the theories by E.H. Erikson and Jung), individualization and personalization, it is a process in which individual stages of identity development are overcome (as the concept by K. Dąbrowski on this issue claims)<sup>6</sup>. The author, performing a specific analysis of defining the concept, notices its multidimensional nature: identity can therefore be identified with a certain uniqueness (Adler), as a developmental task (Erikson), or a phenomenon considered as a change in the social context (Schlenker, Tejfel)<sup>7</sup>.

The above considerations indicate that identity cannot be defined as only a simple answer to the question "who am I?", but one ought to notice the multidimensionality

---

<sup>6</sup> Compare: D. Musiał, *Kształtowanie się tożsamości w adolescencji*, „Studia z Psychologii w KUL” 2007, vol. 14, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> Compare: *ibidem*, pp. 74–80.

of its analysis. In the cognitive theory by Józef Koźielecki, what is decisive in identity is what is constant, and the important role in the formation of identity is played by values that occupy a special place, since they are constant “own”<sup>8</sup>. Thus, in the traditional approach, identity is a construction that is somehow constant (despite variability in its maturation and formation), which is why it is worth noticing its new “digital face”. In the literature on the subject, a lot of attention is paid to the variability and lability of the digital world as its certain characteristic feature that defines it. The digital world is a world without an ontologically stable structure of physicality, and thus deprived of the attributes of the non-digital reality known to us. It not only has no physical area but also no space continuum (the user freely changes their place of digital residence), no limitations of references to reality (which is related to the universality and lack of borders of the Internet), there is also no time continuum (time on the Internet is not linear but runs in the way that the user uses the Internet). It is therefore necessary to ask the question of what the identity suspended in such intense volatility looks like.

Internet identity has several features that are worth distinguishing: firstly, it must be emphasized that it can be a transcript of real identity – although the Internet is easily identified with a place of abuse regarding the honesty of communication, the lack of communication in this respect is not a rule and the continuity of online identity with real one is not excluded (not everyone lies on the Internet), secondly, identity transcription is related to the fact that modern users do not draw such a sharp boundary between the real and virtual world, which (unlike their predecessors) is not only a tool, but also a place.

However, it would be a mistake to omit the opportunities offered by the Internet in terms of identity creation, and this is of great importance in e-space. “On the Internet, identity has-as nowhere else-a certain dimension of self-creation, but also temporariness and volatility resulting from the possibility of introducing a change”<sup>9</sup>. This phenomenon is associated with the flagship features of the e-world, such as speed, volatility, anonymity, and quite high relativity. Therefore, the e-network users function in the reality of change, which taught them to use variability also in the field of identity creation. Identity on the Internet is therefore variable and contractual, adapted to the place that the user is currently exploring. Conventionality characterizes not only the image of a given person, but also a set of their features, from nationality, age, gender, to social position. The online community also has its rights, equalizes statuses, treats the role of the sender and the recipient of content variably, turns a blind eye to lies and can be uncompromising in its assessment. This does affect the user.

<sup>8</sup> Compare: *ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> M. Wojtkowiak, *Poznać – zrozumieć – rozmawiać. (Nie)oczywisty e-świat jako źródło inspiracji i wyzwań w perspektywie pedagogicznej*, Kielce 2021, p. 66.

## **Eminent**

The title of this study includes two adjectives: eminent and lost. Referring to the characteristics of young users, these two words are reflected in their functioning on the Internet. As mentioned above, we are dealing with the generation of people who were born in the era of digitalization and expansion of the Internet. When analyzing the description of the Internet by an increasing number of researchers, one may conclude that the Internet is a kind of universe of the diversity of reality, time, forms of communication, staying together, and even multiplying one's own identity and presence. Functioning in the e-world, despite being accused of being seeming and superficial, requires the ability to adapt to changing conditions. This applies not only to issues related to identity, but also to what affects the position of a person in a group or group functioning under task implementation. (We can talk here both about tasks arising from actual reality-e.g., projects commissioned by the school, as well as tasks resulting from virtual reality-games, cooperation on platforms, etc.). The proficiency of young people on the Internet is also their unprecedented adaptability to the ever-changing emerging new opportunities of the e-world, which is an incredible advantage considering the dynamics of changes in the Internet environment itself and e-reality sharing media.

