

SEMINARE

SEMINARE

Published Volumes

1 – 1975	24 – 2007
2 – 1977	25 – 2008
3 – 1978	26 – 2009
4 – 1979	27 – 2010
5 – 1981	28 – 2010
6 – 1983	29 – 2011
7 – 1985	30 – 2011
8 – 1986	31 – 2012
9 – 1987/1988	32 – 2012
10 – 1994	33 – 2013
11 – 1995	34 – 2013
12 – 1996	35 – 2014
13 – 1997	36 – 2015
14 – 1998	37 – 2016
15 – 1999	38 – 2017
16 – 2000	39 – 2018
17 – 2001	40 – 2019
18 – 2002	41 – 2020
19 – 2003	42 – 2021
20 – 2004	43 – 2022
21 – 2005	44 – 2023
22 – 2005 (jubilee vol.)	45 – 2024
23 – 2006	46 – 2025

S E M I N A R E

STUDIES IN YOUTH AND SOCIETY

SEMI-ANNUAL

Vol. 47 No. 1

**FRANCIS DE SALES SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY
WARSZAWA 2026**

Editorial Board

Mariusz Chamarczuk (Editor-in-Chief - Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland); Jerzy Gocko (Deputy Editor - John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland); Ryszard F. Sadowski (Deputy Editor - Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland); Krzysztof Niegowski (Editorial Secretary - Chopin University of Music, Warsaw, Poland); Zbigniew Formella (Editorial Secretary - Salesian Pontifical University, Rome, Italy); Mirosław S. Wierzbicki (Editorial Secretary - Kujawy and Pomorze University in Bydgoszcz, Poland); Martina Ana Begić (University of Zagreb, Croatia); Erwin Joey E. Cabilan (Ateneo de Davao University, Philippines); Marie Chrásková (Palacký University in Olomouc, Czechia); Stephen McKinney (University of Glasgow, United Kingdom); Miriam Niklová (Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia); Celestine Okafor (Christ the King College, Onitsha, Nigeria); Tibor Reimer (Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia); Jose Sunil (Kristu Jyoti College Bengaluru, India); Zuzana Svobodová (Charles University, Czechia); Banzelao Julio Teixeira (Divyadaan Salesian Institute of Philosophy: Nashik, Maharashtra, India); Janez Vodičar (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia); Ezra Tari (Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang, Indonesia).

Scientific Council

Jacinta M. Adhiambo (Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya); Beáta Balogová (University of Presov, Slovakia); Stanisław Chrobak (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland); Sergio Cicatelli (Pontifical Lateran University, Rome, Italy); Giuseppina Del Core (Auxilium, Rome, Italy); Giuseppe Cursio (Salesian Pontifical University, Rome, Italy); Barnabe D'Souza (International Federation of Catholic Universities, Paris, France); Ana Thea Filipović (University of Zagreb, Croatia); Halyna Katolyk (Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, Ukraine); Mariusz Kuciński (Kujawy and Pomorze University in Bydgoszcz, Poland); Roman Mazur (The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland); Peter Mlynarčík (St. Elizabeth University of Health and Social Work in Bratislava, Slovakia); Jan Niewęglowski (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland); Zhengmei Peng (East China Normal University, Shanghai, China); Ilona Pešatová (Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Czechia); Joseph Chartchai Phongsiri (Saengtham College, Thailand); Josef Spindelböck (ITI Catholic University, Trumau, Austria); Carl-Mario Sultana (University of Malta, Malta); Beata Szluz (University of Rzeszów, Poland); Zoran Turza (Catholic University of Croatia, Croatia); Ilker Ugulu (Usak University, Turkey); Milan Urbančok (University of Trnava, Slovakia); Mankeun Yoon (Catholic University of Korea, South Korea).

The journal uses peer review by experts in the relevant fields.
The list of reviewers is published annually on the journal's website.

Language Editing: Ewa Sawicka

Computer editing & Cover design: Marcin Izdebski

Editor's office address

P.O. Box 26, 05-092 Łomianki, Poland
redakcja@seminare.pl
www.seminare.pl

Publisher

Francis de Sales Scientific Society
ul. Kawęczynska 53, 03-775 Warszawa, Poland
tnfs@tnfs.pl | www.tnfs.pl

The online edition is the version of record.

© Copyright by TNFS, Warszawa 2026
p-ISSN 1232-8766 | e-ISSN 2450-1328
<http://doi.org/10.21852/sem>

Printed by: Elpil, Siedlce

Young People in Digital Environments: A Theoretical Review of Disinformation, Online Communication, and Media Literacy

Młodzi ludzie w środowisku cyfrowym: teoretyczna analiza dezinformacji, komunikacji internetowej i kompetencji medialnych

Monika Wojtkowiak

Jan Kochanowski
University in Kielce,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7611-8302>
mwojtkowiak@ujk.edu.pl

Received: 12 Jan 2026
Revised: 25 Mar 2026
Accepted: 14 May 2026
Published Online First:
30 Jun 2026

Abstract: This article examines how digitalisation, disinformation, and online communication shape young people's functioning in digital environments. Drawing on a theoretical review of selected literature on the information society, networked communication, and young people's online practices, it analyses information overload, Big Data, algorithmic filtering, echo chambers, filter bubbles, fake news, and the reduced communicative cues of online interaction. The analysis indicates that digital technologies function not only as tools but also as social environments in which young people build relationships and identities. At the same time, exposure to fragmented, personalised, and manipulated information complicates source verification, trust, and responsible communication. The article identifies several pedagogical implications: the development of media and information literacy, critical evaluation of sources, awareness of algorithmic mechanisms, social and emotional competencies, responsibility for online speech, and digital hygiene. It concludes that technical proficiency alone does not protect young users against information disorder. Responsible participation in digital communication requires integrated cognitive, social, and ethical education.

Keywords: online communication, disinformation, media and information literacy, algorithmic filtering, information overload

Abstrakt: Artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób cyfryzacja, dezinformacja i komunikacja internetowa kształtują funkcjonowanie młodych ludzi w środowisku cyfrowym. Na podstawie teoretycznego przeglądu wybranej literatury dotyczącej społeczeństwa informacyjnego, komunikacji sieciowej i praktyk internetowych młodzieży omówiono nadmiar informacji, Big Data, filtrowanie algorytmiczne, komory pogłosowe, bańki filtrujące, fake newsy oraz ograniczenie sygnałów komunikacyjnych w interakcjach internetowych. Analiza wskazuje, że technologie cyfrowe funkcjonują nie tylko jako narzędzia, lecz także jako środowisko społeczne, w którym młodzi ludzie budują relacje i kształtują swoją tożsamość. Jednocześnie kontakt z informacjami fragmentarycznymi, personalizowanymi i zmanipulowanymi utrudnia weryfikację źródeł, osłabia zaufanie i komplikuje odpowiedzialne komunikowanie się. W artykule wskazano najważniejsze implikacje pedagogiczne: edukacja powinna rozwijać kompetencje medialne i informacyjne, umiejętność krytycznej oceny źródeł, świadomość działania mechanizmów algorytmicznych, kompetencje społeczno-emocjonalne, odpowiedzialność za wypowiedzi w Internecie oraz higienę cyfrową. Sama sprawność techniczna nie chroni młodych użytkowników przed nieładem informacyjnym. Odpowiedzialne uczestnictwo w komunikacji cyfrowej wymaga zintegrowanej edukacji poznawczej, społecznej i etycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja online, dezinformacja, kompetencje medialne i informacyjne, filtrowanie algorytmiczne, przeciążenie informacją



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary societies function in the conditions of dynamic transformation in which the key role is played by information and the technologies of its processing and distribution. This process leads to fundamental changes in the organization of social life, the ways interpersonal relationships are formed and communication is conducted. These changes have been extensively described in the relevant literature. With the development of information and communication technologies, the intensification of data flow can be observed. This leads to phenomena such as information overload, fragmentation of communication, and the growing dependence of individuals on digital systems. Consequently, the contemporary information environment is becoming increasingly complex and more difficult to interpret.

The functioning of the younger generation, which grow up and form their identity under the constant presence of digital technologies, becomes particularly important. The phenomenon of overlapping offline and online spaces is also significant. Young Internet users become participants in a communicative environment which, while providing access to knowledge, also fosters the emergence of disinformation and disruptions in the flow of information.

The objective of this article is to provide a theoretical analysis of selected phenomena of digitalization, disinformation, and contemporary forms of communication in the context of the functioning of the younger generation in the digital environment. The article is a review in nature, based on a literature analysis, and attempts to present selected theoretical approaches and identify key issues related to individuals' functioning in the information space.

1. DIGITALIZATION

The contemporary process of digitalization has its conceptual roots in earlier debates on the emergence of the information society. The concept of the information society was developed to describe a new paradigm of social organization in which information, knowledge, and communication technologies increasingly replaced industrial production as the principal factors shaping social and economic structures.

Over the following decades, this transformation has developed into a condition in which digital networks permeate an increasing number of areas of everyday life, contributing to the coexistence and mutual interpenetration of offline and online modes of functioning. Modern societies have thus undergone a fundamental shift from predominantly industrial structures towards information- and network-based forms of social organization.

This complex and multidimensional process has been widely described in the literature as a transition towards the information society (Webster 2006). At its core lies the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT),

which has transformed not only the production and distribution of knowledge but also fundamental social, economic, and cultural relations. As a consequence, it has also significantly affected how individuals function within society.

Manuel Castells, one of the leading theoreticians of the phenomenon, claims that a key feature of the new social formation is the emergence of a networked social structure in which the flow of information becomes the dominant factor in organizing social life (Castells 2007, 44). However, the information society is not merely a technological consequence of progress but also entails profound axiological and institutional transformations. Frank Webster points out that the information society is characterized not so much by the presence of information as by its central role in economics, politics, education, and everyday social practices (Webster 2006, 45–56).

These changes necessitate a renewed analysis of concepts such as power, identity, work, and citizenship, which undergo significant reevaluation in the information context. The transition to a post-industrial society is accompanied by the growing importance of the service sector and knowledge-based production, which lays the foundation for further transformation towards the information society. This transformation is not homogeneous; it proceeds unevenly and is shaped by local cultural, economic, and political conditions. At the same time, its pace is exceptionally rapid.

These transformations raise important questions about how information and technology shape new models of social functioning, influence groups and communities, and ultimately affect individuals. These questions acquire particular significance in relation to the younger generation, which operates at the intersection of offline and online environments, where communication, digitalization, and disinformation increasingly intersect in everyday experience.

The literature repeatedly emphasizes that digitalization is not solely a technological phenomenon but a multidimensional transformation of social structures that affects ways of thinking, communicating, and constructing reality (Latour 2011, 102–109).

A fundamental characteristic of the contemporary digital world is its high degree of variability and the unprecedented dynamics of change, unmatched in any previous historical period. At this point, it is worth referring to the findings by Łukasz Tomczyk, which describe the development of information competencies. “According to data from LocaliQ, within a single minute on the Internet more than 231 million emails are sent, 6 million people make online purchases, the Google search engine processes 6 million user queries, 44 million Facebook users participate in live broadcasts, 350,000 posts are created on the X platform, 66,000 photos are uploaded to Instagram, and 625 million videos are viewed on TikTok” (Tomczyk 2024, 142). Information, which constitutes the basic building block of the Internet, is constantly transmitted, modified, and replicated, making the contemporary Internet evolve at a pace significantly faster than humans can adapt to. The development of information and communication technologies outpaces the

adaptive capacities of individuals and social institutions, leading to tension between the pace of technological change and society's ability to critically understand and regulate it (Webster 2006, 8). Although the Internet has transformed the world, it is itself subject to continuous change, and the dynamics of these changes make it hybrid and unpredictable. As a society, we are unable to keep pace with these changes—not only in intergenerational terms, but often also within a single generation.

With the rapid increase of information, the concept of Big Data emerges—referring to massive datasets, the scale, variety, and velocity of which exceed the capabilities of traditional processing methods. These data are characterized by the so-called three “Vs” (volume, variety, velocity), and their sources include the Internet, social media, IoT devices, location systems, smartphones, and transaction records (Kwietniewski 2022). In the context of an information society, Big Data becomes a new raw material—an analytical resource that enables more accurate decision-making, trend prediction, and modeling of complex social, economic, and cultural phenomena. Paradoxically, although massive datasets constitute a potential source of knowledge and a foundation for rational decisions, their abundance can also lead to information chaos. When information flows continuously, often inconsistently, and is difficult to verify, the risk of disinformation increases—both unintentional, arising from misinterpretation of data, and deliberate, used as a tool of manipulation.

In the era of *Big Data*, information loses its former status as an assumed objective truth and increasingly becomes an element in the struggle for influence—subjected to selection, transformation, and contextualization, and often used to reinforce specific narratives. In this sense, information—although seemingly accessible and ubiquitous—does not necessarily contribute to a better understanding of the world. On the contrary, it can lead to a disinformation noise in which it is difficult to distinguish knowledge from opinion, and fact from manipulation. In the absence of appropriate critical thinking tools and media education, individuals are exposed to conflicting messages, which fosters social polarization and undermines trust in institutions and experts. In the digital world, even the role of experts is difficult to define, as their authority transcends the traditional frameworks known in the virtual realm. Thus, authors become readers, readers become authors, and anyone can assume the role of an expert, becoming part of an online kaleidoscope that is dynamic, ambiguous, and difficult to organize (Jenkins 2006, 208–210).

2. COMMUNICATION

When discussing the digital world, we deal with a reality that is largely grounded in communication. In its initial forms, online communication was predominantly textual and embedded in the conventions of traditional written correspondence. However, over time it has undergone a dynamic transformation. Today, it functions

as a hybrid phenomenon that integrates multiple communicative modalities (text, image, sound, and video) which significantly reshapes both the structure of messages and the nature of interpersonal relationships in which it is employed.

Online communication has a distinctive nature, and within its framework a number of features that aim to capture its specificity can be identified. Unlike traditional forms of communication, where communication was most often unidirectional—from the sender to the receiver—the Internet enables dynamic, interactive, and often synchronous exchange of information, as well as interchangeability of these functions. Users cease to be merely passive consumers of content and instead become active co-creators, commentators, and participants in the dialogue. At times, however, they remain observers for extended periods, which is associated with the asynchronicity of communication and, in a broader context, also with the nonlinearity that is common on the Internet. This nonlinearity concerns many issues related to functioning in the Internet environment: it refers both to time, which often loses its three-temporal features in the perception of users, and to relationships which, more often than in the offline world, tend to be interrupted, renewed, and treated as incidental yet profound (Wojtkowiak 2021).

Despite the multiplicity of analyses of the Internet as an environment of co-functioning and communication, the literature on the subject indicates that online communication possesses a number of constitutive features that together constitute its unique profile.

Above all, communication on the Internet is negotiable and uncontrolled, which means that the sender does not retain full control over the interpretation and subsequent circulation of content, while the message itself is subject to constant transformation and reinterpretation by recipients.

Secondly, this form of communication is free from time and space constraints, which makes interaction possible between users located anywhere in the world and at any time. Online communication is sometimes interpreted as the one conducted in real time and as asynchronous; however, it should be noted that such an interpretation constitutes a significant narrowing of the concept which, given the diversity of its characteristics, may be regarded as an analytical overreach. Reducing the description of online communication to issues of temporality alone overlooks a number of other dimensions: mediality, hybridity, scalability, its social nature, and, above all, its embeddedness in networks of relationships and algorithmic filtering mechanisms.

Another characteristic of online communication is hypertextuality, which allows messages to be enriched with links, multimedia, and additional contexts, which, in turn, affects the way information is perceived and processed. Navigating this network of links often presents a dilemma, particularly when considering issues such as data reliability and user security.

Online communication is also hyper-public, meaning that the boundaries between what is private and what is public become blurred, and content posted online can potentially reach an unlimited audience. Importantly, information in

the digital space not only reaches a wide audience but is also subject to immediate response—it can be commented on, shared, rated, and even modified. Recipients thus become active participants in the communicative process, co-creating messages and influencing their further dissemination. Such interactivity and responsiveness establish a new quality of relationships between the sender and the receiver, based on feedback, engagement, and the dynamic exchange of content. As a result, we encounter a phenomenon known as two-way mass communication, which constitutes one of the key distinguishing features of communication in the era of the information society (Loglia and Bowers 2016).

Differences between communication and information transmission in the offline and online worlds have been repeatedly examined in the literature on psychology and media. Communication in the digital environment is characterized by specific properties that distinguish it from traditional face-to-face interaction. First and foremost, there is a reduction in nonverbal cues. As previously noted, online communication is often asynchronous, allowing for delayed responses and content editing, which contrasts with the natural pace of direct conversation. Anonymity and interpersonal distance also play a significant role, contributing to the phenomenon of disinhibition in the digital environment. Internet users often take advantage of controlled self-presentation, selectively disclosing information about themselves, which carries the risk of intensifying interpersonal relationships (Walther and Whitty 2020). Another difference is the altered pace and dynamics of interaction, as well as the impact of technology on the perception of intimacy. Finally, attention should be paid to changes in emotional responses and other forms of message reception due to the absence of nonverbal cues and immediate social regulation.

In the context of this topic, it should be recognized that young Internet users occupy a particular position. The characteristics of young people's emotional communication, such as the need for authenticity, self-expression, intense emotional experiences, and high emotional availability, mean that, on the one hand, they navigate the digital communication space with ease and proficiency (for them, this environment is largely more natural than for previous generations), but on the other hand, they are exposed to the risk of emotional overload, misunderstanding, or hurt. What is more, they often become the authors of content that harms others.

