CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT AND DANGEROUS CHALLENGES ON THE INTERNET IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

For most children and adults, the Internet is an integral part of their lives. Their use is reflected in our everyday life. We would like to present the results of the Dangerous Challenges research. 4952 respondents aged 12-19 from all over the Czech Republic took part in this research. According to its results, 71% of Czech children and adolescents aged 12 to 19 think that the Internet is not a safe place. Although many parents think their child is safe at home at the computer, this is not the case. Various dangers lurk on the Internet, and research on Dangerous Internet Challenges has addressed one of them. Only 9.5% of respondents do not regularly watch YouTube, TikTok or both. There, they may come across hazardous material that could damage or harm them. The aim of the paper is to present the results of research that found out whether children’s users know about dangerous challenges and how they approach them.

Keywords: dangerous videos, children internet usage, internet safety

1. INTRODUCTION

In the world of contemporary education, one thing seems indisputable. The Internet has changed the distribution and availability of information. Technology has taken over our lives, and therefore the way we learn. (Feřtek 2015)

For most children and adults, the Internet is an integral part of their lives. Their use is reflected in our everyday life. They can be used to develop personality, develop knowledge, strengthen and build relationships, fun, develop creativity, etc. In addition to all these positives that the Internet and ever-evolving technologies offer, we can also encounter impending negatives.

Some risks of the Internet in the Czech Republic, such as cyberbullying, are well processed and mapped. However, there are risk phenomena, known and available mainly from foreign servers and case studies, for which there is no literature, relevant sources, information on their prevalence, intervention or prevention in the Czech environment. Czech society and institutions working with children may not be sufficiently prepared to deal with these new phenomena.

One of these risks is dangerous internet challenges. These are manuals, which are freely available on the Internet, and which encourage others to imitate them, document compliance of certain goals and then publish them on the Internet. Not all of them endanger the health of the individual. Some were created with positive intentions. However, others may irreversibly harm or even endanger the "players" in life.

Examples of some challenges:

Kylie Jenner Challenge
This challenge encourages them to enlarge their lips by placing a glass to their mouths and creating a vacuum, that they will let sit for a while. This can lead to serious lip injuries.

Tide Pod Challenge
A call to swallow a capsule intended for washing clothes. These contain dangerous chemicals. You tubers in America also drew attention to the challenge. Ingestion may damage the digestive tract.
The Salt and Ice Challenge

Players sprinkle part of the body with salt and put an ice on it. This creates a chemical reaction, which causes injury. Injuries are similar to second- and third-degree frostbite or burns.

The Choking Challenge

The call encourages the strangulation of a child. The reason is to achieve a feeling of euphoria, which comes when there is a lack of oxygen in the brain. The result can be bruises on the neck and suffocation of the player.

The Fire Challenge

The call encourages you to spill whole or part of your body with flammable material and subsequent ignition. The result is second and third degree burns or death of the player.

It is not difficult for adults, but also for children, to access this information or videos. Until they spread among a wider range of children, they occur in a latent form. They are not dangerous at the moment. They become dangerous if children begin to spread them en masse and imitate them if they become viral. The Internet is largely unregulated, so it is not possible to eradicate these phenomena.

If we want to alert students to this threat, we need to think carefully about how to do it. There is a high risk of finding challenges based on curiosity and lack of information, then trying and sharing the reaction or result with friends. Pupils try to fit in, but also to be someone special to their peers, so they will try, for example, an internet challenge. However, they should be aware at the beginning of this idea that they can hurt themselves. By sharing, spreading and showing, any phenomenon can get into the subconscious of many children very quickly, and this will result in a certain threat to society. That is why good prevention is very important.

Preventive programs are very widespread in the Czech Republic, there are preventive programs against use of drugs, eating disorders, bullying, cyberbullying, etc. The inclusion of this topic in prevention programs is important to eliminate the spread and imitation of challenges. The problem occurs when the media or celebrities get involved in spreading misinformation. Then it will reach more diverse range of people.

Therefore, it is necessary to provide information to students sensitively and carefully due to their age and maturity. It is important to choose words, tone, and atmosphere to understand that this is a health-threatening behavior. So, they understand that something can happen to them once they engage in any dangerous Internet challenge. Children and adolescents are more impulsive and do things without thinking about the consequences. People are naturally curious and children even more. After a thoughtless, misguided debate with an adult, they can deliberately look for challenges and try them out. That is why it is important to think about the course of the debate and choose the right words.

There may be several reasons for imitation and the desire to participate. Children want to fit in, they do not want to stand out and not be accepted. They may long to be admired by their peers.

Many of us probably know how uncomfortable and painful it can be to know that your surroundings reject or condemn you. When we deviate from the standards of the group, we often pay a high emotional price for it. And it is the fear of this social exclusion and ostracism that is one of the strong motivations why we behave just like our surroundings. It depends on the size of the group and its cohesion, as well as on the position of the individual in the hierarchy of power. (Nutil 2018)

Moreover, a certain situation or others can directly force them to do it. In addition to the motives stemming from the desire to fit in and be admired, they can be led by an effort to make themselves visible, or to draw attention of the family to themselves.
1.1. Description of the research

1.1.1. Form

For this research, we chose exploratory methods, dealing with obtaining information directly from the subject. More specifically, a structured electronic questionnaire constructed through Google Forms. By a questionnaire we mean a set of pre-prepared and carefully formulated questions, which are thoughtfully arranged and to which the interviewed person answers in writing form.