Today's young people are the ones who do not have the limitations of fear of going beyond the scheme of their immediate surroundings, which characterized the world of previous generations. They are ambitious, they have no sense of boundaries, they are not satisfied with working locally. They go beyond the boundaries of the physically known environment, easily establish task relationships, "anticipate". Young people are not afraid of borders, not only because they have not experienced their existence (like previous generations), but also because language barriers have disappeared, and the Internet removes the sense of physical limitations. The same is true of convention. The uniqueness of the abolition of these borders, so often criticized in the context of equaling statuses or... lack of personal culture, has the advantage that the network generation is not limited by shyness – they are active, boldly mark their presence, emphasize their own strengths, they are brave in searching and establishing contacts. The quality of these is mentioned in the further part of the study, but at this point it is worth mentioning that task-related relationality on the Internet is doing well, and young people are extremely open to making friends with people from other countries or representing a different culture.

It seems that multitasking is also a feature of the contemporary young generation. They do a lot almost at the same time, they can divide their attention (and presence) between several places, they perform several tasks, they are in contact with many people at the same time. And although multitasking is accused of superficiality, inaccuracy, lack of focus and commitment, it is worth noting that it is often a response to the requirements of the rush of the modern world. Young people

do not: analyze, but focus on effectiveness, even if it is to be temporary. Temporariness is one of the most characteristic features of the presence on the Internet, as well as a kind of ad hoc nature and inconstancy. The e-world is a mobile, dynamic world that requires adaptation, in which attachment to fixed things, the search for stability (of any kind) is redundant. Efficiency counts more than analysis; intelligence is replaced by creative accommodation to volatility. In many cases, this may also require a kind of plasticity in the formulation of rules, norms, and finally in the treatment of people and oneself. Internet identity mentioned above can be as volatile as the Internet itself. We can freely create it, but it is also impossible not to mention that it is created by the requirements that the user faces. This means more or less that the employer looking for a contractor for the entrusted task no longer checks references as often as real skills that they can check and they can do it in the shortest possible time. At this point, we return to efficiency, the glorification of which can be found in the arsenal of desirable e-user features. If the word 'eminent' is assumed in this study, it is worth summarizing in which areas this eminence appears. Undoubtedly, these will be already mentioned: excellent adaptation to changes, proficiency in using the tools of the digital world, openness and lack of barriers, the ability to take on challenges at work, multitasking and effectiveness. One more characteristic of young e-users should be mentioned. Young people are not only navigators of the e-world, they also have a sense of participation in its construction, they are creators, they also do not waste time on considering if they have competences and predispositions for this (which is often a dead end leading to blurring the truth or excessive faith in their own abilities) but: they believe in themselves, which gives them power that previous generations did not have. While the generation of grandparents or parents of contemporary young people was brought up according to the proverb "sit in the corner (and) they will find you", for today's young people the modesty suggested by this recommendation is the antithesis of good functioning: they want to be visible and noticed, express their opinion loudly and like to talk about their own success, even if these are exaggerated declarations, going beyond real assessment. Young people function well in the e-world and do not waste time on considering its differences from the real world. One can risk the thesis that for them it is as real as the real world. They draw from what the virtual world offers and have a lot to offer to the virtual world.

### **Lost**

Although the Internet as a global network was created for people and the activity of its users can be treated as a tissue building it, the e-environment is often accused of having at least two faces of relationality on the Internet: on the one hand, the network brings people closer, it provides an opportunity to stay in touch and

an almost constant relationship. On the other hand, this relationship is so characteristic that it cannot be fully compared to the relationality of the real world. It is therefore worth asking whether the superficiality of relationality can be treated as a threat? Contact in the e-world has a slightly different nature than in reality. Tonito Cantelmi even writes that “relationship becomes impression”<sup>10</sup>. The specificity of bonds between e-network users has already been described by many authors. This type of relationship is often reproached for its superficiality, treating others in a consumptive way, as if the relationship was to be a commodity to be acquired, satisfying needs, and not aimed at development and mutual support. It seems that such a view may be slightly unfair and too generalizing. Among many voices in the discussion of online intimacy, Aaron Ben-Ze’ev’s voice stands out. The author, writing about the “close long-distance relationship”, listed five antinomies governing online emotional relationships; they are: distance and directness, concise and rich communication, anonymity and openness, sincerity and deception, continuity and discontinuity<sup>11</sup>. It is these characteristics of the environment that generate the conditions in which contact and even attachment take place in the e-world. As Patricia Wallace proved, we tend to become attached to people with whom we spend time in e-space, we also tend to ascribe quite positive features to them, as if “supplementing” the image of the interlocutor impoverished by the lack of physical contact. Interestingly, this “supplement” is often idealized; we want to think well and we think well about someone with whom, despite the physical distance (and sometimes the lack of such contact at all), we are in constant contact, with whom, despite the lack of physical proximity (or perhaps as a result of its lack), it is easier and more open to talk about your feelings, emotions and everyday life.