3. DISINFORMATION

The intensity of the digital circulation of information, while on the one hand opening new spaces for knowledge, dialogue, and innovation, on the other, provides fertile ground for the phenomenon of disinformation. It should be remembered, however, that disinformation is not a new phenomenon. Basically, it has accompanied humanity since the emergence of the public sphere. What is unprecedented today, however, is its scale and reach. In the past, false information spread relatively slowly, constrained by traditional media channels and editorial

oversight mechanisms. The digital revolution, the Internet, and especially the rise of social media have completely transformed this landscape: today, any Internet user can become a content broadcaster, regardless of the quality, intention, or reliability of the source. Disinformation, therefore, is not solely the result of deliberate action, but also a consequence of the very logic of the digital space—its abundance, fragmentation, emotionalization of messages, and lack of time for reflection. In this context, false or manipulated content can spread virally, often faster than truthful information, shaping users' opinions, attitudes, and decisions.

The process of disinformation has been present since information transmission—a process for which the Internet was created—through the expansion of the digital universe, up to the present times, in which the digital universe occupies a substantial portion of reality experienced offline. The very fact that we use the term “offline” highlights how much of human activity is now situated within digitality. Janusz Morbitzer, discussing this phenomenon, refers to a “spectacular expansion for various forms of activity” (Morbitzer 2016, 68). It is widely recognized that the Internet can serve as an environment conducive to disinformation due to the sheer abundance of information, which itself becomes problematic. The process of collecting, sorting, processing, and summarizing information has been radically shortened and simplified by the digital world (Furman 2018, 206). The selectivity of information choice, and the related need for verification, takes a back seat in the face of the deluge of news—including fake news—that floods the Internet. Sławomir Rębisz writes: “It must also be remembered that the information environment carries serious risks associated with disinformation, fake news, and information manipulation. Disinformation, that is, the deliberate dissemination of false information with the aim of misleading, creates a distorted view of the world, leading to erroneous decisions and false beliefs. Fake news, in turn, influences public opinion, political decisions, and social moods, destabilizing democratic processes” (Rębisz 2024, 30). It should also be remembered that navigating the digital environment itself is not only about using information, but also about leaving information about oneself. Allegorically speaking, this is where the bipolar nature of the world we create and inhabit comes into play. Creating this world is not merely the fluid transition between the roles of the author and the receiver, with the boundaries of both still unsettled, but also the constant presence in the field of digital observation. As Piotr Łuczuk writes: “We live in the era of the Internet, and every piece of information we leave online, every word, every movement is tracked by millions of algorithms that construct our digital profile and, in turn, determine what we see, who we communicate with, what we read, and what decisions we make” (Łuczuk 2024, 58-59).

In the face of the increasing dynamics of information circulation and the proliferation of content of varying reliability, it becomes essential to systematically develop competencies in terms of critical analysis and verification of information sources. Unfortunately, proficiency in using the Internet does not necessarily coincide with greater awareness of the need for education in this area.

At this point, it is worth mentioning two phenomena: the *echo chamber* effect and filter bubbles. While these phenomena may appear quite similar in everyday understanding, they are slightly different. In the context of the risk of disinformation implied by the nature of the Internet, they warrant closer examination.

Echo chambers (called “echo chambers” or isolated information environments in Polish) are characterized by a situation in which individuals primarily communicate with those sharing similar views, which leads to the reinforcement and consolidation of specific beliefs. This mechanism relies on selective exposure to information sources and the confirmation of one’s own judgments, resulting in reduced exposure to counterfactual arguments and alternative perspectives. Consequently, *echo chambers* foster social polarization and hinder rational public debate. They also have a secondary effect, namely a decline in the practice of genuine dialogue, listening to opponents, and openness to opposing views.

Filter bubbles, on the other hand, refer to the algorithmic filtering of content employed by digital platforms and social media. These algorithms personalize the content based on users’ prior behavior, preferences, and browsing history, resulting in the selective exposure of information that aligns with pre-existing beliefs. In contrast to *echo chambers*, where isolation arises from active social selection, filter bubbles are generated by automated technological processes that may not be consciously controlled by users.

Obviously, when discussing forms of manipulation on the Internet, it is impossible to omit those that are used intentionally—for example, to expand reach or implement marketing strategies. It is worth mentioning *clickbait*, which operates on the principle of baiting, with the primary goal of generating increased traffic in specific online locations. This phenomenon indirectly fosters the popularity of not only specific products but also certain behavior, and, in the longer term, can influence individuals’ opinions and judgments. An almost prevalent phenomenon in the digital space is so-called *malinformation*—deliberately disseminated harmful or malicious content intended to cause damage or harm to specific individuals or groups. Another example is *deepfake* technology, based on advanced image processing (including video material), used to generate false content. Like other forms of manipulation mentioned above, it can lead to disinformation, reputational damage, and direct harm to individuals.

Iwona Zielińska, while categorizing forms of manipulation present on the Internet, identifies two principal areas of this phenomenon. First, she distinguishes the forms of manipulation arising from information disorder, understood as the deliberate and organized use of diverse communication strategies and tools aimed at influencing users’ behavior, opinions, decisions, or emotions. Such actions often take subtle forms, operating at the intersection of disinformation, persuasion, and social engineering. They are therefore relatively difficult to detect and pose a significant challenge to preventive measures for functioning safely online.

The other category consists of *fake news* (previously mentioned), which represent one of the most conspicuous tools of informational manipulation.

Within this category, Zielińska identifies, among others, automated bots, Internet trolls, and the phenomenon of deepfake—digitally generated or manipulated images and video recordings designed to mislead recipients through suggestive and realistically appearing visual forgeries (Zielińska 2024, 73–74).

Both groups—manipulations arising from information chaos as well as actions based on the dissemination of false content—fit within the broader context of disinformation in the digital space, which constitutes one of the greatest challenges for contemporary online communication and the information society.

In conclusion, it is worth emphasizing that manipulation on the Internet encompasses two constitutive features of this environment. The first is the fact that the Internet constitutes a powerful technological tool which, due to its dynamic nature, often makes it difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood. The other is the intentionality of human action, which utilizes this technology. The line of indirect influence on the individual is communication, serving as the binding element of the Internet and forming the basis of the existence of the digital environment.

4. YOUTH

When speaking about online communication in the context of young people, it is necessary (assuming the perspective that, for them, it is a largely appropriated and natural form of communication) to note that it possesses distinctive features as a specific field for perceiving relationality and the other person. As early as twenty years ago, Patricia Wallace (2001) wrote about the specificity of communication and bonds on the Internet, emphasizing that the lack of physical contact with another person often results in a distorted image of both the individual themselves and the relationship. The author also referred to the specificity of intimacy online, pointing to anonymity, tolerance, openness, variability, and the possibility of escapist behavior. It should be emphasized, however, that with the avalanche-like growth in the popularity of various forms of online communication, today (unlike in 2001, when Wallace published her study) it has become a permanent part of the canon of interpersonal and social contact, of variously understood forms of “being together.” At the beginning of the 21st century, online communication had a somewhat peripheral nature; it was treated as a type of supplement and had an operational nature. Nowadays, to a large extent (especially for young people), it is an integral part of everyday life and even, which may seem disturbing, a form of communication that is more popular and more desired than relationships accompanied by physical presence.

It is worth emphasizing that, in the context of the subject matter under consideration, the Internet can be treated as both a tool and environment of communication. On the one hand, young people use digital technologies efficiently, demonstrating proficiency in operating applications, communication platforms, and social media—often in contrast to the competencies of adults (including parents, caregivers, and teachers), who frequently struggle to keep up with the

dynamic changes of the digital world. On the other hand, the Internet serves young people as a social environment of life, in which they build relationships, shape their identities, engage in peer interactions, and participate in a variety of cultural practices. It is a highly diverse environment and, notably, a non-physical one, which is difficult for adults to fully grasp or understand.

From a psychological perspective, the online space is becoming an important area for the construction of the “self” and for exploring social roles—especially during adolescence, when the need for affiliation, self-definition, and social recognition becomes particularly significant. On the other hand, pedagogy perceives it as both as a source of educational and socializing potential and an area requiring critical reflection and the conscious development of digital and relational competencies. The Internet is therefore not merely a channel for the transmission of information, but also an active educational and developmental context in which young people learn to function as participants in social life—often detached from, or even independent of, traditional institutions and structures.

In recent years, we have been witnessing an extremely dynamic phenomenon of shifting activities into e-reality, with all the consequences this entails. The theory that the Internet is a world of communication that is more intense than communication in the real world is confirmed by the research. An example can be a study by Nelli Lyyra and her team, which showed, among others, that adolescents consider online communication about sensitive topics to be more comfortable. The preference for sharing personal content online and for communicating with online friends (and strangers) about issues that are difficult and personal for young people is fairly common. What is disturbing is that the preferential factor for using the Internet as a communication tool and environment is that the higher the level of activity and the search for communication with others the higher the feeling of loneliness. (Lyyra et al. 2022) This phenomenon seems quite disturbing considering the risk of abuse.

When discussing communication on the Internet, it is impossible not to mention lying, which takes on a particular form in this context and is often normalized. Lying constitutes an integral element of communication in the online environment; it is not a marginal phenomenon, but rather a widespread and socially acceptable in many contexts. The specific nature of the digital medium—particularly the lack of physical presence, the possibility of anonymizing the sender, asynchronicity of communication, multiplicity of identities, and ease of manipulating messages—creates conditions conducive to both intentional deception and subtle forms of reality distortion (such as selective self-presentation).

From the user’s perspective, the features of the online environment seemingly reduce the psychological costs of lying, weakening norms of interpersonal responsibility and decreasing the immediate availability of feedback, which in face-to-face communication serves a regulatory function and often carries ethical implications. Moreover, in many digital spaces—particularly on social media—lying, or deviating from the truth, becomes not only tolerated but even functional,

serving purposes such as self-promotion, building influence, or manipulating the opinions of others.

Consequently, lying on the Internet ceases to be unambiguously deviant behavior—it gains the status of a normalized element of communicative practice, raising significant questions about the boundaries of authenticity, trust, and responsibility in the digital space. Moreover, disinformation and deliberate deviations from the truth undergo a process of normalization, often accompanied by social permissiveness and a lack of reaction. Deviating from the truth, or even intentionally misleading others—a phenomenon increasingly extending not only to the external world but also to ourselves—becomes a form of creating an alternative reality. This, in turn, provides the illusion of control and greater influence over the surrounding reality. The virtual world—vivid, limitless, accessible at the touch of a button, and dismissible with a single click—is a good environment for fulfilling the need for escapist egoism. It is worth emphasizing that for young people, it is a world of entertainment, where the boundless realms of games and colorful imagery are directed as much toward satisfying needs as well as the people who are present there.

Therefore, this raises the question: was life in the real world so difficult for young people? Do they escape into virtuality because it is simpler? Or perhaps because it is malleable—because they can create it with extraordinary boldness? (Boldly, because they are not burdened by the consequences that, in the real world, could potentially prove troublesome.) Because they can see the effects of the changes they make, and in the case of difficulties, have a fallback to retreat to. Only... that fallback becomes the real world, and then we can speak of a rather obvious reversal and polarization of priorities. At this point, we touch the area of axiology and recognize the necessity of maintaining an ongoing dialogue with young people about values.

When referring to the classics, one could say that the disintegration of personality described by McLuhan (2004) and the simulacra of Baudrillard intersect at a common point: lying. McLuhan, when writing about the disintegration of personality, claimed that the medium affects society more than the content it conveys (which is especially disturbing considering that the author applies the concept of extensions referring to a situation in which contemporary humans change and use tools that, figuratively speaking, also change them). It may be worth asking whether the modern human can live without such an extension.

The Internet and virtual reality are extensions of consciousness, senses, and presence — they allow us to be “somewhere else” without physically moving. This is a tempting offer, but also an illusion, since objectively it does not change an individual’s position in the real world. We are still here and now, physically present; our situation, location, and position remain objectively unchanged. We do not relocate our bodies, but our attention, allegorically speaking: our mind. In the context of the virtual world, this means that, for example, social media or virtual reality change the way we think, act, and build relationships—regardless of

what exactly we communicate through them and irrespective of how much we use deception. Initially, this may be small—a subtle omission, a slight filtering of the messages we convey—but gradually it can become bolder. Considering that we are not only receivers but also creators of content, the filter of online irresponsibility allows us to partially sidestep responsibility for our words.

On the other hand, users seem to push to the margins of their memory the fact that “what’s on the Internet never disappears.” It could have been an online troll or a “malicious” instance of ChatGPT. Meanwhile, online hate is flourishing, but fueled by people through mockery and insults, for which there is no cure, only an “explanation.”

The possibility of defending oneself is limited. Obviously, it is possible to expose what is unjustified. One can engage in discussions and even win with a well-chosen argument. But: if the Internet is a place for communication, should it also be a stage for dramas that are often their consequence? In the face of these phenomena, it becomes essential to educate young people in the spirit of responsibility for their own words and actions, as well as to counteract the tendency to retreat into rationalizations, which often serve to justify inappropriate behavior in the digital space.

Education for online communication is actually preparation for social life in a form that provides an opportunity to uphold the basic principles of functioning within a group. Essentially, it is largely based on cultivating respect. Young people should be systematically taught to take responsibility for their words, including in the online space, where the apparent lack of direct contact can encourage underestimating the power and impact of a message. It is necessary to raise awareness of the potential consequences of one’s statements—both for other recipients and for themselves—because the phenomenon of emotional numbness to the effects of online communication can lead to unintended harm, loss of trust, or deterioration of interpersonal relationships. However, it seems equally important to strengthen the foundational values of education: distinguishing truth from falsehoods, refusing to propagate the latter, and moving away from treating participants in online communication as objects. A conscious and reflective approach to digital communication forms the foundation for building a responsible culture of dialogue, which the younger generation must learn in order to participate effectively and ethically in society—not only in the informational dimension.

5. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The analysis presented leads to the conclusion that the functioning of the younger generation in the digital environment requires not only technological adaptation but, above all, in-depth pedagogical reflection. Digital reality shapes the ways of learning about the world, building social relationships, constructing identity, and making decisions; however, it does not constitute a neutral developmental context.

In this sense, education cannot be limited to the transmission of instrumental knowledge but should include the systematic preparation of young people for critical, responsible, and reflective participation in the digital environment, as well as in the world beyond it.

The first significant pedagogical implication is the need for the consistent development of media and information competences, understood not merely as technical proficiency but as the ability to critically analyze content, assess the credibility of sources, recognize mechanisms of manipulation, and consciously manage information overload. In the conditions of the information society, the ability to select, verify, and interpret data becomes one of the key civic competencies, determining an individual's cognitive autonomy and (consequently) their resilience to disinformation.

Another area of pedagogical implications concerns the need to incorporate reflection on the algorithmic nature of contemporary digital media into educational practice. Raising young people's awareness of the existence of filter bubbles, content personalization mechanisms, and the logic of social media platform operation enables a type of demystification of the apparent neutrality of technology. Education in this area should foster the development of cognitive openness, the ability to confront one's own beliefs with alternative perspectives, and the conscious pursuit of diverse sources of information, thereby providing a counterbalance to both echo chambers and algorithmic information isolation.

An important task of pedagogy in the context of digital communication is also the development of social and emotional competencies. The specificity of online communication—its hyper-public nature, reduction of nonverbal cues, asynchronicity, and the possibility of anonymous self-presentation—fosters both the intensification of relationships and their superficiality, and at times also the escalation of conflicts and harmful behavior. For this reason, it becomes essential to systematically support young people in developing empathy, responsibility for one's words, the ability to anticipate the consequences of one's communicative actions, and the skills necessary to conduct dialogue grounded in respect and attentiveness to others. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that this endeavor remains traditional and universal in its significance.

Another pedagogical premise is the need to redefine the role of the teacher and educator in the digital environment. In conditions in which access to information is nearly unlimited, the role of the educator no longer consists solely in the transmission of knowledge but increasingly involves acting as a guide, moderator, and mentor. The task of the educator becomes the creation of spaces for reflection, posing problem-based questions, initiating discussion, and supporting students in constructing meanings independently. Such a perspective fosters the strengthening of young people's cognitive autonomy.

The significance of pedagogical prevention with regard to digital safety and psychosocial well-being must also not be overlooked. Constant presence in the digital space, permanent visibility, and communicative pressure may lead

to emotional overload, a reduced sense of agency, or difficulties in emotional regulation. Education should therefore address issues related to digital hygiene, the boundaries of online presence, as well as reflection on the relationship between the virtual world and offline experience.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the pedagogical implications of disinformation, manipulation, and the specific nature of online communication constitute challenges that cannot be addressed in a fragmented manner. They require long-term educational efforts that integrate the development of cognitive, social, and ethical competencies, while also taking into account the dynamic and ambiguous nature of the contemporary digital world.

CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary civilization, shaped by the dynamic development of technology and globalization, is in a constant process of transformation, the essential foundation of which is communication and the flow of information. Communication, as a fundamental mechanism enabling the exchange of thoughts, ideas, and knowledge, constitutes the central axis of societal functioning and simultaneously serves as a catalyst for its evolution. In the era of digitalization and ubiquitous information, these concepts acquire a new dimension, becoming key factors that determine the structure and dynamics of contemporary social, economic, and cultural systems. It should not be forgotten that this phenomenon also has an individual dimension; its influence extends beyond the macroscale of social mechanisms, penetrating deeply into the sphere of human existence. Information, digitalization, and the related phenomenon of globalization shape individuals' perception, identity, and capacity for action, redefining their role in the global order and establishing new frameworks for functioning in a complex environment. It must also be noted that this environment is saturated with information of varying degrees of accuracy, significance, and form, which in contemporary society blurs the distinction between the sender and the receiver, moves away from axiological polarization, and diffuses responsibility. The labyrinth it creates, through which we must navigate, is an environment in which we operate, half-real and half-constructed.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Available upon request.