1.1.2. Respondents

The questionnaire was sent to all primary and secondary schools in the Czech Republic. As a research sample, we chose primary school students (aged 12-15) and secondary school students. The age structure of the respondents is therefore mostly twelve to nineteen years. We tried to get a wide and different type of respondents to cover the widest possible range of possible victims. In the end, we obtained 4952 respondents.

1.1.3. Date

Data collection took place from the beginning of April 2020 to the end of May 2020.

2. RESULTS

We will present and evaluate some important questions from our research. We divided the respondents according to their age from twelve to fifteen years and from sixteen to nineteen years, fifteen years indicate the limit of completion of primary school and transfer to secondary school (high school). Age group 12-15 will be marked in blue in the graphs and will be at the bottom, while age group 16-19 will be marked in orange.

Fig. 1. Answers to the question: How many hours a day, on average, do you spend on the Internet? (n=4952)

This question proves that children are on the Internet for a large part of their day. Only 5.65% of all respondents spend less than an hour a day in this environment. Respondents spend most of two to three hours on the Internet, more precisely 22.7% of respondents aged 12-15 and 17.1% of respondents aged 16-19 answered this way, i.e. together less than 40% of respondents. The second highest category was four to five hours, chosen by less than 34%, 16.07% aged 12-15 and 17.87% aged 18-19. 9.43% of respondents aged 12-15 and 11.17% aged 16-19 spend more than six hours a day on the Internet.
Fig. 2. Answers to the question: Do you think the Internet is a safe place? (n=4952)

Although respondents spend a lot of time on the Internet, 70.86% of them think that the Internet environment is not a safe place, more precisely 36.45% of respondents aged 12-15 and 34.41% aged 16-19. 15.97% of children aged 12-15 and 13.17% of adolescents aged 16-19 think that the Internet is a safe place.

Fig. 3. Answers to the question: Do you regularly watch YouTube or TikTok? (n=4952)

The vast majority of respondents, 90.47%, regularly watch YouTube or TikTok. Only 8.04% of respondents watch TikTok, 54.44% follow Youtube, and 27.99% follow both of them. There are 9.53% of pupils who do not regularly monitor either of these two social networks. The responses of both age groups were almost balanced, only in the following of TikTok, respondents aged 12-15 years slightly prevail. There were 4.95% versus 3.09% of respondents aged 16-19.
72.53% of respondents think that there can be dangerous instructions on the Internet, which can include dangerous challenges on the Internet. 17.46% of respondents believe that there are no dangerous instructions on the Internet. The answers of both age groups were balanced in this question.

**Fig. 4.** Answers to the question: Do you think there could be dangerous tutorials on the Internet? (n=4952)

**Fig. 5.** Answers to the question: What internet challenges do you know? (n=4952)
Most respondents, 59.89% know the Blue Whale challenge, which swept through the Czech Republic in April 2017. The second most frequently mentioned challenge was The Cinnamon Challenge, chosen by 46.02%, then The Salt and Ice Challenge 37.78%, The Kylie Jenner Challenge 33.76%, The Ghost Pepper Challenge 27.20%, The Duct Tape Challenge 20.19%, The Fire Challenge 16.50%, The Choking Challenge 13.33%, The TidePod Challenge 12.16%, The Eyeballing Challenge 7.15%, The Snorting Challenge 6.56%. One of the most common positive challenges was The Ice Bucket Challenge, mentioned by 5.98% of respondents. The most significant difference between age groups was in the number of respondents who do not know the challenges, do not know about them, do not look for them, etc. There was a total of 8.6%, of which respondents aged 12-15 were 5.78% and respondents aged 16-19 2.83%.

3. USE OF RESULTS

It was important to map and describe new forms of risky behavior of Czech children in the Internet environment with a specific focus on dangerous online challenges. This topic is explored very marginally in the Czech Republic, and many are still unaware of the risk. We would like to provide information not only to academic society, but also to all others who may be affected by the topic who need help. The results and other findings will be summarized and posted on the Internet, where all users will have free access to them and can handle this information as they see fit. It is important to raise awareness about the internet challenges and the consequences of engaging in them. This information will be completely new for the Czech population.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The research has confirmed that children and adolescents aged 12-19 spend much of the day on the Internet. This number can be even higher, depending on whether the respondents are aware of how much time they spend on the Internet. Most of them, regardless of age, also think that the internet is a dangerous place, which is important to know. The vast majority of respondents watch videos on YouTube or TikTok, but YouTube is clearly more used and popular platform. The most well-known challenge for the respondents was the White Whale, which was promoted by the media in 2017. The surprise was that some respondents, mostly the younger ones, do not know anything about the challenges.

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