The issues of defining and recognizing emotions and relationships can also be treated as a challenge. In the era of social media, the word “friendship” is blurred, it extends to include various kinds of relationships: friends, people we sympathize with (e.g., because they belong to the same association), who have the same problem as us or are fighting the same battles and function-related relationships<sup>12</sup>. And although such a prospect may seem overwhelming, it must be admitted that perhaps young e-users are not looking for deep, sincere and “long-term” friendships. Acting on the wave of youthful enthusiasm, or perhaps youthful fascination with the world of their peers, they take advantage of opportunities offered by the e-world. They make acquaintances, friendships, and sometimes coalitions with others, they take advantage of the pace of virtuality, its lack of limitations, and the multitude of communication channels. It must be remembered that this continuity of being in touch gives opportunities both in terms of establishing quick relationships, but

<sup>10</sup> T. Cantelmi, *Technoflynnność. Człowiek w epoce Internetu: technoflynnny umysł*, Warszawa 2014, p. 113.

<sup>11</sup> Compare: A. Ben-Ze’ev, *Miłość w sieci. Internet i emocje*, Poznań 2005, pp. 45–67.

<sup>12</sup> T. Cantelmi, *Technoflynnność. Człowiek...*, p. 112.

also hate speech or coalitions serving it. Educational environments of schools more and more often face the phenomenon of hate precisely in this hidden space of the Internet adults have difficult access to, and often have no control over it. On the one hand, it is defined by the proficiency and resourcefulness of young e-users, on the other hand, with young people treating certain pathological phenomena (such as directness, lack of convention, lies) in terms of the norm. Therefore, what if relationality is superficial and the hunger for relation remains? What if this longing for the other person is felt, but there is also a fear of commitment, discovering one's own self, or simply superficiality that provides a sense of independence? Perhaps the answer can be the words of the above mentioned Anna Andrzejewska: "In the Y generation, a shift in the age of entering adulthood can be observed (to the border of about thirty years). Representatives of this generation prolong the period of education, postpone the time of marriage, and remain dependent on their parents for longer, wanting to live a full life as long as possible and prolong their youth"<sup>13</sup>. Perhaps this shift in the age of adulthood (or rather: responsibility) is also associated with the fear of making binding choices, making an effort which, at least theoretically, is related to duration. The temporary nature of online relationships has its advantages, but it also has disadvantages, and one of them is a kind of consumerism of treating relationships as a form of quick satisfaction of needs, including emotional needs and the need for self-fulfillment. Is it possible to realize oneself through temporariness? – the question should be left unresolved. Thus, does the Internet space pathologize relativity? This question is and certainly will be the subject of many analyzes by psychologists, educators, and others. At this point, it should be admitted that it has an impact, although young people will not necessarily perceive the phenomena associated with it as inappropriate, but they will be treated in terms of ordinariness.

It should be remembered that the period of adolescence is a period of increased emotionality and strong emphasis on this dimension of life. The extraordinary intensity and lability of emotions on the one hand, and their non-objectivity-changeability on the other, find fertile ground in the online dimension of relationality.

The time of isolation caused by the epidemic led to the discourse about disturbed socialization and loneliness of children and youth. The antidote in this otherwise changed world was contacts in the virtual world. This in turn has resulted in increased voices of concern about the compulsion of e-presence on the one hand and, in short, Internet addiction on the other.