AI Tools Declaration: *Not applicable. The author declares that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.*

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Castells, Manuel. 2007. *Spółeczeństwo sieci [The Rise of the Network Society]*. Translated by Mirosława Marody, Kamila Pawluś, Janusz Stawiński, and Sebastian Szymański. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Furman, Wojciech. 2018. "Od pozornej wiedzy do komory pogłosowej i nadmiaru informacji. Krótki przegląd strachów medialnych [From Apparent Knowledge to the Echo Chamber and Information Overload: A Brief Review of Media Fears]." *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* 61 (2): 201–208. <https://doi.org/10.4467/22996362PZ.18.015.9109>.
- Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: University Press.
- Kwietniewski, Karol. 2022. *Big Data – technologiczny rubikon [Big Data—The Technological Rubicon]*. Narodowy Instytut Cyberbezpieczeństwa. Accessed May 5, 2025. <https://nci.org.pl/big-data-technologiczny-rubikon/>.
- Latour, Bruno. 2011. *Nigdy nie byliśmy nowocześni: studium z antropologii symetrycznej [We Have Never Been Modern: An Essay on Symmetrical Anthropology]*. Translated by Maciej Gdula. Oficyna Naukowa.
- Loglia, Jennifer Marie, and Clint Alan Bowers. 2016. "Emoticons in Business Communication: Is the :) Worth It?" In *Emotions, Technology, and Design*, edited by Sharon Y. Tettegah and Safiya U. Noble, 37–53. Academic Press.
- Łuczuk, Piotr. 2024. "Problem barier informacyjnych [The Problem of Information Barriers]." In *Młodzież w infosferze [Youth in the Infosphere]*, edited by Monika Wojtkowiak, 45–66. IBE.
- Lyrra, Nelli, Niina Junttila, Jasmine Gustafsson, Henri Lahti, and Leena Paakkari. 2022. "Adolescents' Online Communication and Well-Being: Findings from the 2018 Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC) Study." *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 13: 976404. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.976404>.
- Machlup, Fritz. 1962. *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*. Princeton University Press.
- McLuhan, Marshall. 2004. *Zrozumieć media. Przedłużenia człowieka [Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man]*. Translated by Natalia Szczucka. Wydawnictwa Naukowo-Techniczne.
- Morbitzer, Janusz. 2016. "Współczesna przestrzeń obecności człowieka – między realnością a wirtualnością [Contemporary Space of Human Presence—Between Reality and Virtuality]." *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas* 13: 59–68.
- Rębisz, Sławomir. 2024. "Infosfera jako wieloaspektowe środowisko informacyjne [The Infosphere as a Multifaceted Information Environment]." In *Młodzież w infosferze [Youth in the Infosphere]*, edited by Monika Wojtkowiak, 11–44. IBE.
- Tomczyk, Łukasz. 2024. "Kształtowanie kompetencji informacyjnych [Developing Information Competencies]." In *Młodzież w infosferze [Youth in the Infosphere]*, edited by Monika Wojtkowiak, 141–167. IBE.
- Wallace, Patricia. 2001. *Psychologia Internetu [The Psychology of the Internet]*. Translated by Tomasz Hornowski. Dom Wydawniczy Rebis.

- Walther, Joseph B., and Monica T. Whitty. 2020. "Language, Psychology, and New Media: The Hyperpersonal Model of Mediated Communication at Twenty-Five Years." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 40 (1): 120–135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X20967703>.
- Webster, Frank. 2006. *Społeczeństwo informacyjne. Kluczowe idee [The Information Society: Key Ideas]*. Translated by Michał Gawlik. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Wojtkowiak, Monika. 2021. "Czas w percepcji młodych użytkowników sieci globalnej [Time in the Perception of Young Users of the Global Network]." *Kultura – Przemiany – Edukacja* 9: 268–277.
- Zielińska, Iwona. 2024. "Informacja i dezinformacja [Information and Disinformation]." In *Młodzież w infosferze [Youth in the Infosphere]*, edited by Monika Wojtkowiak, 67–85. IBE.

Internet and Social Media Use among Primary School Students: Digital Habits, Online Safety, and Parental Supervision in a Local Polish Survey

Korzystanie z Internetu i mediów społecznościowych przez uczniów szkoły podstawowej: nawyki cyfrowe, bezpieczeństwo w sieci i nadzór rodzicielski w lokalnym badaniu ankietowym

Jolanta Łodzińska

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński
University in Warsaw,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2224-3834>

j.lodzinska@uksw.edu.pl

Mariusz Chamarczuk

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński
University in Warsaw,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5605-2115>

m.chamarczuk@uksw.edu.pl

Received: 11 Mar 2026

Revised: 23 Apr 2026

Accepted: 26 May 2026

Published Online First:

30 Jun 2026

Abstract: This empirical study analyses Internet, social media, and mobile device use among students in grades 6–8, focusing on their digital habits, perceptions of online risks, social relationships, and parental supervision. In 2024, an anonymous, voluntary paper questionnaire was completed by 80 students, including 43 girls and 37 boys, at a primary school in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, Poland. Most respondents used the Internet for 1–4 hours per day, primarily for gaming and entertainment, although educational and social uses were also common. Students frequently identified Internet addiction, impaired academic performance, online hate, and personal data theft as major risks. Most preferred face-to-face contact with peers and understood that online activity was not completely anonymous. However, 57.5% reported using mobile phones at night, while only 13.8% were subject to parental time limits on Internet use. The findings indicate a need for school-based digital education combining online safety, responsible time management, critical media use, and parental involvement. Given the single-school sample, the results provide a local and context-specific account of students' digital behaviours.

Keywords: primary school students, Internet use, social media use, digital habits, online safety, parental supervision, peer relationships, Podlaskie Voivodeship

Abstrakt: W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badania empirycznego dotyczącego korzystania z Internetu, mediów społecznościowych i urządzeń mobilnych przez uczniów klas VI–VIII. Analizie poddano ich nawyki cyfrowe, postrzeganie zagrożeń internetowych, relacje społeczne oraz zakres nadzoru rodzicielskiego. W 2024 roku anonimowy i dobrowolny kwestionariusz w formie papierowej wypełniło 80 uczniów, w tym 43 dziewczęta i 37 chłopców, uczęszczających do jednej ze szkół podstawowych w województwie podlaskim. Większość respondentów korzystała z Internetu przez 1–4 godziny dziennie, przede wszystkim w celach rozrywkowych i związanych z grami, chociaż powszechne było również wykorzystywanie sieci do nauki i kontaktów społecznych. Uczniowie najczęściej wskazywali uzależnienie od Internetu, pogorszenie wyników w nauce, hejt oraz kradzież danych osobowych jako główne zagrożenia. Większość preferowała bezpośrednie kontakty z rówieśnikami i rozumiała, że aktywność w Internecie nie jest w pełni anonimowa. Jednocześnie 57,5% badanych korzystało z telefonu w nocy, a jedynie 13,8% podlegało ustalonym przez rodziców ograniczeniom czasu korzystania z Internetu. Wyniki wskazują na potrzebę edukacji cyfrowej łączącej bezpieczeństwo w sieci, odpowiedzialne zarządzanie czasem, krytyczne korzystanie z mediów oraz zaangażowanie rodziców. Ze względu na objęcie badaniem jednej szkoły, wyniki przedstawiają lokalny i kontekstowy obraz zachowań cyfrowych uczniów.

Słowa kluczowe: uczniowie szkoły podstawowej, korzystanie z Internetu, korzystanie z mediów społecznościowych, nawyki cyfrowe, bezpieczeństwo w sieci, nadzór rodzicielski, relacje rówieśnicze, województwo podlaskie



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

INTRODUCTION

Modern society is characterised by widespread access to digital technologies, including the Internet and social media, which affects the daily functioning of children and young people. The Internet has become an integral part of social life, revolutionising both the process of information gathering and interpersonal communication. The ability to use computers effectively and to access the Internet have become almost essential for full participation in various spheres of social life. At the same time, Internet use is ambivalent – although it brings numerous benefits, it also presents new challenges and problems unknown to previous generations (Zduniak and Rubas 2021, 5; Zduniak 2024, 56–57). Activities such as spending time online, using mobile phones, and interacting on social media can have both positive and negative consequences for students' social, emotional, and educational development. Excessive use of new technologies and the transfer of a significant part of life to the virtual environment currently pose a serious social challenge. Since the late twentieth century, research has shown that Internet use can spiral out of control, hindering, and in extreme cases even preventing, young people from functioning properly in social life (Zduniak and Rubas 2021, 5). The continuous connection of the human mind to an ever-evolving collective intelligence and memory leads to lasting changes in the processes of information and knowledge exchange among people. Consequently, profound transformations in learning and social interaction may come to be perceived as trivial (Cantelmi 2014, 13).

Therefore, research on the digital behaviour of young people constitutes an important element in monitoring educational and social trends and in formulating recommendations for schools and parents. The dynamic advancement of digital and multimedia technologies, the growing commercialisation of the entertainment market, the rapid development of computer games, and the use of increasingly sophisticated persuasive mechanisms in virtual environments mean that younger users face new challenges related to functioning in the digital world. These phenomena require an adequate response from the education system, which should not only keep pace with the technological change but also effectively prepare children and young people for the conscious, critical and responsible use of the resources of the virtual world (Drożdż 2006, 248).

1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aimed to examine how students at one primary school use computers, the Internet, and social media, and to identify the social and educational consequences of these activities. The analysis focused on the frequency and purposes of using new technologies, preferred forms of online activity, and students' perceptions of online safety. In addition, the study examined the impact of Internet use on peer relationships, students' emotional functioning, and the role of parental control in shaping young people's digital habits.

The following research questions were formulated:

1. How often and for what purposes do primary school students use computers and the Internet?
2. Which forms of online activity and which social media platforms are most commonly used by students?
3. How do students perceive Internet safety and the associated risks?
4. Does Internet use affect students' social relationships and emotional functioning?
5. To what extent are students' computer and Internet use subject to parental control?

These research questions defined the main areas of analysis concerning primary school students' use of the Internet. The research hypotheses were formulated based on these questions, the theoretical framework, and the findings of previous research on the functioning of children and adolescents in the digital environment.

2, RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on theoretical framework and the findings of previous research in the fields of pedagogy, psychology and sociology of the media, research hypotheses concerning the intensity of primary school students' use of information and communication technologies were formulated. These hypotheses relate to the dominant forms of activity in the digital environment, the ways in which students use the Internet and social media, as well as the potential impact of these technologies on the social, emotional, and educational functioning of primary school students.

1. Primary school students use computers and the Internet every day, mainly for entertainment and communication purposes.
2. Social media and instant messaging applications are the dominant forms of students' online activity.
3. Students are aware of the risks associated with excessive Internet use.
4. Frequent Internet use may limit students' direct social interactions.
5. Most students do not have time limits imposed by their parents on their Internet use.

These hypotheses provided the basis for designing the research process and selecting appropriate research methods and instruments. To verify them, an empirical study was conducted using the diagnostic survey method. The adopted methodology made it possible to collect data on the ways in which primary school students use computers, the Internet, and social media, as well as to analyse the social, emotional, and educational aspects of these activities. The following section presents a detailed description of the research methodology and procedure.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The study was conducted in 2024 at a primary school in one of the municipalities of the Podlaskie Voivodeship. As this was the only primary school in the municipality, the school administration requested that the participants remain anonymous to ensure complete confidentiality and data security. The study was based on an original questionnaire developed by the researcher to obtain reliable information about students' use of the Internet, social media, and mobile devices.

Students in grades 6–8 were invited to participate in the study, and participation was voluntary. The questionnaire was anonymous, and its completion had no consequences for the participants and was not subject to assessment by teachers. Formal consent to conduct the study was obtained from both the parents and the school administration, ensuring compliance with legal requirements and school regulations.

The questionnaire was administered in paper format, allowing students to complete it comfortably in a familiar school environment. The use of a paper-based questionnaire also enabled the researcher to oversee the questionnaire completion process and minimise the potential influence of digital technologies on participants' responses.

From an ethical perspective, all principles of research involving human participants were observed. Anonymity and voluntary participation were ensured, and participants were free to omit any questions they did not wish to answer. The data were analysed in aggregate form, making it impossible to identify individual participants. Protecting students' data and respecting their rights were treated as priorities, and the study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles governing educational research.

Data were collected using a questionnaire in which participants answered questions concerning their gender, grade level, time spent online, use of mobile phones and social media, and their perceptions of the virtual world. The questionnaire allowed participants to select multiple responses to questions concerning the risks and benefits associated with Internet use, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of students' digital behaviours.

Psychologists and researchers investigating the functioning of children and adolescents in the digital environment emphasise that the risks do not arise directly from cyberspace itself but rather from a lack of knowledge about it and the mistaken belief that children and very young users are capable of navigating the digital world independently and using its resources in a fully safe and informed manner. Human interaction with the world is mediated through the senses; therefore, the reality experienced by Internet users is shaped by the stimuli that generate the strongest perceptions and emotions. If these emotions originate predominantly from virtual environments while, at the same time, exposure to the outside world is reduced (e.g. spending long periods alone in one's room, a lack of face-to-face social interactions, and rarely leaving the house), contact with the real

world may gradually become less authentic. Consequently, the subjective sense of authenticity of real-life experiences may diminish, making their interpretation and verification increasingly complex (Cantelmi 2014, 187; Bienvenu 2024, 5–6).

4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

As regards gender, 53.8% of the participants were girls and 46.3% were boys. This indicates that the survey results reflect the opinions and behaviours of girls to a slightly greater extent.

With regard to grade level, 35.0% of the participants were in grade 6, while 32.5% were in grades 7 and 8, respectively. This relatively even distribution of participants allows for comparisons between grade levels.

Regarding daily Internet use, 35.0% of students used the Internet for 1–2 hours per day, 33.8% for 3–4 hours, 25.0% for 5–6 hours, and 6.3% for 6 hours or more. These results indicate that most students use the Internet for a moderate amount of time, however, a significant proportion spend considerably longer online, which may adversely affect their learning and health.

Taking into account nighttime mobile phone use, 57.5% of respondents reported using their phones at night, while 42.5% indicated that they did not. Regular nighttime phone use can negatively impact students' sleep and concentration.

When analysing whether parents had imposed time limits on Internet use, 13.8% of respondents confirmed that such restrictions had been introduced by their parents, 82.5% stated that no such limits were in place, and 3.8% were unaware of their existence. These results indicate that parental control over the amount of time children spend online is limited.

Analysis of the relationships between time spent online, parental supervision, and nighttime mobile phone use revealed clear patterns in students' digital habits. Most participants used the Internet for a moderate amount of time (1–4 hours per day), however, a significant proportion spent 5 hours or more online each day. At the same time, only 13.8% of students reported that their parents had imposed time limits on their Internet use, suggesting limited parental supervision of children's Internet use. Moreover, 57.5% of respondents admitted to using their phones at night, which may disrupt sleep and reduce concentration. These findings indicate that the lack of systematic parental supervision may contribute to longer Internet use during the day and increased nighttime mobile phone use, which may negatively affect young people's health, learning, and social functioning.

With regard to perceptions of Internet safety, 58.8% of participants considered the Internet to be safe, 18.8% believed it was unsafe, and 22.5% were undecided. These results indicate the need to increase students' awareness of online risks.

When analysing the risks associated with excessive Internet use, addiction was the most frequently identified problem (82.5%). Furthermore, 51.2% of participants believed that excessive Internet use could impair academic

performance, 46.3% identified online hate as a potential risk, and 38.8% pointed to the risk of personal data theft. Weakening interpersonal relationships was noted by 25.0% of participants, 8.8% perceived no risks associated with Internet use, and 3.8% reported other problems, such as eye conditions. These results suggest that students are aware of the main risks associated with excessive Internet use, particularly addiction, although they do not always recognize its broader social consequences (Rzecznik Praw Dziecka 2021, 24).

With regard to social media use, YouTube was the most frequently used platform (77.5%), followed by TikTok and Messenger (71.3% each), Snapchat (60.0%), Instagram (47.5%), and Facebook (38.8%). WhatsApp (10.0%) and Twitter (3.8%) were the least frequently used platforms. Student preferences indicate that platforms used for watching videos and communication are dominant, whereas more traditional social networking platforms appear to be losing popularity.

When asked about the possibility of deleting their Facebook account, 48.7% of participants declared that they would be able to do so, 30.0% stated that they would not, 20.0% were undecided, and 1.3% did not have a Facebook account. These results suggest that many students are aware of the possibility of limiting their social media activity, although some find this emotionally difficult.

Regarding the perceived benefits of social media use, 46.3% of participants stated that it brings them joy, 33.8% stated that social media offers no benefits, and 28.8% indicated that it provides a sense of belonging or an opportunity to make new friends. 17.5% regarded social media as a waste of time, and 7.5% reported that it increased their sense of self-worth. These results indicate that social media primarily serves social and emotional purposes, not educational ones.

Regarding the importance of likes received on photos, 45.0% of participants stated that they did not experience any emotions in response to them, 40.0% admitted that receiving likes made them feel more liked and accepted, 12.5% reported an increase in their sense of self-worth, and 6.3% stated that likes made them feel important. An additional 7.5% of students provided other responses, such as not posting photos online. These results indicate that, for most students, likes are not a significant source of self-worth, although they do influence the way some students perceive their social acceptance.

When asked whether they could imagine living without a mobile phone, 37.5% of students stated that they could, 41.3% said they could not, and 21.3% expressed no opinion. These results imply that young people are divided regarding the importance of mobile phones in everyday life.