The research results included in the Teens 3.0 Report-NASK confirm the previously mentioned feeling of the lack of control over time spent by young users online. Over 83% of the respondents answered positively to the question "Have

---

<sup>13</sup> A. Andrzejewska, *Świat wirtualny miejscem nawiązywania i utrzymywania relacji przez młodzież* [in:] *Edukacja – relacja – zabawa. Wieloaspektowość Internetu w wymiarze bezpieczeństwa dzieci i młodzieży*, eds. A. Wrońska, R. Lew-Starowicz, A. Rywczyńska, Warszawa 2019, p. 73.

you ever stayed online longer than originally planned?” “This proves that the vast majority of the surveyed young people feel that they have no control over time spent on the Internet “after the fact”, when they leave the computer”<sup>14</sup>. This happens at the level of the fact realized, but it seems: as yet unrealized difficulty. (The research conducted by the author of this study in 2018–2019 among young people confirmed that young people notice this phenomenon-but do not treat it in terms of difficulties, but only describe it as “ordinary” and associated with being in the e-network). Quite a lot has already been written about the above phenomenon related to Internet addiction when looking for the universe of definitional Internet and computer addiction<sup>15</sup>. It should be noted that the concept evolves just like the Internet itself and the forms of access to it. Unquestionably, it is an important form of young people “getting lost” in the world of the Internet. The effects of addiction are a hindrance to functioning in three areas: health (deterioration of vision, sleeping problems, hyperactivity, poor concentration, experience of stress), in the field of social contacts (the emergence or consolidation of egocentric attitudes, difficulties in maintaining contacts with friends and acquaintances in the real world, difficulties in making new friends, social isolation, loneliness and social phobias, wrong pattern of social relations, difficulties in open interpersonal communication, emerging social anxiety, low emotional intelligence, change of language (impoverishment, technical slang, newspeak combined with borrowings from English) and functional disorders (neglect of school and professional duties-lower conscientiousness at work, emergence and deepening of the tendency to procrastinate and distraction in solving tasks and a tendency to pessimistic thinking, financial problems)<sup>16</sup>.

### **How much does online communication have to do with negotiations?**

In the discourse on the characteristics of the e-world, much attention is paid to how its users communicate and how they meet the needs in the e-world. This duality of activity initiated the comparison of e-users to negotiators, included in the title of the study. It also gives rise to reflection on the effectiveness of communication procedures undertaken in virtuality. Just as a negotiator should be effective, effectiveness seems to be a priority for e-users. The Internet is accused

<sup>14</sup> M. Wojtkowiak, *Poznać – zrozumieć...*, p. 61.

<sup>15</sup> These are: netaholism or net addiction, computer addiction, Internet addiction, cyber addiction, information addiction. A. Jakubik, *Zespół uzależnienia od Internetu*, „Studia Psychologica” 2002, no. 3, p. 135.

<sup>16</sup> Compare: M. Barłóg, *Uzależnienie od Internetu i jego osobowościowe determinanty*, „Hygeia Public Health” 2015, no. 50(1), p. 201; A. Jakubik, *Zespół uzależnienia od Internetu*, „Studia Psychologica UKSW” 2002, no. 3, p. 140; R. Poprawa, *W poszukiwaniu psychologicznych mechanizmów problematycznego używania Internetu*, „Przegląd Psychologiczny” 2011, no. 54(2), p. 115.

of impoverishing the mechanisms of the analysis of content and perception, it is an environment that even supports the “primitive instinct of a lazy recipient”<sup>17</sup> when characterizing the communication of users, it is said that it is deprived of the dimension of direct observation, asynchronicity, “utility” implementation, omitting the personalistic dimension of this communication, as well as the “solitude” of this communication (because it is an activity carried out without the physical presence of the other interlocutor). Marta Juza accurately defines Internet communication by noting several of its essential features: the growing range of digitization, accompanied by the specialization of offers and shifting the decision on the form of communication from the sender to the recipient; the fact that the individual (recipient) is at the center of decision-making regarding the choices made; – the possibility of making information more flexible, shortening or extending it depending on the recipient’s expectations; – popularity, which is an indicator of attractiveness and priority of providing information; the fact that the roles of the sender and the receiver are contractual<sup>18</sup>. Definitely, the key feature of young users is the ability to navigate in cyberspace and search for information legally, they also use this skill when it comes to communication. Unlike the offline world, this one is deprived of the canon of linearity, the roles of the sender and the recipient are contractual, as is a kind of ‘order’; communication. Internet space is a space in which a clearly distinguished convention no longer appears, but features such as interactivity, ambiguity and provocation do. At this point, a question should be asked whether such communication can build a relationship and whether it can have a negotiation trait. The answers to this question may vary. It is worth noting, however, the extraordinary proficiency of young people in emphasizing the effectiveness of communication and treating it as a tool (which brings the negotiation process closer). Young people do not construct complex descriptions, they avoid emphasis, they treat language as a tool to achieve a goal and often of manipulation, which is enabled by the specificity of virtuality. They skillfully acquire information about the opponent, have no need to accept all their views (and often even provoke a dispute), they can “listen” to the opponent, they are much more assertive than their parents when they were their age, they are also goal oriented. Just like negotiators, the young think quickly and strategically (perhaps the source of these skills can also be found in the use of e-games), they can make alliances and compromise. The virtual world offers them an opportunity to avoid “face to face” confrontation and gives them an opportunity to spread the wings of creativity in a situation where they can achieve their goals in opposition to the actions of others. At this point, the question should be asked whether also in the face of the difficulties that the e-world brings.

<sup>17</sup> M. Castells, *Spółeczeństwo sieci*, Warszawa 2008, p. 338.

<sup>18</sup> M. Juza, *Internet a nowe tendencje w dziedzinie komunikowania masowego* [in:] *Oblicza Internetu. Internet w przestrzeni komunikacyjnej XXI wieku*, ed. M. Sokołowski, Elbląg 2006, pp. 140.

### **“In the face of”, i.e., young people (and adults) in the face of disturbing phenomena of the Internet**

The perspective of “the young facing threats” implies the consequence of presenting the attitude of young people to the above-mentioned phenomena. As mentioned earlier: young people efficiently move in the world of the Internet, thus, it is possible to indicate those features of young people that allow for responding to disturbing phenomena of young Internet users themselves. It should be noted that such an analysis cannot be universal because the phenomenon of the e-world itself is a highly dynamic phenomenon. The attitudes of young people towards functioning in it are also changing, some phenomena are becoming a thing of the past, others are treated as an integral part of e-reality over time. For example, Internet scams are no longer (as they were a few years ago) an alienated rarity. The landscape of virtuality is changing, and so are its recipients and creators.

Young people are action-oriented, their attitude has the feature of an act (and sometimes a feat), and they are not willing to carry out an in-depth analysis of the consequences of their actions. The speed of life in general, and even more of life on the Internet, entails the threat of deepening multitasking activities, which are often undertaken hastily, rashly, treated as one of many. Action is treated as a priority, which on the one hand results from the nature of the developmental age, on the other hand, it is forced by the glorification of action and effectiveness also in the dimension of functioning in e-space. It is worth emphasizing that these patterns of effectiveness over reflexivity will probably accompany young people also in the non-virtual world. Perhaps adaptation to reality can be treated as an advantage in this context, but it will be a disadvantage considering further consequences for relationality and ethics of conduct”.

No matter how much we talk about the e-world, it is not a space in which the cultural and ethical scope is perceived as dominant. One can even talk about a kind of crisis of ethics on the Internet. This translates into the way users are, as well as the authorities they follow. The dominant way of life, which sees mainly the fulfillment of one’s own needs, considers hedonism as the right of every user without any reservations about the rights of or harming other people. This is also influenced by the fact that the acts of harm (or behavior related to upsetting others) do not meet with the natural response of the adult world, present in e-reality. If young people themselves do not react (according to the e-reaction semantics they have adopted), then there is no reaction and no change in this respect. It should be remembered that the e-world is a world in which there is no division into the master and the student, or authorities in the traditional sense. Users themselves fluently change the role from the author to the recipient of information and vice versa, and it is their decisions about what is bad and good, their way of defining both that are binding. How do young people react to such violation or harm? It is difficult to

unequivocally say that the Internet is a place where a lot is said about the violation of rights, but little is done in this area. However, it must be honestly noted that the voice of the Internet community is strong in the social discourse, and the Internet is sometimes a source of raising a discourse in situations where rights are violated. This is one of few situations where the sense of anonymity and security resulting from it can bring a positive outcome.