With regard to anxiety associated with forgetting a mobile phone at school, 17.5% of participants admitted that they would feel uncomfortable, 70.0% reported that it would not be a problem, and 12.5% were unsure how to answer. These results suggest that most students do not display a strong emotional dependence on their mobile phones.

Regarding perceptions of anonymity on the Internet, 11.3% of students believed that they were anonymous online, 63.8% believed they were not, and

25.0% expressed no opinion. These results indicate that the vast majority of participants are aware that online activity leaves a digital footprint and is not completely anonymous.

With regard to preferences for contact with peers, 71.3% of students preferred visiting their friends in person, 11.3% preferred communicating via text messages, and 17.5% expressed no opinion. These results demonstrate that young people continue to value face-to-face interpersonal relationships.

When examining the reasons why students use computers, the most frequently reported were gaming (83.8%), spending free time (66.3%), using computers for pleasure (60.0%), and acquiring knowledge (57.5%). In addition, 43.8% of participants used computers to read messages, 37.5% for instant messaging and email, 16.3% to make new friends, 12.5% without any specific purpose, 7.5% to access Facebook, and 2.5% to visit "forbidden" websites. These results indicate that computers are used primarily for entertainment but also serve educational and communication purposes.

When analysing students' general perceptions of the Internet, 67.5% regarded it as an escape from everyday problems, 41.3% perceived it as an anonymous environment, and 13.8% considered it a way of life. These results suggest that the Internet serves primarily psychological and social functions, providing an escape from everyday difficulties and fulfilling an escapist role by enabling a temporary withdrawal from the problems and tensions of everyday life into the virtual world.

The observed relationship shows that students who perceive the Internet as an escape from everyday problems (67.5%) tend to spend more time online each day. Among this group, the proportion of students using the Internet for 5–6 hours or more is higher than among those who regard the Internet as simply a way of life (13.8%). This indicates that the psychological function of the Internet – as a means of relaxation and escape from everyday difficulties – may contribute to increased time spent online. These students also show a preference for platforms offering quick access to entertainment and real-time interaction. The most frequently used platforms were YouTube (77.5%), TikTok and Messenger (71.3% each), whereas Facebook (38.8%) and Twitter (3.8%) were used considerably less often. This relationship further indicates that the psychological function of the Internet is reflected in the preference for the social media platforms that provide immediate access to visual content and facilitate communication with peers. Similarly, students who perceived the Internet as an escape from everyday problems or as an anonymous space (41.3%) more frequently reported that excessive Internet use limits real-life social interactions (56.3%). This comparison suggests that students who use the Internet intensively for emotional and social purposes may experience some reduction in direct peer interactions, which underscores the importance of maintaining a balance between online activity and face-to-face social relationships.

Considering the impact of frequent Internet use on real-world interpersonal relationships, 56.3% of students believed that excessive Internet use limits real-life social interactions, 16.3% did not perceive such an effect, and 27.5% expressed no

opinion. These results indicate that a significant proportion of young people recognise the potential negative impact of excessive Internet use on social relationships.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding the use of the Internet, social media, and mobile devices by students attending a municipal primary school. These conclusions relate to students' digital behaviours, their perceptions of the virtual world, and the impact of new technologies on their social and emotional functioning.

1. Most students use the Internet daily, with the majority spending 1–4 hours online each day, although a considerable proportion spend more time online. This highlights the need to educate students about managing their time online in a balanced and responsible manner.

2. The findings show that most students do not exhibit a strong emotional dependence on social media or mobile phones, and for some of them, likes and online popularity are not a significant source of self-worth. At the same time, a considerable proportion of students use the Internet responsibly and recognise the social benefits, such as fostering a sense of acceptance and belonging.

3. Students are largely aware of the risks of excessive Internet use, with addiction, impaired academic performance, online hate, and personal data theft being the most frequently identified threats. Despite this, a small proportion of students do not recognize any risks, indicating the need for further digital education.

4. Face-to-face interactions with peers are still preferred to digital communication, underscoring the importance of real-life social relationships in young people's development.

5. The analysis indicates that entertainment is the primary purpose of computer use; however, a substantial proportion of students also use computers for educational, informational, and communication purposes, demonstrating the multidimensional nature of their online activity.

6. The findings indicate limited parental supervision of children's Internet use – only a small proportion of participants reported being subject to parental time limits. At the same time, most students are aware that online activities are not completely anonymous and recognise that frequent Internet use may limit real-life social interactions.

7. According to the students, the Internet serves primarily psychological and social functions. For most participants, it represents an escape from everyday problems or an anonymous environment, whereas only a small proportion regard it as a way of life.

8. The study also showed that students are able to identify both the benefits and the risks associated with the use of digital media, which is an encouraging finding in the context of developing digital awareness and promoting the responsible use of technology.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study are consistent with the conclusions presented in the NASK report *Teenagers 3.0: Report from a Nationwide Survey of Students and Parents*, which indicates that young people are increasingly engaged in digital environments and regard the Internet as a natural part of everyday life (Ładna et al. 2025, 121–132). Both the present study and the national data show that social media, communication, and entertainment remain the dominant forms of online activity, although the Internet is also used for educational and informational purposes. Similarly to the NASK report, the present study also demonstrates a relatively high level of students' awareness of digital risks. Participants most frequently identified Internet addiction, online hate, and impaired academic performance as the main consequences of excessive Internet use. At the same time, a small proportion of students do not recognise the risks associated with Internet use, pointing to the need for continued media education and the development of digital competences from the early stages of education.

The findings also indicate that students attending the municipal primary school continue to prefer face-to-face interactions with their peers, which represents a positive aspect of their psychosocial development. These findings are particularly important in light of previous research pointing to the risk of replacing direct interpersonal relationships with digital communication. At the same time, the participants emphasised that the Internet serves important social and emotional functions by providing a means of relieving stress and fostering a sense of belonging.

Another noteworthy finding is the limited level of parental supervision of children's Internet use. These findings are consistent with observations reported in the literature, which suggest that parents often lack the knowledge, skills, or tools necessary to effectively monitor their children's online activity. This underscores the need for educational initiatives targeting not only students but also parents and teachers.

In conclusion, the findings confirm that the Internet is an integral part of young people's everyday lives, offering both developmental opportunities and potential risks. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen digital education, promote media and digital competences, and encourage a healthy balance between online activity and real-life social relationships.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the survey provided a detailed insight into the behaviours, attitudes, and opinions of students attending a municipal primary school regarding their use of the Internet, social media, and mobile devices. The findings indicate that most students use the Internet daily for a moderate amount of time; however, a considerable proportion spend more than three hours online each day, which

may affect both their academic performance and their social lives. The findings also indicate that, although most students consider the Internet to be safe, nearly one-quarter of the participants expressed no clear opinion regarding its safety. This uncertainty highlights the need for systematic education on digital risks.

The study found that Internet addiction is perceived as the most significant risk associated with Internet use, while other problems, such as impaired academic performance and online hate, are also widely recognised. At the same time, most students do not experience strong emotional pressure related to social media use, and for some of them, likes are of little importance, suggesting a relatively mature approach to their online activity. The findings also show that young people continue to value face-to-face interactions with their peers and prefer visiting friends in person, which remains an important aspect of social development during the school years.

The findings also point to limited parental supervision of children's Internet use, with only a small proportion of students reporting that their parents impose time limits on their online activity. Despite this, most participants are aware that online activity is not completely anonymous and recognise that frequent Internet use may limit real-life social interactions. The analysis of the purposes for which computers are used showed that gaming and entertainment remain the dominant activities; however, a substantial proportion of students also use computers for educational and informational purposes, demonstrating the multidimensional nature of their online activity.

Psychologists and researchers investigating the functioning of children and adolescents in the digital environment emphasise that the source of digital risks lies not in cyberspace itself but primarily in a lack of knowledge, digital competences, and a critical understanding of the mechanisms governing the online environment. The belief that children and very young users are able to navigate the digital world independently and use its resources safely without appropriate adult guidance is particularly concerning. A lack of media education, parental supervision, and open discussion about online risks may encourage risky online behaviours, which can lead to adverse emotional, social, and developmental consequences. For this reason, increasing emphasis is placed on consciously supporting children throughout the process of digital socialisation and systematically developing their digital competences from the early stages of education (Tanaś and Galanciak 2019, 43–44).

In light of the findings, several important conclusions and practical recommendations can be drawn. First, there is a need to provide systematic digital education in municipal primary schools, covering online safety, personal data protection, and raising awareness of the consequences of excessive Internet use. Second, students should be supported in developing the ability to manage their time online, for example by introducing simple tools for monitoring and limiting the time spent using mobile devices and computers. Third, parents should be actively involved in their children's digital education and encouraged to establish reasonable time limits and supervise their children's online activity while maintaining an appropriate balance between supervision and young people's autonomy.

In addition, schools should promote activities that encourage face-to-face social interaction, such as group activities, educational trips, and collaborative projects, in order to maintain a healthy balance between online activity and direct interpersonal relationships. It is also important to foster healthy attitudes towards social media by encouraging a critical approach to likes, online popularity, and social comparison, thereby supporting the development of students' self-esteem and psychological resilience.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate both the opportunities and the risks associated with Internet use among students attending a municipal primary school. Well-designed educational initiatives, parental involvement, and the promotion of real-life social activities may contribute to the development of informed, safe, and healthy digital habits among young people.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation: J.Ł., M.Ch.; Formal Analysis: J.Ł., M.Ch.; Investigation: J.Ł., M.Ch.; Methodology: J.Ł., M.Ch.; Writing – Original Draft: J.Ł., M.Ch.; Writing – Review and Editing: J.Ł., M.Ch. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Available upon request.

AI Tools Declaration: Not applicable. The authors declare that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Bienvenu, Jean-Baptiste. 2024. *Zjadani przez ekrany. Jak odzyskać czas, przestrzeń i relacje* [Consumed by Screens: How to Regain Time, Space, and Relationships]. Translated by Beata Czarnomska. Wydawnictwo Polskiej Prowincji Dominikanów, W drodze sp. z o.o.
- Cantelmi, Tonino. 2014. *Człowiek w epoce Internetu. Technopłynny umysł. Technopłynność* [Human Beings in the Internet Age: The Technofluid Mind. Technofluidity]. Translated by Artur Laciuga. Bratni Zew Wydawnictwo Franciszkanów.
- Drożdż, Michał. 2006. *Etyczne orientacje w mediosferze* [Ethical Orientations in the Mediasphere]. Biblos.
- Ładna, Agnieszka, Karol Kamiński, Konrad Rosłaniec, et al. 2025. *Nastolatki. Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów i rodziców – raport badawczy* [Teenagers: Report from a Nationwide Study of Students and Parents—Research Report]. NASK – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy. https://www.nask.pl/media/2026/01/Nastolatki_RAPORT_BADAWCZY.pdf.
- Rzecznik Praw Dziecka. 2021. *Ogólnopolskie badanie jakości życia dzieci i młodzieży w Polsce. Obszar nr 5: Korzystanie z mediów społecznościowych i internetu* [Nationwide Study of the Quality of Life of Children and Young People in Poland. Area No. 5: Use

- of Social Media and the Internet]. Biuro Rzecznika Praw Dziecka. <https://brpd.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raport-RPD-korzystanie-z-medi%C3%B3w-spo%C5%82ecznie%C5%9Bciowych-i-internetu-PDF.pdf>.
- Tanaś, Maciej, and Sylwia Galanciak. 2019. "Dziecko w sieci zagrożeń – ryzykowne zachowania internetowe dzieci i młodzieży jako wyzwanie dla edukacji [A Child in the Network of Threats—Risky Online Behaviors of Children and Youth as a Challenge for Education]." In *Edukacja – relacja – zabawa. Wieloaspektowość internetu w wymiarze bezpieczeństwa dzieci i młodzieży [Education—Relation—Play: The Multifaceted Nature of the Internet in the Context of Children's and Young People's Safety]*, edited by Agnieszka Wrońska, Rafał Lew-Starowicz, and Anna Rywczyńska, 40–67. Wydawnictwo Fundacji Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji. <https://doi.org/10.47050/65591777.40-67>.
- Zduniak, Agnieszka. 2024. "Dylematy etyczne w zastosowaniach sztucznej inteligencji [Ethical Dilemmas in Applications of Artificial Intelligence]." In *Sztuczna inteligencja. Szanse i zagrożenia. Aspekty społeczne i etyczne [Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Threats. Social and Ethical Aspects]*, edited by Artur Wysocki, 55–66. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.
- Zduniak, Agnieszka, and Krzysztof Rubas. 2021. *Uzależnienie młodzieży od Internetu. Uwarunkowania społeczne, diagnostyka, profilaktyka [Youth Internet Addiction: Social Determinants, Diagnosis, and Prevention]*. Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

Generative AI and ChatGPT in Self-Directed Learning among Year 7 and 8 Primary School Pupils: Survey Findings from Radom, Poland

Generatywna sztuczna inteligencja i ChatGPT w samodzielnym uczeniu się uczniów klas VII i VIII szkoły podstawowej: wyniki badania ankietowego przeprowadzonego w Radomiu

Agnieszka Żabińska

Casimir Pulaski Radom
University, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2035-491X>

a.zabinska@urad.edu.pl

Sebastian Warchol

Casimir Pulaski Radom
University, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6960-0691>

Julia Rojek

Casimir Pulaski Radom
University, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9741-5445>

Weronika Fetrás

Casimir Pulaski Radom
University, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4951-4366>

Received: 19 Jan 2026

Revised: 10 Jun 2026

Accepted: 17 Jun 2026

Published Online First:

30 Jun 2026



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstract: This article examines how Year 7 and 8 primary school pupils use Internet resources, ChatGPT, and other artificial intelligence tools in self-directed learning. It presents a subset of data collected within the project *Education on the Internet. The Internet in Education*, using a paper questionnaire administered to 281 pupils attending schools in the city and municipality of Radom, Poland. The survey covered preferred learning methods, situations in which pupils use the Internet for educational purposes, online platforms and resources, forms of online learning, purposes for using ChatGPT, and school subjects for which it is used. Practical activities were the pupils' preferred learning method, while 73% used the Internet primarily before tests. Google, ChatGPT, and YouTube were the most frequently used resources. Furthermore, 64% reported using artificial intelligence in learning, 62% used ChatGPT for rapid information retrieval, and 69% used it when studying mathematics. The findings show that generative AI is already embedded in pupils' learning practices but is frequently used instrumentally and without sufficient verification of information. The article therefore recommends developing critical thinking, source evaluation skills, teachers' digital competences, and the pedagogically guided use of generative AI. It also introduces the Internet Educator as a potential specialist role that supports pupils and teachers in digital learning environments.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, self-directed learning, AI-assisted learning, primary school pupils, digital education,

Abstrakt: Artykuł analizuje sposoby wykorzystywania zasobów internetowych, ChatGPT i innych narzędzi sztucznej inteligencji przez uczniów klas VII i VIII szkoły podstawowej w procesie samodzielnego uczenia się. Przedstawiono część danych zgromadzonych w ramach projektu „Edukacja w Internecie. Internet w edukacji” za pomocą papierowego kwestionariusza ankiety, który wypełniło 281 uczniów szkół z terenu miasta i gminy Radom. Badanie dotyczyło preferowanych metod uczenia się, sytuacji, w których uczniowie wykorzystują Internet do celów edukacyjnych, używanych platform i zasobów internetowych, form edukacji online, sposobów korzystania z ChatGPT oraz przedmiotów szkolnych, w których narzędzie to znajduje zastosowanie. Uczniowie najczęściej preferowali praktyczne metody uczenia się, natomiast 73% z nich korzystało z Internetu przede wszystkim przed sprawdzianami. Najpopularniejszymi zasobami były Google, ChatGPT i YouTube. Ponadto 64% badanych deklarowało wykorzystywanie sztucznej inteligencji w nauce, 62% używało ChatGPT do szybkiego

wyszukiwania informacji, a 69% korzystało z niego podczas nauki matematyki. Wyniki wskazują, że generatywna sztuczna inteligencja stała się już elementem praktyk edukacyjnych uczniów, ale bywa wykorzystywana instrumentalnie i bez wystarczającej weryfikacji informacji. Autorzy rekomendują rozwijanie krytycznego myślenia, umiejętności oceny źródeł, kompetencji cyfrowych nauczycieli oraz pedagogicznie ukierunkowanego korzystania z generatywnej sztucznej inteligencji. Przedstawiają również Pedagoga Internetu jako możliwą specjalizację wspierającą uczniów i nauczycieli w cyfrowym środowisku edukacyjnym.

Słowa kluczowe: generatywna sztuczna inteligencja, ChatGPT, samodzielne uczenie się, uczenie się wspomagane przez AI, uczniowie szkoły podstawowej, edukacja cyfrowa

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, we have witnessed extremely rapid global development of digital technologies. The changes brought about, amongst other things, by the dynamic growth of the Internet can be observed in the way we live, communicate and spend our leisure time (Sowińska 2010). Those who are adept at navigating cyberspace do not need to leave home to meet their basic needs such as shopping, paying bills, or working remotely (Hołtyń 2009). The phenomenon of the computerisation of society has therefore become widespread; Henry Jenkins noted that, whichever way we look, people are taking the media into their own hands and engaging in dialogue with the mass media by creating their own online communities. People think, work and process culture in new ways (Jenkins 2007, 8). New media serve to meet many of the needs of today's children and young people; these include "identity, information about the outside world, behavioural models, compensation, entertainment, acceptance and social interaction" (Wawrzak-Chodaczek, quoted in Sowińska 2010, 169). For these two groups, the Internet is becoming a second world – known as the virtual world – and, at the same time, a natural environment in which they function (Sowińska 2010; Rigamonti 2019; Kopczewski and Paprotny 2025). It is therefore not difficult to see that Internet use has a huge impact on the attitudes and behaviour of children and young people; their vocabulary, manner of speaking, the content they share and the ideas they pursue are all changing. The Internet is beginning to play the role of a friend and confidant in the lives of children and young people – someone they can turn to at any time, who is always available and ready to offer advice. It has thus become a space that is more real than the traditional "playground" (Stępnia 2012, 46).