What raises significant doubts as to the nature of the ways in which young people respond to the e-world is the fact that the reality of the Internet (together with its visual aspect and idealization falsifying reality) may contribute to deepening the states of sadness or depression. The Internet is a place where we are constantly exposed to comparisons on the one hand and criticism on the other. The manner in which this criticism is presented is often characterized by aggressiveness and aggression. The Internet is often referred to as a place where users engage in behavior they would not be able to do in the real world, a place where “the brakes” of convention or simply respect for other people do not work. The pattern of behavior repeated many times is consolidated and socially accepted. The brevity of the message, its directness, non-reflectiveness become the norm of online conduct. The cost of behavior that conceals aggression under the guise of directness can be extensive. Long-term use of the Internet (especially social media) is associated with the need to be in constant contact (on the one hand) and to be appreciated (on the other hand)<sup>19</sup>. Interestingly, the research shows that one does not need to be very active in order to succumb to the negative influence of social media. The term of passive social media use (PSMU) illustrates one more issue important for the discussed subject matter, because it turns out that not only the reactions of others but also the sense of one’s own position, as a result of observing others, can contribute to the user’s bad mood. PSMU can be understood as “consuming information without direct social interaction can negatively affect well-being [...] viewing content on social media can make people feel inferior and experience envy and frustration”<sup>20</sup>. This state of affairs results from comparing oneself to other users, with the dominance of the ubiquitous positive self-presentation, visualization. It should be remembered that self-presentation is influenced not only by the filters used in the context of visual enhancement, but also by the asynchronous nature of many social media platforms that allows users to improve self-presentation to manage impressions and relationships. And the Internet is an impression, temporariness, shifting the emphasis to what at a given moment has a utility value to improve the presentation. A kind of form of responding or adapting to a difficult

<sup>19</sup> Compare: Sunkara Santhi Priya, *The airborne internet technology using alo*, “International Journal of Proressive research in engineering managment and science (ijprems)” 2023, vol. 3, issue 6, pp. 221–226.

<sup>20</sup> Z. Yue, R. Zhang, J. Xiao, *Passive social media use and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: The role of social comparison and emotion regulation*, [sciedirscet.com/science/article/pii/S0747563221003733](https://sciedirscet.com/science/article/pii/S0747563221003733) (updated on 20.06.23).

situation (if we consider the reception causing negative feelings in such terms) is to adopt the norm of positivity, i.e., adapting one's actions to the predicted expectations of the community. Actions that fit into this standard will be, for example, multiple editing of photos so that they cause the best social response, or positive distortion of information, showing it in a false but well-received pattern of success, satisfaction, happiness<sup>21</sup>. This way of manipulating the content is not only characteristic of the young generation, representatives of the X generation who, as a way of improving their image, also use procedures such as glorifying a career, the ethos of "being busy with work", assigning themselves special roles and positions, use similar measures. Therefore, the young did not invent the manipulation of the image, and even if they play the main role in the transmission of this manipulation to the virtual world, they are not alone in this activity.

When searching for an answer to the question: what to do to help young users in the e-network, one can distinguish several directions of such activities remaining in the hands of educators and parents. The basic activity of educational environments should be wise (and constantly updated) prevention, not only in terms of threats arising from the activities of other people on the Internet, but also related to the abuse of the e-network. Pedagogical and psychological work related to building an attitude of selectivity towards the content and forms of activity also seems to be important. An important activity in terms of aid prevention is also supporting adequate self-esteem and working on improving empathic communication. These seemingly simple forms of psychological and pedagogical work practically translate into the quality of social functioning in the e-network, but they can also provide protection against the effects of contact with potential threats of the Internet.

## Conclusions

The subject matter of young people functioning on the Internet is and certainly will be discussed on many occasions. It will be a truism to say that this is because this (the Internet) has become an environment like any other, although ontologically so different from the physical one. The purpose of this article was to create a short description of how young people adapt to the reality of this "unreal" world and how they deal with the feeling of being lost referred to in the title. In the scientific discourse, for a long time, the characteristics of the Internet were operated mainly in the context of threats it potentially carries. Mentioning them is not avoided here (mainly in the context of changing identity and communication disruptions) as well, but the aim was also to notice the skills that young users are endowed with,

---

<sup>21</sup> Compare: Z. Yue, M.A. Stefanone, *Submitted for your approval: A cross-cultural study of attachment anxiety, contingencies of self-worth and selfie-related behaviour*, "Behaviour & Information Technology" 2021, vol. 41, no. 7, pp. 1–12.