1. THE INTERNET AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE LIVES AND EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The use of new communication technologies is increasingly viewed as a phenomenon that can lead to addiction, and that has a negative impact on a person's mental, physical, and emotional development. Jolanta Jarczyńska and Aleksandra Orzechowska (2014) listed (also citing Jakubik 2002; Pyżalski 2009, 2014) terms associated with addiction

to new media; according to the authors, these are: “netaholics” or “net addiction;” “cyberaddiction” or “cyber-addiction;” “Internet addiction;” “Internet dependency;” or “Internet dependence;” “Internet Addiction Disorder” (IAD); “infoholism” or “information addiction” (Jarczyńska and Orzechowska 2014, 121). Andrzej Jakubik added that two of the terms mentioned above could be ruled out, either because their scope was too broad – i.e. “infoholism” – or too narrow – “computer addiction.” Instead, the author proposed the terms: “Internet addiction syndrome” or “online addiction syndrome.” In Polish, translations of the English terms “The Network,” “The Global Web,” “The World Wide Web” or “The Global Village” are also used (Jakubik 2002, 135–136). Aleksandra Paprotny (2022, 168–169) drew attention to cyber threats, including cyberbullying (harassment and online persecution). Cyberbullying is a regular, deliberate act directed at a weaker individual who is unable to or incapable of defending themselves. The most common forms of cyberbullying include, but are not limited to verbal abuse, the public sharing of humiliating or doctored photos and videos, blackmail, and the disclosure of secrets. Peer bullying is nothing new, but thanks to new technologies, bullies find it much easier (Borkowska 2019). Parents play a vital role in combating cyberbullying amongst children and young people, and they should be supported by schools and the police. It is these institutions that are responsible for the effectiveness of prevention measures relating to this problem; they should, in consultation with parents, ensure that joint efforts are systematic and comprehensive in nature. The latest update to the European ICD-11 classification has brought some progress in systematising diagnostic and intervention knowledge; it includes preliminary criteria for distinguishing individuals with computer game addiction.

It should be noted that the popularity of cyberspace, in a way, undermines and trivialises the formation of bonds with other people based on primal relationships, as genuine interpersonal relationships (offline) last longer, require greater dedication and commitment, and are deeper. However, when confronted with the diversity of activities and the possibility of overcoming temporal and spatial barriers (Wrótniak 2018) – as is the case online – the formation of relationships in the real world is very often jeopardised. Social media platforms offer young people a form of communication that is “easy, convenient, accessible, and independent of time and place; for these very reasons, it fits well with the lifestyle of today’s youth, who are accustomed to fast, constant and immediate contact, and who are unable to postpone their immediate needs” (Tomaszewska 2014, 331–332).

According to Ewelina Kosicka and Renata Lis (2016, 89–90), the development of new information technologies has influenced the way information is presented and absorbed, shifting the focus from books and paper to screens and the digital environment. New media require not only the ability to read and write, but also new visual and digital skills. Most people view social media as a cause of distraction, and a source of superficial entertainment. Meanwhile, an increasing number of content creators, including teachers, researchers and science enthusiasts, are using these platforms to share knowledge in an engaging and accessible way. Short,

dynamic formats grab attention, whilst humour, the use of interesting facts and visual presentation enhance retention. Furthermore, the ability to comment, ask questions and share content encourages collaboration and helps build a community of learners. The Internet has a huge impact on education, the main aim of which is to acquire knowledge and skills.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory assumes that observation and imitation play a crucial role in learning; therefore, social media and the use of educational platforms can provide a rich environment for acquiring knowledge and new behaviours. As Bandura noted, "an individual is more likely to replicate behaviour that results in rewards or enables the achievement of a goal than behaviour that results in adverse consequences" (2007, 49-50). Combined with immediate, quantifiable feedback in the form of "likes" and views, young people, by observing their peers, teachers or popular figures online, can internalise both positive and negative behavioural patterns related to learning. Furthermore, the tendency to model behaviour increases when positive consequences of a particular behaviour for the role model are observed, which may also apply to educational successes showcased in the virtual space. Social media is the main channel of communication and a key way for today's young people to build peer relationships. The ability to set up project groups, take part in discussions on educational forums or provide mutual support with their studies via these platforms directly meets these needs. By feeling part of a learning community, pupils may be more motivated to engage with the educational process. Finally, cognitive needs (for knowledge and understanding) are an integral part of self-fulfilment. The Internet, and consequently social media, offer access to an extremely wide range of educational resources, supplementary materials and diverse perspectives. Pupils can independently seek out information, broaden their horizons and develop their interests, which directly influences their intrinsic motivation to learn. To meet the needs of young people, an increasing number of organisations – ranging from universities, through foundations and associations, to individual teachers – are making valuable resources available free of charge, thereby promoting the idea of open education.

In recent years, there has been rapid growth in digital educational tools. Language-learning apps, websites with teaching materials, e-learning platforms, educational channels, podcasts, webinars and online quizzes – all of these form a new educational ecosystem. Importantly, many of these resources are free and accessible from anywhere and at any time. Pupils can learn at their own pace, revisit material they find difficult, or explore topics that fascinate them in greater depth. As a result, education becomes more personalised, and pupils can take greater responsibility for their own development. The Internet gives them the tools to learn not just "to get good grades," but out of a genuine need to understand the world.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a technology that can "learn" and assist people with various tasks and that has become so commonplace that some are even unaware that they are making use of it. Pupils encounter it every day when using online translation tools, asking educational questions of voice assistants such as Siri,

Alexa or Google Assistant, checking for mistakes in essays, solving maths problems or creating drawings or texts with the help of AI-based programmes that can adapt to the learners' level of ability, thereby making learning easier and more interesting. AI is also popular in entertainment, helping to create music, images and videos. It is also used in computer games, where computer-controlled characters behave in increasingly "intelligent" ways. Voice assistants are also used to set reminders or search for information online. On social media, AI suggests videos to watch, songs to listen to and people to connect with. AI helps young people in many aspects of their daily lives, but it is important to remember that no technology can replace human imagination, conversation and genuine relationships.

As early as 2010, Sebastian Wasiołka wrote that educators have excellent tools at their disposal in the form of the media. He argued that the educational community should make use of virtual space, as this could significantly support activities aimed at educating young people and shaping their attitudes. In this regard, the author posed the question: are teachers making effective use of this virtual space? (Wasiołka, 2010, s. 69-71) This question remains open, despite the fact that a number of studies have been carried out in recent years on how children and young people use the Internet (e.g. Krzyżak-Szymańska et al. 2016; Ordon and Sołtysiak 2017; Wrótniak 2018). It is significant that, in most analyses, respondents regarded this medium as the "best source of knowledge," and the Internet was the primary source of information whilst studying and doing homework (studying without Internet access would be considerably more difficult). In the NASK report *Nastolatki 3.0 (Teenagers 3.0)* – a study on the digital lives of young people in Poland – the majority of teenagers themselves indicated that using the Internet makes it easy to broaden their knowledge in their areas of interest, which also applies to the educational context (Bochenek and Lange 2019). The research presented was carried out prior to the pandemic, which brought about not only social changes but also changes in how young people utilise their digital skills.

According to the teenagers themselves, the Internet is a source of many benefits, and young people's digital everyday lives are increasingly at odds with adults' perceptions. This disconnect is highlighted by research reports published in 2025, such as the report *Nastolatki 3.0 (Teenagers 3.0)* mentioned above. The data collected open up a space for discussion on what pupils' online reality really looks like and what educators can do to support them better. The report's analysis of the use of AI reveals that as many as 70% of pupils have had contact with artificial intelligence (AI) tools, most commonly ChatGPT, CapCut and Character AI. Teenagers use these tools for learning and doing their homework, but also for entertainment or to relieve boredom. At the same time, awareness of the risks – such as deepfakes – is very low amongst them. The way the Internet is used for educational purposes is also changing. Wikipedia and Google are losing popularity, whilst young people are increasingly turning to AI, as demonstrated by the authors' own research discussed in this text. This highlights the growing gap between pupils' digital skills and the tools used in education (Ładna et al. 2025).

Similar findings were reported by the authors of a report entitled *Internet Dzieci* (Children's Internet) monitoring the online activity of children and young people. This research was carried out under the auspices of the Polish foundation Fundacja Instytut Cyfrowego Obywatelstwa (Digital Citizenship Institute Foundation) and included the most recent data from 2025, revealing, interestingly, that for children aged 7–14, the two most popular categories viewed online are education (14.3 per cent) and culture and entertainment (12.7 per cent). The Internet is therefore used for learning and doing homework. However, according to the analyses, the time spent on education and culture and entertainment is not as significant as the time young people and children devote to social media and watching video streams (Bigaj et al. 2025). These figures are undoubtedly a signal for adults – particularly teachers – to address the issue and make a conscious effort to harness cyberspace for sound and effective education. At the same time, scientists and researchers point to a shortage of specialists (psychologists, educators, therapists) who are practically equipped to tackle the issue of children and young people's excessive use of new technologies (Kuss, Griffiths, 2012). The findings of the authors' analysis cause them to sound the alarm regarding the need for intervention and for market regulators and institutions responsible for protecting minors from violence, abuse and objectification to take concrete action. Used appropriately, the Internet can become a powerful tool for supporting pupils' education and personal and social development. Pupils have never before had such agency, and teachers have never faced such a challenge.

2. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

In 2024, the idea was born to study children's and young people's use of digital media and its significance in their development. This led to the birth of the project *Education on the Internet. The Internet in Education*, which combined the enthusiasm of young students of pedagogy with the theoretical and practical experience of their lecturers. The aim of the research was to understand the extent to which young people use the Internet in education, from their own perspective. Consequently, the authors' intention was to collect a sufficient amount of data to enable teachers, parents and institutions to better understand the contemporary digital habits of the younger generation – not to judge them, but rather to foster intergenerational dialogue and jointly seek new solutions relating to education. To achieve this aim, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What method of learning do pupils prefer?
2. In what situations related to their education do children use the Internet?
3. What educational platforms or online resources do children use when learning independently?
4. What forms of online education do children use?
5. What do they use artificial intelligence (ChatGPT) for whilst learning?
6. For which subjects do they use ChatGPT?

The empirical data were collected using a self-designed questionnaire containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The research was conducted amongst primary and secondary school pupils in the city and municipality of Radom. A total of 710 pupils were surveyed. This study utilised a subset of the research data covering primary school pupils, i.e. 281 respondents from Years 7 and 8. The questionnaires were delivered to schools in paper form. Before their distribution, the pupils were briefed by the students conducting the research on the voluntary nature of participation, anonymity and the protection of personal data.

In carrying out this fairly large-scale research, the authors sought to hear the voice of the younger generation – the voices of those growing up in a world of screens, apps, social media and digital opportunities, that is, in an environment that is their natural habitat. Another aim of the research was to create a tool, (which will be developed in the near future), for teachers and parents to improve communication in cyberspace, whilst each school received reports with data analyses from the researchers concerning their specific institutions. The next step will be workshops for teachers at the schools participating in the research, during which digital solutions to support teaching and learning will be demonstrated.

In deciding to carry out the project, the researchers were concerned not only with collecting data, but above all with the welfare of young people. Both during data collection and analysis, the focus was on respect for others and the application of empathy, as it is only through attentive listening and openness to young people's perspectives that it is possible to build relationships based on trust, dialogue and mutual learning. A key element of the research was the emphasis on prevention and education, rather than focusing on the risks associated with Internet use (a topic on which a considerable number of theoretical and empirical publications have appeared in recent years). Another important aspect of the project was to emphasise a partnership-based approach to young people, as it is often the pupils who possess the knowledge and skills from which their teachers and parents can benefit.

3. RESULTS

To better understand why young people turn to cyberspace when they intend to learn, the researchers asked a question about the method that facilitates the best acquisition of knowledge. The wording of the question was based on the theoretical learning styles outlined by Czesław Kupisiewicz (2000). The results show that practical activities are very popular, having scored highly in every class. This indicates a strong preference amongst pupils for learning through action, experience and independent experimentation. In turn, listening to the teacher, whilst still important, gradually loses significance as pupils get older, whilst discussions and problem-solving become more prevalent. This may suggest that younger pupils feel more confident with more traditional forms of teaching, whilst older pupils seek more engaging methods. Watching presentations generally

attracts the least interest. This may mean that this format is perceived as less engaging or too passive, requiring little active participation compared to other methods. In summary, pupils prefer active and practical forms of learning, which is worth taking into account when designing lessons and educational materials.

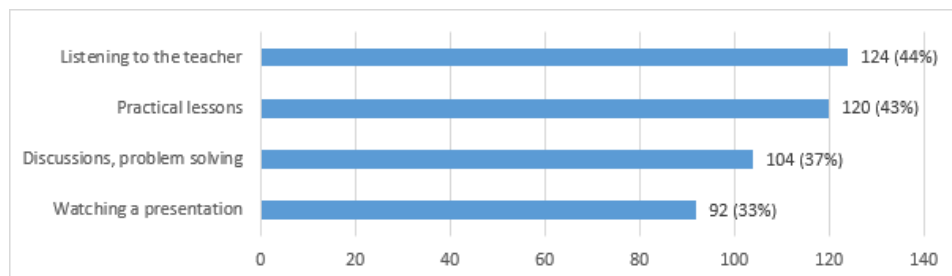


Chart 1. Which method of learning do pupils prefer?

The next question asked pupils to identify specific situations related to their education. Research shows that pupils most often use the Internet for educational purposes at key moments for them. In both Year 7 and Year 8, the predominant reason is an upcoming test, which indicates that the Internet is treated as a source of quick help before a knowledge assessment (206 responses – 73%). Such a high figure also suggests that pupils in lower secondary education do not study systematically; they turn to learning aids “at the last minute,” with only 32 respondents (11 per cent) using the Internet as part of their ongoing study. In second place, in terms of the number of responses, is the need to refresh information learnt some time ago (119 responses – 42 per cent), which highlights the role of the Internet in consolidating material, thanks to its accessibility and the ability to independently choose the time and place to test one’s own knowledge. This result may raise questions regarding the reasons for this state of affairs. It is possible that this is linked to teaching methods, individual learning styles, the curriculum workload, and the lack of assessment practices (apart from tests and quizzes). This is also indicated by another high figure: 93 (33%) respondents use the Internet independently when they wish to revise current material.

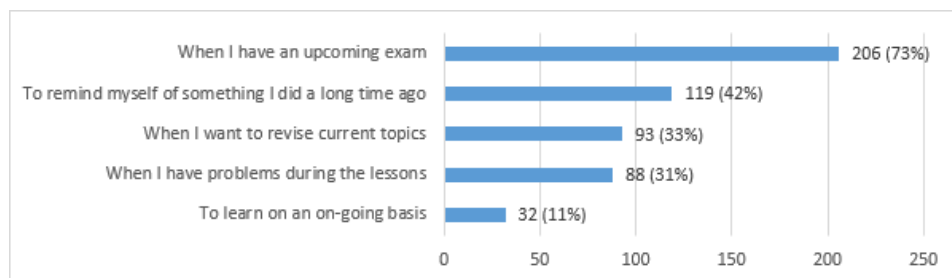


Chart 2. In what situations related to their learning do children use the Internet?

Following on from the question relating to the task-based situation – learning using the Internet – the following question was posed: Which educational platforms or online resources do children use when learning independently? The survey included a question regarding awareness of, and frequency of use of, selected educational tools and online platforms. Pupils answered the question in a closed-ended format, selecting one of four options: “I don’t know” – 0 points; “I know it, but I don’t use it” – 1 point; “I know it, I use it sometimes” – 2 points; “I know it, I use it often” – 3 points. Below is a list of educational websites and portals that were used in formulating the question. This list was compiled on the basis of a search of the Internet, specifically by entering the term “educational portal” into a search engine and selecting the most frequently appearing results (this search was carried out by pedagogy students conducting this research). The most frequently appearing results were: Google, YouTube, ChatGPT, Brainly.pl (formerly Zadane.pl), Kahoot!, Pistacja, Wikipedia, Quizlet, Bryk.pl, Odrabiamy, Opracowania.pl, Matzoo, Ściaga.pl, Matemaks and zpe.gov.pl (Zintegrowana Platforma Edukacyjna – Integrated Educational Platform). As pupils had the option to select ‘other’, three additional options appeared in the responses: Brainly; Duolingo and Knowunity.

Each response received was converted into a numerical value on a scale of 0–3. For each platform or tool, the arithmetic mean of all the points obtained was calculated. This produced an indicator of the popularity and active use of a given tool within the study group. The most frequently selected were Google, ChatGPT and YouTube. All the platforms mentioned are popular and meet the needs of pupils, rather than merely reflecting researchers’ and adults’ ideas about what pupils should be given and what they should use. At the other end of the scale – with the fewest responses from participants – was ZPE, or Zintegrowana Platforma Edukacyjna, a state-run platform. The fact that it ranked at the very bottom with the fewest points indicated that pupils had not heard of it, were unfamiliar with it, and did not use it. In the researchers’ view, opinions in cyberspace – particularly regarding educational platforms – spread very quickly and are generally objective. Websites and all online content must be appropriately structured for specific target audiences and must meet their needs. Particular attention should therefore be paid to simplicity, reliability and adapting the visual design to the audience’s level, bearing in mind that pupils also use the Internet for learning, and the key point is that in this space, they are the ones who choose what they want to use.

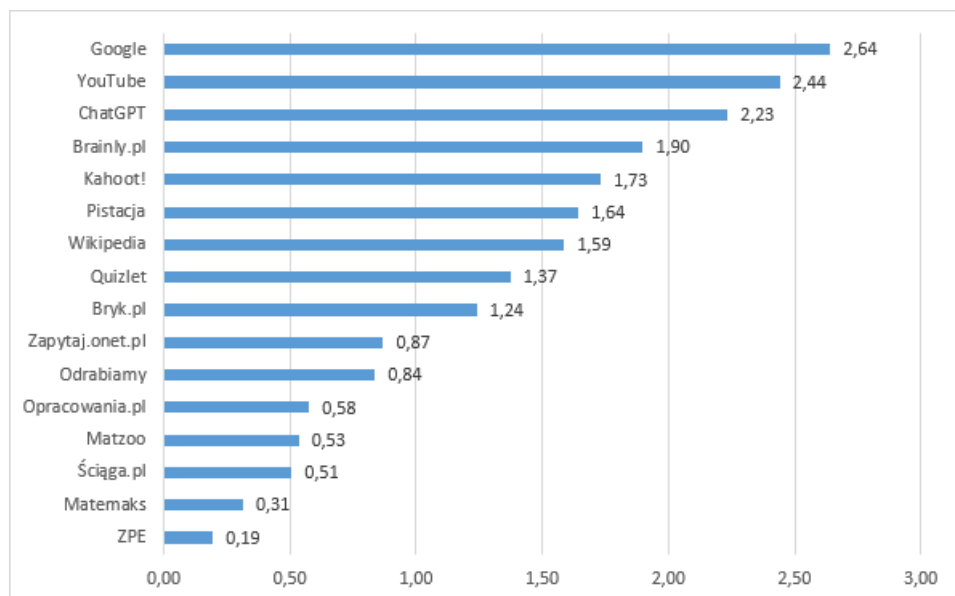


Chart 3. Which educational platforms or online resources do children use when learning independently?

The next question sought to explore the information gathered in greater depth, aiming to answer: What forms of online education do children use? Pupils could select multiple answers from a list provided and were also given the option to enter their own response. Today's pupils make extensive use of artificial intelligence in their learning, even though it is a relatively new source of information (180 people, 64%). A worrying trend has been observed: rather than solving problems independently, pupils often paste tasks or phrases into a search engine and uncritically select the first suggested link, without verifying the reliability or accuracy of the information found. In view of this, it is crucial to focus educational efforts on developing critical thinking and the ability to select sources. Pupils should be actively shown tried-and-tested apps and websites that offer reliable information and support in solving problems, thereby promoting the informed and effective use of available technologies. Despite the uncritical use of artificial intelligence, the finding that pupils watch longer videos covering the entire topic (170 people, 60 per cent) and visit websites describing the entire topic appears to be positive. There is therefore a need for deeper analysis, and the preparation of educational content should be based on this need.

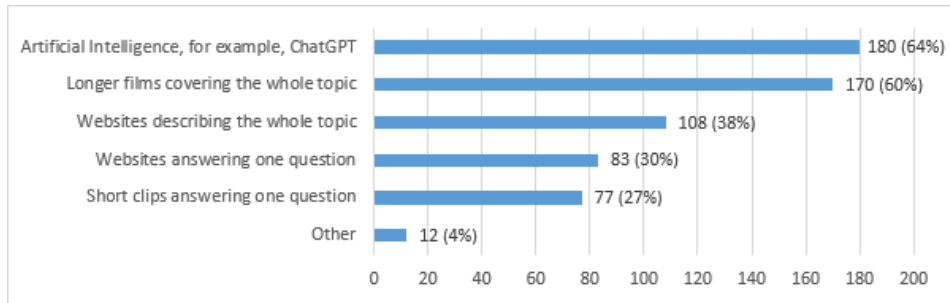


Chart 4. Which forms of online education do children use?

The next question asked for further details regarding the use of artificial intelligence. Pupils were asked: What do they use artificial intelligence for whilst learning? Although as many as 174 respondents (62%) cited quick information retrieval, there were also responses indicating young people's capacity for reflective thinking, as they use ChatGPT for educational purposes rather than merely mindlessly copying answers. A significant number of respondents – 112 pupils – use artificial intelligence to solve problems step by step, which indicates a need to understand the subject matter rather than simply learning it by heart. Only 43 pupils do not use ChatGPT for learning; it should be borne in mind that the respondents were primary school pupils, so the prevalence of this platform is already enormous even amongst such young Internet users.

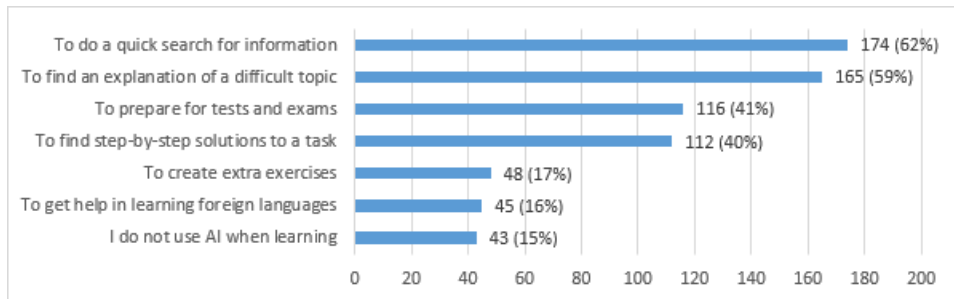


Chart 5. What do they use artificial intelligence (ChatGPT) for whilst learning?

The next question asked specifically which subjects pupils use artificial intelligence to study. The results can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, they indicate which academic subjects pupils struggle with on their own and need support with (188 respondents, i.e. 69%, chose mathematics, including 71 pupils – 26% – who use ChatGPT frequently). Secondly, it is worth noting the number of responses indicating a significant demand for extra tuition in almost all subject areas.

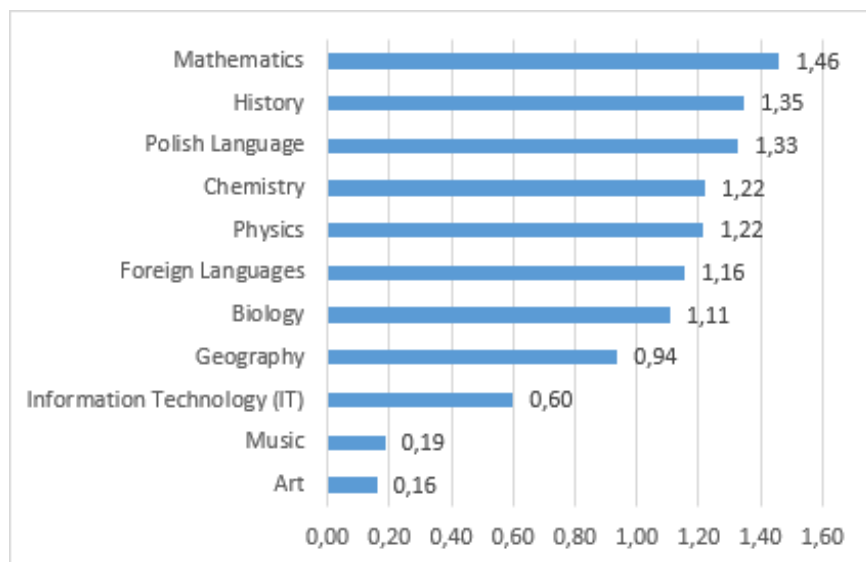


Chart 6. Which school subjects do pupils use ChatGPT for?

The high maths score suggests that pupils use generative artificial intelligence not as an assistant for their daily exercises, but as a “lifeline” in situations of urgent need. Maths, in particular, benefits from regular practice and systematic feedback. Without a constant supply of educational stimuli, mathematical skills do not develop. Unlike language skills, which develop naturally (through social interactions, exposure to written text or the acquisition of models of correct Polish) as well as by systematic practice, mathematics requires the active construction of meaning, the formulation of conclusions, making mistakes and correcting them. Simply reading an answer provided by a language model leads only to short-term recall, often limited to the period immediately before a test, rather than to a deep understanding.

There is also a fundamental problem arising from the nature of generative artificial intelligence models. These models are large language models based on statistical relationships between words, their frequencies and the order in which they appear. Whilst humans are able to assign semantic meaning to mathematical concepts (e.g. the “number of pupils” as a natural number or a non-negative integer), artificial intelligence treats such statements merely as sequences of words, without understanding their implications or possessing the capacity for abstract reasoning. A similar problem arises with text-based tasks: generative artificial intelligence does not understand the content of the instruction, but merely creates variations of words based on examples that were previously deemed correct. The set of assumptions generated by the AI may therefore be accurate, but it may just as well be the product of the model’s hallucinations. The pupil can never be certain which situation they are dealing with.

Lacking the capacity for abstract thought and metacognitive skills, a pupil relying solely on generative artificial intelligence is unable to independently plan

a learning process that would lead to the resolution of their educational problems. They can only satisfy the need to complete their homework, which will neither fill gaps in their knowledge nor resolve the problem of a lack of knowledge on a given topic – but it will simply give the pupil the opportunity to complete the task quickly, though not necessarily correctly.

4. DISCUSSION

After analysing the information gathered, the researchers concluded that, just as at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, industrialisation and urbanisation gave rise to the need for a new profession – that of the Street Educator (Rymsza 2007) – so too are we now facing new challenges linked to the development of the Internet. Street Educators are people who meet children's needs by entering their natural environment, not as missionaries but as supporters. Today, the shift of many aspects of reality into the virtual world means that we now need Internet Educators, i.e. adults who are not outsiders to young people, but those who understand everyday digital life. We need people who do not lecture from a distance, but accompany the youngsters closely, ready to discover, learn and build a safe, empathetic educational space together.

As research findings indicate (e.g. Lange 2021; Pyżalski 2009), the school environment, alongside the family environment, is a key setting for fostering constructive ways of using the Internet and safe behaviour in the virtual space amongst children and young people. In accordance with current education legislation (Poland 2017), schools are responsible for promoting knowledge about safety and fostering appropriate attitudes towards threats in both the physical and virtual worlds. Measures focusing on standards and procedures relating to physical safety have been implemented in schools for many years, whereas ensuring pupils' safety in cyberspace is still a new area that requires further development and education not only for pupils but also for teachers.

Supporting pupils in the effective and, above all, purposeful use of digital media should be a priority in today's schools, because, as research has also shown, this fosters the development of interests and supports the learning process. We must not forget to support the development of teaching staff's digital competences, particularly in countering negative phenomena in cyberspace and in developing their understanding of the devices and services used by pupils. It is worth noting that generative artificial intelligence can be an extremely useful tool in the hands of a teacher, as an educator who is aware of a pupil's individual educational needs can, within a short space of time, generate a set of tasks tailored both to address a specific learning difficulty and to support a gifted pupil, by adjusting the level of difficulty and setting challenges corresponding to their potential. As a result, this tool not only helps to compensate for difficulties but also fosters talents, which is in line with the concept of personalised learning.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation: A.Ż., S.W.; Formal Analysis: A.Ż., S.W., J.R., W.F.; Investigation: S.W., J.R., W.F.; Methodology: A.Ż., S.W., J.R., W.F.; Visualisation: S.W.; Writing - Review and Editing: A.Ż. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board / Ethics Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable

AI Tools Declaration: Not applicable. The authors declare that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Bandura, Albert. 2007. *Teoria społecznego uczenia się [Social Learning Theory]*. Translated by Joanna Kowalczevska and Józef Radzicki. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Bigaj, Magdalena, Konrad Ciesiołkiewicz, Krzysztof Mikulski, et al. 2025. *Internet dzieci: Raport z monitoringu obecności dzieci i młodzieży w internecie [Internet of Children: Report on Monitoring the Online Presence of Children and Young People]*. Fundacja “Instytut Cyfrowego Obywatelstwa” and Państwowa Komisja do spraw przeciwdziałania wykorzystaniu seksualnemu małoletnich poniżej lat 15. <https://cyfroweobywatelstwo.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/RAPORT-INTERNET-DZIECI-2025.pdf>.
- Bochenek, Marcin, and Rafał Lange, eds. 2019. *Nastolatki 3.0: Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów [Teenagers 3.0: Report from a Nationwide Survey of Students]*. NASK – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy.
- Borkowska, Anna. 2019. *Cyberprzemoc: Włącz blokadę na nękanie: Poradnik dla rodziców [Cyberbullying: Turn On the Block against Harassment: A Guide for Parents]*. NASK – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy.
- Hołyń, Beata. 2009. “W jaki sposób dzieci i młodzież korzystają z komputera i internetu? [How Do Children and Young People Use Computers and the Internet?]” In *Wspomaganie rozwoju: Psychostymulacja i psychokreacja [Supporting Development: Psychostimulation and Psychocreation]*, vol. 8, edited by Barbara M. Kaja and Beata Hołyń, 169–184. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.
- Jakubik, Andrzej. 2002. “Zespół uzależnienia od Internetu [Internet Addiction Syndrome].” *Studia Psychologica* 3: 133–142.
- Jarczyńska, Jolanta, and Aleksandra Orzechowska. 2014. “Siecioholizm i fonoholizm zagrożeniem współczesnej młodzieży [Internet Addiction and Mobile Phone Addiction as Threats to Contemporary Youth].” In *Uzależnienia behawioralne i zachowania problemowe młodzieży: Teoria, diagnoza, profilaktyka, terapia [Behavioural Addictions and Problem Behaviours among Young People: Theory, Diagnosis, Prevention, and Therapy]*, edited by Jolanta Jarczyńska, 121–146. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.

- Jenkins, Henry. 2007. *Kultura konwergencji: Zderzenie starych i nowych mediów* [Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide]. Translated by Małgorzata Bernatowicz and Mirosław Filiciak. Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne.
- Kopczewski, Marian, and Aleksandra Paprotny. 2025. "Szkoła jako środowisko zapewniania cyberbezpieczeństwa dzieci i młodzieży – zagrożenie patostreamingiem [School as an Environment for Ensuring Cybersecurity for Children and Youth – Trash Stream Threat]." *Colloquium* 17 (2): 195–206. <https://doi.org/10.34813/29coll2025>.
- Kosicka, Ewelina, and Renata Lis. 2016. "Komputerowe wspomaganie kształcenia z zakresu harmonogramowania produkcji [Computer-Aided Education in Production Scheduling]." *Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka* 3 (17): 89–93. <https://doi.org/10.15584/eti.2016.3.13>.
- Krzyżak-Szymańska, Ewa, Joanna Kowalkowska, and Andrzej Marcin Szymański. 2016. *Zagrożenia dzieci i młodzieży w sieci: Cyberproblemy, diagnoza i profilaktyka: Vademecum nauczyciela* [Online Risks for Children and Young People: Cyberproblems, Diagnosis, and Prevention: A Teacher's Handbook]. Górnośląska Wyższa Szkoła Handlowa im. Wojciecha Korfanteo.
- Kupisiewicz, Czesław. 2000. *Dydaktyka ogólna* [General Didactics]. Oficyna Wydawnicza Graf-Punkt.
- Kuss, Daria. J., Griffiths, Mark. D. 2012. "Internet gaming addiction: A systematic review of empirical research". *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 10 (2): 278-296. DOI: 10.1007/s11469-011-9318-5
- Lange, Rafał, ed. 2021. *Nastolatki 3.0: Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów* [Teenagers 3.0: Report from a Nationwide Survey of Students]. NASK – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy.
- Ładna, Agnieszka, Karol Kamiński, Konrad Rosłaniec, et al. 2025. *Nastolatki: Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów i rodziców – raport badawczy* [Teenagers: Report from a Nationwide Survey of Students and Parents – Research Report]. NASK – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy. https://www.nask.pl/media/2025/09/Nastolatki_RAPORT-2.pdf.
- Ordon, Urszula, and Wioletta Sołtysiak. 2017. "Media społecznościowe w e-learningu akademickim [Social Media in Academic E-Learning]." *Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka* 1 (19): 217–221. <https://doi.org/10.15584/eti.2017.1.29>.
- Paprotny, Aleksandra. 2022. "Bezpieczeństwo dzieci i młodzieży w cyberprzestrzeni – zagrożenie patostreamingiem [The Safety of Children and Young People in Cyberspace: The Threat of Trash Streaming]." PhD diss., Akademia Wojsk Lądowych im. gen. Tadeusza Kościuszki.
- Poland. 2017. "Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Prawo oświatowe [Act of 14 December 2016 – Education Law]." *Dziennik Ustaw* 2017, item 59. <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20170000059>.
- Pyżalski, Jacek. 2009. "Agresja elektroniczna dzieci i młodzieży – różne wymiary zjawiska [Electronic Aggression among Children and Young People: Different Dimensions of the Phenomenon]." *Dziecko Krzywdzone: Teoria, badania, praktyka* 8 (1): 12–26.
- Pyżalski, Jacek. 2014. "Elektroniczna agresja rówieśnicza – ustalenia empiryczne ostatniej dekady [Electronic Peer Aggression: Empirical Findings from the Last Decade]." In *Uzależnienia behawioralne i zachowania problemowe młodzieży: Teoria, diagnoza, profilaktyka, terapia* [Behavioural Addictions and Problem Behaviours among Young People: Theory, Diagnosis, Prevention, and Therapy], edited by Jolanta Jarczyńska, 33–47. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.