and which adapt them to smooth and effective being online in the full sense of the word. “Young generation” referred to in the title are not only lost but they are also endowed with the ability to see benefits, acquire and operationalize information, and even manipulate interlocutors. They can act quickly, strategically, they move smoothly in a less stable than offline reality. Their life (and thus needs, aspirations) is realized in a changing world, and they are more flexible in adapting to it than previous generations. As Piotr T. Nowakowski, B. Więckiewicz and Łukasz Szwejka write, “success in life depends on the ability to adapt to ever-new living conditions”<sup>22</sup>, which indicates that young people train this accommodation from an early age. They find acquaintances and friendships on the Internet, find answers to their questions as well as a sense of loneliness, whether they also find happiness and fulfillment are questions about the future that cannot be resolved today from the perspective of the scientific analysis.

## Bibliography

- Andrzejewska A., *Świat wirtualny miejscem nawiązywania i utrzymywania relacji przez młodzież* [in:] *Edukacja – relacja – zabawa. Wieloaspektowość Internetu w wymiarze bezpieczeństwa dzieci i młodzieży*, eds. A. Wrońska, R. Lew-Starowicz, A. Rywczyńska, Warszawa 2019, pp. 68–90.
- Barłóg M., *Uzależnienie od Internetu i jego osobowościowe determinanty*, „Hygeia Public Health” 2015, no. 50(1), pp. 197–202.
- Ben-Ze’ev A., *Miłość w sieci. Internet i emocje*, Poznań 2005.
- Cantemi T., *Technopłynność. Człowiek w epoce Internetu: technopłynny umysł*, Warszawa 2014.
- Castells M., *Spółczesność sieci*, Warszawa 2008.
- Dobrowolski Z., *Teoria społeczeństwa informacyjnego Daniela Bella* [in:] *Od informacji naukowej do technologii społeczeństwa informacyjnego*, eds. B. Sosińska-Kalata, M. Przastek-Samokowa, Warszawa 2005.
- Jakubik A., *Zespół uzależnienia od Internetu*, “Studia Psychologica UKSW” 2002, no. 3(2002), pp. 133–142.
- Juza M., *Internet a nowe tendencje w dziedzinie komunikowania masowego* [in:] *Oblicza Internetu. Internet w przestrzeni komunikacyjnej XXI wieku*, ed. M. Sokołowski, Elbląg 2006, pp. 140–142.
- Loska K., *Dziedzictwo McLuhana – między nowoczesnością a ponowoczesnością*, Kraków 2001.
- Musiał D., *Kształtowanie się tożsamości w adolescencji*, “Studia z Psychologii w KUL” 2007, vol. 14, pp. 73–92.
- Poprawa R., *W poszukiwaniu psychologicznych mechanizmów problematycznego używania Internetu*, “Przegląd Psychologiczny” 2011, vol. 54(2), pp. 193–216.
- Sunkara Santhi Priya, *The airborne internet technology using alo*, “International Journal of progressive research in engineering management and science” (ijprems) 2023, vol. 3, issue 6, pp. 221–226.
- Szwejka Ł., Więckiewicz B., Nowakowski P.T., *Między wspólnotą a wyobcowaniem. Człowiek w kontekście współczesnych przeobrażeń społeczeństwa i rodziny*, Kraków 2021.
- Wojtkowiak M., *Poznać – zrozumieć – rozmawiać. (Nie)oczywisty e-świat jako źródło inspiracji i wyzwań w perspektywie pedagogicznej*, Kielce 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Ł. Szwejka, B. Więckiewicz, P.T. Nowakowski, *Między wspólnotą a wyobcowaniem. Człowiek w kontekście współczesnych przeobrażeń społeczeństwa i rodziny*, Kraków 2021, p. 17.

- Wrzesień W., *Pokoleniowość współczesnej młodzieży polskiej*, pokoleniowosc-wspolczesnej-polskiej-mlodziezy.pdf (access: 10.05.23), pp. 39–55.
- Yue Z., Stefanone M.A., *Submitted for your approval: A cross-cultural study of attachment anxiety, contingencies of self-worth and selfie-related behaviour*, “Behaviour & Information Technology” 2021, vol. 41, no. 7, pp. 1–12.
- Yue Z., Zhang R., Xiao J., *Passive social media use and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: The role of social comparison and emotion regulation*, sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563221003733 (updated on 20.06. 23).