- Rigamonti, Magdalena. 2019. "Porno, bijatyki i pijatyki: Dlaczego bycie patostreamerem jest pociągające? [Porn, Fights, and Drinking Sessions: Why Is Being a Trash Streamer Appealing?]" *Forsal.pl*, July 4, 2019. <https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1420578,porno-bijatyki-i-pijatyki-dlaczego-bycie-patostreamerem-jest-pociagajace-wywiad.html>.
- Rymsza, Marek. 2007. "Pedagogika ulicy – praktyczne doświadczenia i dylematy metodologiczne [Street Pedagogy: Practical Experiences and Methodological Dilemmas]." *Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze* 3 (546): 17–22.
- Sowińska, Bożena. 2010. "Miejsce Internetu w życiu młodzieży ponadgimnazjalnej [The Place of the Internet in the Lives of Upper-Secondary School Students]." In *Internet a relacje międzyludzkie [The Internet and Interpersonal Relationships]*, edited by Elżbieta Laskowska and Mariusz Kuciński, 169–200. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.
- Stępiak, Krzysztof. 2012. "Internet – wirtualny przyjaciel czy realny wróg? [The Internet: A Virtual Friend or a Real Enemy?]" *Warmińsko-Mazurski Kwartalnik Naukowy, Nauki Społeczne* 3: 45–56.
- Tomaszewska, Hanna. 2012. *Młodzież, rówieśnicy i nowe media: Społeczne funkcje technologii komunikacyjnych w życiu nastolatków [Young People, Peers, and New Media: The Social Functions of Communication Technologies in the Lives of Teenagers]*. Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak.
- Wasiółka, Sebastian. 2010. „Syndrom łatwości życia” [The „Easy Life” Syndrom]. *Edukacja i Dialog* 1: 69-71.
- Wrótniak, Joanna. 2018. "Portale społecznościowe w edukacji współczesnej młodzieży [Social Media in Education of Contemporary Adolescents]." *Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka* 3 (25): 178–183. <https://doi.org/10.15584/eti.2018.3.25>.

Religion in the Digital Media Age: The Religious Formation of Young People from the Perspective of Christian Personalism

Religia w epoce mediów cyfrowych. Formacja religijna młodzieży w perspektywie personalizmu chrześcijańskiego

Wojciech Słomski

Vizja University in Warsaw,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1532-0341>

w.slomski@vizja.pl

Received: 7 Mar 2026

Revised: 14 Apr 2026

Accepted: 28 May 2026

Published Online First:

30 Jun 2026

Abstract: This article examines the religious formation of young people in the digital media age from the perspective of Christian personalism and the humanism of Francis de Sales. It argues that digital media function not merely as tools of religious communication but also as a cultural and formative environment that shapes young people's faith, identity, relationships, and experience of community. Methodologically, the study combines source hermeneutics, theological comparativism, and discourse analysis, bringing research on digital religion, the mediatisation of religion, and youth religiosity into dialogue with the personalism of Emmanuel Mounier and Karol Wojtyła. The analysis identifies both the formative potential of digital religion and its structural limitations, particularly the fragmentation of religious experience, the dominance of affectivity and visibility, the selective consumption of religious content, and algorithmically conditioned forms of choice. Christian personalism is proposed as a hermeneutical framework and critical criterion for assessing whether digital religious practices support the integral development of the person as relational, free, and responsible. The humanism of Francis de Sales complements this framework through its emphasis on gradual growth, pedagogical gentleness, and the integration of reason, will, and affectivity. The article concludes that a personalist and Salesian perspective enables a critical yet constructive theological evaluation of youth religiosity and provides directions for responsible religious formation in digital culture.

Keywords: digital religion, youth religiosity, religious formation, Christian personalism, digital media, Francis de Sales, religious pedagogy, mediatisation of religion

Abstrakt: Artykuł analizuje formację religijną młodzieży w epoce mediów cyfrowych z perspektywy personalizmu chrześcijańskiego i humanizmu Franciszka Salezego. Punktem wyjścia jest teza, że media cyfrowe funkcjonują nie tylko jako narzędzia komunikacji religijnej, lecz również jako środowisko kulturowe i formacyjne kształtujące wiarę, tożsamość, relacje oraz doświadczenie wspólnoty młodych ludzi. Pod względem metodologicznym opracowanie łączy hermeneutykę źródeł, komparatykę teologiczną i analizę dyskursu, zestawiając badania nad religią cyfrową, mediatyzacją religii i religijnością młodzieży z personalizmem Emmanuela Mouniera i Karola Wojtyły. Analiza wskazuje zarówno na potencjał formacyjny religii cyfrowej, jak i na jej strukturalne ograniczenia, zwłaszcza fragmentaryzację doświadczenia religijnego, dominację afektywności i widzialności, selektywną konsumpcję treści religijnych oraz uwarunkowane algorytmicznie formy wyboru. Personalizm chrześcijański zostaje przedstawiony jako rama hermeneutyczna i kryterium krytyczne pozwalające ocenić, czy cyfrowe praktyki religijne wspierają



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

integralny rozwój osoby jako bytu relacyjnego, wolnego i odpowiedzialnego. Humanizm Franciszka Salezego uzupełnia tę perspektywę poprzez podkreślenie stopniowego charakteru rozwoju, pedagogicznej łagodności oraz integracji rozumu, woli i afektywności. Artykuł prowadzi do wniosku, że perspektywa personalistyczna i salezjańska umożliwia krytyczną, a zarazem konstruktywną teologiczną ocenę religijności młodzieży oraz wskazuje kierunki odpowiedzialnej formacji religijnej w kulturze cyfrowej.

Słowa kluczowe: religia cyfrowa, religijność młodzieży, formacja religijna, personalizm chrześcijański, media cyfrowe, Franciszek Salezy, pedagogika religijna, mediatyzacja religii

INTRODUCTION

The dynamic development of digital media in recent decades has led to a profound transformation in the ways of communicating, forming identity and experiencing religiosity, especially among young people. Today's youth function in an environment that is no longer just a collection of communication tools but a comprehensive cultural ecosystem that shapes perceptions of reality, social relations, and the language of spiritual experience (Campbell 2010; Hoover 2006). Religion, subject to processes of mediatisation, is incorporated into the logic of imagery, algorithmisation, and affectivity characteristic of digital culture, which raises questions about its anthropological, theological, and educational consequences (Hjarvard 2011; Hjarvard 2016).

This problem is particularly evident in the area of religious education for young people. Research on digital religion indicates that young users not only consume religious content in digital media, but also actively reinterpret, curate, and performatively enact it in online spaces (Campbell 2013; Moberg and Sjö 2020). The religiosity of young people can therefore take on fragmentary, hybrid, and strongly experiential forms, creating tensions between doctrinal and communal continuity and subjective or aesthetic modes of participation (Horsfield 2015; Gale 2024). In this context, religious formation faces a tension between the need for authentic experience and the risk of reducing faith to a media product or identity performance (Nam 2023).

Research on the relationship between religion and digital media emerged as a separate field of study at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. The classic works of Stewart M. Hoover pointed to the need to analyse religion not only as content present in the media, but as a phenomenon co-created by media logic (Hoover 2006). This approach was further developed into the concept of the mediatisation of religion, proposed by Stig Hjarvard, according to which the media are not a neutral channel of communication, but an active factor transforming religious authority, symbolism, and practices (Hjarvard 2011; Hjarvard 2016).

Heidi A. Campbell's work was groundbreaking for research on digital religion, proposing a methodological framework for analysing religious practices in the new media environment. Campbell demonstrated that digital religiosity is not a simple transfer of traditional forms of piety to the internet, but a new configuration of relationships between community, authority, and medium (Campbell 2010;

Campbell 2013). In her later work, Campbell examines digitally creative actors who renegotiate religious authority and narratives within networked media cultures (Campbell 2021).

This approach has been further developed in interdisciplinary anthologies such as *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion*, which document the diversity of online religious practices and research methods used in the analysis of digital religion (Campbell and Cheong 2024). At the same time, research by Cheong and co-authors has highlighted the importance of social media as a space for negotiating religious and identity meanings, especially among young adults (Cheong et al. 2012).

In recent years, researchers have focused particular attention on the religiosity of young people in the digital environment. The volume *Digital Media, Young Adults and Religion*, edited by Moberg and Sjö, provides a broad comparative picture of religious practices among young adults in different cultural contexts and highlights both the possibilities and tensions associated with digital religious engagement (Moberg and Sjö 2020). Gale's dissertation complements this literature by examining specifically how social media affects young people's faith (Gale 2024).

At the same time, theological reflection on digital media and religious formation is developing. The concept of digital theology, proposed by Peter M. Phillips, among others, postulates the need to integrate digital humanities tools with classical theological reflection (Phillips et al. 2019).

Against this background, a research gap is clearly emerging. Although the literature on the subject extensively analyses digital religion and the religiosity of young people, attempts to systematically root these analyses in personalist Christian anthropology are relatively rare. Classical personalism, represented by Emmanuel Mounier and Karol Wojtyła, offers a coherent concept of the person as a relational, free, and responsible being, which can serve as a criterion for evaluating the processes of digital mediatisation of religion (Mounier 1989; Wojtyła 1979).

Polish personalist reflection has developed concepts that systematically address the issues of the human person, freedom, and education understood as the process of integral formation of the subject. These approaches provide tools for critical analysis of contemporary cultural changes, in particular those that influence the construction of identity and the understanding of the autonomy of the subject. Of particular importance here is the personalist interpretation of freedom inspired by the thought of Emmanuel Mounier and the consistent distinction between person and personality, which makes it possible to describe the tensions that arise in the processes of cultural and media socialisation of the individual. This perspective remains relevant, especially in relation to digital mechanisms of identity formation, which favour the identification of subjectivity with its variable forms of expression (Słomski 1998; Słomski 2008).

An important point of reference for this study is also the humanism of Francis de Sales, which emphasises the integrity of the person, pedagogical gentleness, and the importance of internal formation. His vision of spiritual life, focused on everyday life and relationships, can be an inspiration for contemporary reflection

on the religious education of young people in the digital world (Francis de Sales 2002; Francis de Sales 1997). Contemporary documents of the Magisterium of the Church, especially the exhortation *Christus vivit*, confirm the relevance of this approach, emphasising the need for the integral formation of young people in the context of digital culture (Francis 2019).

The aim of this article is to analyse the religious formation of young people in the age of digital media from the perspective of Christian personalism, taking into account the humanism of Francis de Sales. The main research question is: to what extent can the personalistic concept of the person be an adequate hermeneutical tool for assessing the processes of digital mediatisation of religion among young people? Specific questions concern: (1) the impact of digital media on the structure of young people's religious experience, (2) tensions between affectivity and personal freedom in digital religiosity, (3) the possibility of applying personalistic criteria in religious pedagogy.

The article is based on the method of source hermeneutics, including the analysis of theological, philosophical, and pedagogical texts, as well as on theological comparativism, comparing contemporary research on digital religion with classical personalistic anthropology. An analysis of theological discourse will also be used, focusing on the language of the person, relationships and freedom in the context of digital media. The adopted perspective allows for a critical yet constructive approach to the problem, without reducing theology to media sociology or pedagogy to communication technology.

1. DIGITAL MEDIA AS A RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT: ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH FORMATION

One of the key findings of contemporary research on religion in the digital age is the shift away from an instrumental understanding of media towards viewing them as a cultural environment in which religious experience is constituted. Digital media no longer serve merely as channels for the transmission of religious content, but co-create the perceptual, symbolic, and relational frameworks within which young people interpret reality, construct identity, and experience faith (Hoover 2006; Campbell 2010). This approach has important consequences for theological and pedagogical reflection, as it shifts the focus from the question of the effectiveness of religious communication to the question of the anthropological effects of immersion in digital culture.

Heidi A. Campbell, developing the concept of digital religion, emphasises that online religious practices are not a simple continuation of traditional forms of piety, but arise as a result of negotiations between the norms of religious communities and the logic of digital media, such as personalisation of communication, participation, and algorithmic selection of content (Campbell 2013). In the case of young people, this process is particularly intense, as digital media are the primary environment for socialisation and identity expression. Religion in the digital space is thus incorporated into the dynamics of self-presentation, aestheticization, and performativity, leading to a transformation of its forms and meanings (Horsfield 2015).

Stig Hjarvard's analyses indicate that in the context of the mediatisation of religion, there is a shift of authority from religious institutions to the media as the main producers of cultural meaning (Hjarvard 2011). In the context of young people, this means that religious experience is increasingly shaped by the logic of digital platforms, which prefer concise, emotional, and visual communication. Theological authority is giving way to media authority, based on reach, visual appeal, and the ability to generate engagement (Hjarvard 2016). From a theological perspective, this raises questions about the durability and depth of religious formation based on such mechanisms.

Empirical research on youth religiosity in the digital environment confirms the ambivalent nature of these processes. On the one hand, digital media provide access to a variety of religious content, online communities, and forms of spiritual support; on the other hand, research collected in comparative studies of young adults and religion also points to fragmented, selective, and rapidly changing patterns of religious engagement in digital contexts (Moberg and Sjö 2020). Such findings suggest that digital religious practices can broaden access and participation while simultaneously challenging doctrinal and communal continuity.

Joshua Gale's dissertation examines how social media affects young people's faith and presents this relationship as ambivalent rather than unidirectional (Gale 2024). Vo Huong Nam likewise analyses both the promise and the risks of digital media for youth discipleship, stressing the importance of sustained formation rather than reducing discipleship to digital engagement alone (Nam 2023).

From a theological point of view, the key issue is therefore the question of the image of the person implied by digital culture. Personalistic Christian anthropology, developed by Emmanuel Mounier and Karol Wojtyła, emphasises the person as a relational, free, and responsible being whose development takes place through engagement in relationships and community, rather than through constant self-presentation (Mounier 1989; Wojtyła 1979). Meanwhile, the logic of digital media favours the construction of a fragmentary and performative identity based on changing narratives and audience reactions.

Polish personalist reflection has developed a distinction between person and personality, which allows us to grasp the tension between the ontological dignity of the subject and the variable forms of its cultural expression. Personality, as a structure shaped by social, psychological, and cultural factors, can be deformed under the influence of dominant symbolic patterns, while the person retains their unchanging dignity and call to freedom and responsibility. In the context of digital media, this distinction takes on particular importance, as network communication processes encourage the identification of one's own value with one's media image and the reactions of the audience. Such dynamics lead to a reduction in freedom to make aesthetic or emotional choices, subordinated to the logic of visibility and acceptance, rather than to authentic self-determination (Słomski 1998).

In this context, the humanism of Francis de Sales appears to be an important point of reference. His vision of spiritual life, focused on the integrity of the person, gentleness, and the daily practice of faith, counterbalances the hasty and

fragmentary nature of digital religiosity (Francis de Sales 2002). Francis de Sales emphasised the importance of patient internal formation and harmony between experience and reason, which can inspire contemporary religious pedagogy in the world of digital media.

In summary, an analysis of the literature on the subject allows us to conclude that digital media are not only a challenge but also a space that requires in-depth theological and personalistic reflection. Without clear anthropological criteria, there is a risk that the religious formation of young people will be subordinated to the logic of the media, rather than leading to the integral development of the person. Christian personalism and the humanism of Francis de Sales offer an interpretative framework that enables a critical and constructive approach to the religiosity of young people in the digital age, which is the starting point for further analysis in the following sections of this article.

2. FRANCIS DE SALES'S HUMANISM AS A PARADIGM FOR THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Reflection on the religious formation of young people in the context of digital culture requires not only analytical tools drawn from media studies, but also a grounding in the spiritual and pedagogical tradition of the Church. In this context, the humanism of Francis de Sales is a particularly relevant point of reference, as it combines a profound Christian anthropology with sensitivity to everyday life, relationality, and the gradual nature of spiritual growth (Francis de Sales 2002). His thought, although shaped in the realities of early modern Europe, contains insights that remain relevant to the challenges of contemporary digital culture.

The central element of the Salesian vision of man is the belief in the integral unity of the person, encompassing reason, will, emotions, and physicality. Francis de Sales opposed all forms of elitist spirituality or spirituality detached from the realities of everyday life, emphasising that the call to holiness is realised in specific existential conditions, through gradual and patient work on oneself (Francis de Sales 2002). From the perspective of youth formation in the digital age, this intuition takes on particular significance, as media culture encourages the fragmentation of experience and the acceleration of formation processes at the expense of their deepening (Hoover 2006; Campbell 2010).

Francis de Sales's humanism is based on the affirmation of personal freedom, understood not as freedom of choice, but as the capacity to direct one's life consciously and responsibly towards the good. In his *Treatise on the Love of God*, Francis de Sales consistently presents freedom as the space in which grace and human response cooperate, thereby protecting spirituality from the extremes of both determinism and subjectivism (Francis de Sales 1997). In the context of digital media, which promote instant gratification and algorithmically shaped choices, the Salesian concept of freedom can serve as a critical criterion against reducing the person to a user or consumer of content (Hjarvard 2016).

An important aspect of Salesian pedagogy is also the role of affectivity in spiritual life. Francis de Sales does not deny the importance of feelings and emotional experiences, but subordinates them to the process of discernment and formation of reason and will. Affectivity is to be integrated, not absolutised. In contemporary digital culture, where emotionally engaging communication can strongly shape patterns of attention and participation, this Salesian emphasis offers a useful criterion for distinguishing formative experience from merely transient reaction (Moberg and Sjö 2020; Gale 2024). In this sense, Salesian humanism offers an alternative to the emotionalisation of religion in social media, pointing to the need for harmony between experience and reflection.

From a pedagogical point of view, the Salesian principle of gentleness (*douceur*) is particularly important, which is expressed in the manner of spiritual and educational accompaniment. Francis de Sales emphasised the importance of dialogue, patience and gradualness in the formation process, which is reflected in contemporary concepts of accompanying young people, developed, among others, in the Salesian tradition (Attard and García 2018). In the digital context, this principle can be interpreted as a call for responsible and prudent use of the media, without a moralising tone, but with respect for the young person's path of development.

Francis de Sales's humanism also remains deeply consistent with Christian personalism. Its emphasis on the dignity of the person, the person's relational nature, and the vocation to freedom and love corresponds to the personalist approach of Emmanuel Mounier and Karol Wojtyła (Mounier 1989; Wojtyła 1979). In the personalist reflection developed in Poland, attention has been drawn to the particular risk of identity deformation under the conditions of digital culture, in which the expressive and performative layer of identity gains dominance over its ontological dimension. In a media communication environment, there is a real danger that a personality constructed through images will begin to overshadow the dignity of the person as a being of inviolable value and an inner call to freedom. Such a shift in emphasis leads to a reduction of subjectivity to representative and reactive functions, which has far-reaching consequences for the processes of religious formation and education towards responsibility (Słomski 2008). Salesian humanism, through its anthropological realism, makes it possible to preserve this distinction in educational practice.

The contemporary Magisterium of the Church confirms the relevance of Salesian intuitions in relation to young people living in the digital world. The exhortation *Christus vivit* emphasises the need for the integral formation of young people, taking into account both their immersion in digital culture and the need for a deeper relationship with God and the community (Francis 2019). Francis points to the risks of loneliness and superficial forms of virtual contact in the digital environment (Francis 2019, para. 88), which is consistent with the Salesian emphasis on relationality and the presence of the educator.

In summary, Francis de Sales's humanism offers a coherent and theologically profound paradigm for the religious formation of young people in the age of

digital media. His integral anthropology, affirmation of freedom and pedagogical gentleness, and critical approach to affectivity can provide an effective counterbalance to the reductionist tendencies of digital culture. Incorporating this perspective into reflections on religion and digital media not only allows for a better understanding of the challenges of contemporary formation, but also points to ways of developing it creatively and responsibly.

3. CHRISTIAN PERSONALISM AS A HERMENEUTIC OF THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The analysis of youth religiosity in the age of digital media requires not only a sociological or media-studies description, but above all a hermeneutic capable of grasping the meaning of religious formation as a process of shaping the person. Christian personalism offers a coherent interpretative framework in this regard, as it focuses on the person as a relational, free, and responsible subject rather than merely on the behaviour or experiences of the individual (Mounier 1989; Wojtyła 1979). The application of personalism as a hermeneutic of formation thus allows us to move beyond reductionist approaches to digital religiosity, which reduce it to shifting media practices or emotional reactions.

Emmanuel Mounier defined the person as a spiritual being who fulfils himself through commitment, relationship, and responsibility towards others (Mounier 1989). In the perspective of religious formation, this means that the educational process cannot be limited to the transmission of content or the stimulation of experiences, but must lead to the integration of freedom, reason, and affectivity towards the good. In the context of digital media, which encourage superficial consumption of content and fragmentation of attention, Mounier's personalism becomes a critical tool against models of formation based solely on the attractiveness of the message (Campbell 2013; Moberg and Sjö 2020).

Karol Wojtyła, developing personalism in a phenomenological key, emphasised the importance of action as a place of revelation of the person. In *The Acting Person*, the person appears as a subject of self-determination who, through action, not only expresses himself but also shapes himself (Wojtyła 1979). From the perspective of the religious formation of young people, this means moving away from passive models of religious content reception in favour of forms of education that engage young people as responsible participants in the life of the faith community. Meanwhile, the digital environment often encourages a consumerist attitude, in which religion becomes one of many available identity resources (Hjarvard 2016).

In the personalist reflection developed in Poland, a distinction has been made between the person and the personality, which proves particularly useful in analysing the formation processes taking place in digital culture. Personality, understood as a dynamic set of psychological and social traits, remains highly susceptible to the influence of dominant cultural, media, and communication patterns. The person, on the other hand, retains their ontological dignity and inner freedom, regardless of the

changing forms of expression and representation. In the context of the mediatization of religion, this distinction allows for a critical assessment of the tendency to equate religious identity with media image or the intensity of emotional experiences, which, although important, cannot constitute a sufficient criterion for the maturity of faith or the integral formation of a person (Słomski 2008).

Freedom remains a particularly important category in the personalist hermeneutic of formation, understood not as abstract autonomy or unlimited choice, but as the dynamic capacity of the person for self-determination in relation to truth, goodness, and other people. This approach emphasises the relational nature of freedom, which excludes both determinism, reducing the subject to the result of external factors, and a subjectivist understanding of autonomy detached from responsibility and the normative dimension of the good. Freedom understood in this way is a key criterion for evaluating formative processes, especially in the context of digital culture, where freedom is often reduced to the selective choice of content and styles of expression. In the case of young people functioning in an environment of algorithmically controlled digital media, personal freedom is exposed to subtle forms of restriction resulting from mechanisms of content personalisation and the attention economy (Campbell 2021). Christian personalism thus makes it possible to unmask the apparent freedom of choice offered by digital media and to direct religious formation towards authentic self-determination.

Personalist hermeneutics also assumes an integral approach to affectivity. Unlike approaches that either absolutise emotions or marginalise them in the formation process, personalism views feelings as an important but subordinate element of personal development. Studies of social media, faith, and youth discipleship indicate that digital environments can intensify the role of affective and experiential forms of religious engagement (Gale 2024; Nam 2023). Christian personalism, on the other hand, allows affectivity to be included in the formation process without reducing religion to experience alone, presenting it instead as a path of relational maturation of the person.

The application of personalism as a hermeneutic of religious formation of young people also leads to a critical reinterpretation of the concept of community. In the digital environment, relationships often take on a networked and episodic character, which influences the way religious community is experienced (Hoover 2006; Horsfield 2015). Christian personalism, emphasising *communio* as a space for personal encounter, allows us to distinguish between a formative community and a group of users gathered around religious content.

In this sense, personalism is not just one of many possible anthropological trends, but a hermeneutic capable of integrating empirical data with theological reflection. It enables a critical yet constructive reading of youth religiosity in the digital age, without falling into either apologetics for technology or its unequivocal condemnation. The personalist hermeneutics of religious formation indicates that the essential criterion for evaluating digital practices is not their attractiveness or reach, but their ability to support the integral development of the person in relation to God, others, and oneself.

4. CHRISTIAN PERSONALISM AS A CRITICAL CRITERION FOR DIGITAL RELIGIOSITY

Contemporary digital religiosity, especially among young people, requires not only empirical description but also normative theological evaluation. Christian personalism, understood as an anthropology rooted in the ontological dignity of the person, offers an adequate critical criterion for religious phenomena shaped by the logic of digital media. This criterion does not consist in the *a priori* rejection of new forms of religiosity, but in discerning them in light of the question of whether, and to what extent, they promote the integral development of the person as a relational, free, and responsible subject (Mounier 1989; Wojtyła 1979).

One of the fundamental problems of digital religiosity is the shift in emphasis from formation to expression. Research on digital religion indicates that digital environments can privilege visible, participatory, and self-presentational forms of religiosity (Campbell 2013; Campbell 2021). In this context, religion can become an element of performative identity, subject to the rules of self-presentation and the economy of attention. From the perspective of Christian personalism, this raises the question of whether religious expression in digital media leads to a deepening of a person's relationship with God and the community, or whether it remains at the level of symbolic self-affirmation.

Mounier's personalism emphasises that a person fulfils themselves not through expression alone, but through commitment, which is binding and lasting in nature (Mounier 1989). Digital religiosity can include episodic acts of engagement, such as reactions, comments, or short-term spiritual campaigns. From a personalist perspective, such practices may have value, but they do not by themselves constitute the sustained commitment required for long-term religious formation.

Another problem that emerges in the analysis of digital religiosity is the redefinition of freedom. Digital media promote an image of freedom as the unlimited choice of content and lifestyles, which is also reflected in the religious sphere (Hjarvard 2016). The personalistic concept of freedom, developed by both Mounier and Wojtyła, opposes this view, presenting freedom as the ability to self-determination oriented towards truth and goodness (Wojtyła 1979; Słomski 1998). From this point of view, digital religiosity, which reduces freedom to the selective consumption of religious content, can lead to an illusion of autonomy, devoid of any real ethical and spiritual dimension.

The algorithmic nature of digital media further complicates the issue of personal freedom. Content personalisation mechanisms, while increasing the sense of tailoring the message to individual preferences, simultaneously limit the horizon of experience and reflection, reinforcing existing beliefs and emotions (Campbell 2021). In this context, Christian personalism allows us to unmask the structural limitations of freedom, which often remain invisible to users but are of significant importance for the religious formation of young people.

The affectivity of digital religiosity also requires particular critical reflection. Research on social media, faith, and youth discipleship indicates that emotional and experiential dimensions play an important role in digital religious engagement (Gale 2024; Nam 2023). Christian personalism does not deny the importance of feelings, but incorporates them into a broader structure of personal development, in which reason, will, and community relations play an integrating role (Słomski 2008). From this perspective, a form of digital religiosity based predominantly on emotional and visual stimuli risks instability unless it is integrated into sustained practices of reflection, community, and responsibility.

The critical application of personalism also applies to the concept of community. Digital religiosity often creates online communities based on weak ties and shared interests rather than real participation in religious life (Hoover 2006; Horsfield 2015). Christian personalism, emphasising *communio* as a space for personal encounter and mutual responsibility, allows us to distinguish between a formative community and temporary configurations of users. This criterion is particularly important in working with young people, for whom the experience of community is an important factor in the development of religious identity.

In this sense, Christian personalism plays a critical but constructive role. It does not reduce digital religiosity to pathology, nor does it postulate a return to pre-media forms of piety. On the contrary, it enables discernment of those elements of digital culture that can be creatively incorporated into the formation process and those that need to be corrected or limited. The humanism of Francis de Sales, with its emphasis on the integrity of the person, pedagogical gentleness, and the processual nature of spiritual growth, reinforces this perspective by offering practical criteria for accompanying young people in the world of digital media (Francis de Sales 2002; Francis 2019).

Ultimately, Christian personalism allows us to formulate a fundamental criterion for evaluating digital religiosity: it is neither the modernity of forms nor the intensity of experiences, but the ability to lead a person towards a mature relationship with God, rooted in freedom, responsibility, and community. Understood in this way, the critical criterion is an essential element of theological reflection on the religious formation of young people in the age of digital media and prepares the ground for the synthetic conclusions of the article.

CONCLUSION

The analysis has shown that the religiosity of young people in the digital media age cannot be adequately described or assessed solely in sociological or media-studies terms. Although research on digital religion provides valuable diagnostic tools, it is only by rooting reflection in theological anthropology that we can grasp the essence of religious formation as a process of shaping the person rather than merely managing practices or experiences (Campbell 2013; Hoover 2006). The article has shown that Christian personalism constitutes a coherent and normatively justified

hermeneutic, capable of a critical and at the same time constructive reading of the digital religiosity of young people.

The starting point for the discussion was the thesis that digital media today function as a formative environment that shapes the structure of young people's religious experience. The mediatisation of religion leads to a shift in emphasis from permanent community and doctrinal forms to practices based on visibility, affectivity, and performative expression (Hjarvard 2011; Hjarvard 2016). This analysis revealed the ambivalent nature of digital religiosity: on the one hand, it creates new opportunities for contact with religious content and communities, while on the other hand, comparative research on young adults and digital religion points to fragmented and selective patterns of engagement that can complicate sustained formative processes (Moberg and Sjö 2020; Gale 2024).

The application of Christian personalism as a research hermeneutic enabled a transition from description to normative evaluation. The personalism of Emmanuel Mounier and Karol Wojtyła presents the person as a relational, free and responsible being whose development takes place through engagement rather than through the consumption of experiences (Mounier 1989; Wojtyła 1979). In this light, digital religiosity, reduced to emotional expression or aesthetic self-presentation, reveals its structural limitations as a tool of formation. The personalistic criterion thus allows us to distinguish between practices that promote the integral development of the person and those that lead to distraction and superficiality.

A particularly important element of the analysis was to demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between person and personality in the interpretation of phenomena of digital religiosity. The personalist perspective makes it possible to grasp the risk involved in identifying religious identity with a media image or with the intensity of emotional experiences characteristic of digital culture. In communication environments shaped by algorithms and mechanisms of visibility, this distinction acquires particular importance because it allows us to distinguish between the ontological dignity of the person and the variable, performative forms through which that dignity is expressed. Maintaining this distinction proves crucial for the theological and anthropological coherence of the religious formation of young people, protecting it from being reduced to emotional experience or media self-presentation (Słomski 1998; Słomski 2008).

The humanism of Francis de Sales also proved to be an integral element of the proposed hermeneutics. His vision of spiritual life, based on the affirmation of freedom, pedagogical gentleness, and the processual nature of growth, is a valuable counterbalance to accelerated and affective digital religiosity (Francis de Sales 2002; Francis de Sales 1997). The Salesian understanding of formation as accompanying a person in their daily life allows us to avoid both a technocratic approach to the media and a nostalgic rejection of digital culture. In this sense, Francis de Sales's humanism reinforces the personalistic criterion for evaluating digital religiosity, while offering practical pedagogical guidelines.

The conclusions of the article are in line with the teaching of the contemporary Magisterium of the Church, which emphasises the need for the integral formation of young people in the digital world. The exhortation *Christus vivit* points out that digital media cannot replace real relationships and the process of maturing in faith, but require critical discernment and responsible use (Francis 2019). This convergence confirms the thesis that Christian personalism is not merely a theoretical proposition, but a living tradition capable of dialogue with current cultural challenges.

In summary, Christian personalism, reinforced by the humanism of Francis de Sales, appears to be an adequate critical criterion for the digital religiosity of young people. This criterion does not consist in the negation of new forms of religiosity, but in their discernment from the perspective of the integral development of the person. The article has shown that without such grounding, religious formation is vulnerable to subordination to the logic of the media, which leads to the reduction of faith to an affective experience or an element of identity politics. By contrast, the application of a personalist hermeneutic makes it possible to preserve the theological identity of religious formation and opens up space for further research into creative and responsible forms of accompanying young people in the age of digital media.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board / Ethics Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analysed in this study.

AI Tools Declaration: During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used DeepL for language translation and linguistic assistance in preparing the English-language version of the text. The use of DeepL was limited to translation and language-related support and did not involve the formulation of the research problem, methodology, substantive argumentation, analysis, interpretation, or the study's conclusions. The author critically reviewed and verified the translated text and takes full responsibility for the content of this publication.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Attard, Fabio, and Miguel Ángel García, eds. 2018. *Spiritual Accompaniment: An Educational and Spiritual Journey with Young People in the Way of Don Bosco*. Don Bosco Publications.
- Campbell, Heidi A. 2010. *When Religion Meets New Media*. Routledge.
- Campbell, Heidi A. 2021. *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority*. Routledge.
- Campbell, Heidi A., and Pauline Hope Cheong, eds. 2024. *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197549803.001.0001>.
- Campbell, Heidi A., ed. 2013. *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. Routledge.

- Cheong, Pauline Hope, Peter Fischer-Nielsen, Stefan Gelfgren, and Charles Ess, eds. 2012. *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture: Perspectives, Practices and Futures*. Peter Lang.
- Francis de Sales. 1997. *Treatise on the Love of God*. Translated by Henry Benedict Mackey. TAN Books.
- Francis de Sales. 2002. *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Translated and edited by John K. Ryan. Vintage.
- Francis. 2019. *Christus Vivit: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God*. March 25, 2019. [vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html).
- Gale, Joshua. 2024. *How Does Social Media Affect Young People's Faith?* BA (Hons) dissertation, Birmingham Newman University / CYM. cym.ac.uk/assets/files/Josh_Gale.pdf.
- Hjarvard, Stig. 2011. "The Mediatisation of Religion: Theorising Religion, Media and Social Change." *Culture and Religion* 12 (2): 119–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2011.579719>.
- Hjarvard, Stig. 2016. "Mediatization and the Changing Authority of Religion." *Media, Culture & Society* 38 (1): 8–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715615412>.
- Hoover, Stewart M. 2006. *Religion in the Media Age*. Routledge.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2015. *From Jesus to the Internet: A History of Christianity and Media*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Moberg, Marcus, and Sofia Sjö, eds. 2020. *Digital Media, Young Adults and Religion: An International Perspective*. Routledge.
- Mounier, Emmanuel. 1989. *Personalism*. Translated by Philip Mairet. University of Notre Dame Press.
- Nam, Vo Huong. 2023. *Digital Media and Youth Discipleship: Pitfalls and Promise*. Langham Academic.
- Phillips, Peter, Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero, and Jonas Kurlberg. 2019. "Defining Digital Theology: Digital Humanities, Digital Religion and the Particular Work of the CODEC Research Centre and Network." *Open Theology* 5 (1): 29–43. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2019-0003>.
- Słomski, Wojciech. 1998. "Personalistyczna koncepcja wolności Emmanuela Mouniera [The Personalist Concept of Emmanuel Mounier's Freedom]." *Edukacja Filozoficzna* 26: 263–80.
- Słomski, Wojciech. 2008. *Duch personalizmu [The Spirit of Personalism]*. Vizja Press & IT.
- Wojtyła, Karol. 1979. *The Acting Person*. Translated by Andrzej Potocki. Edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. D. Reidel Publishing Company.

From Christian Rock to the Psalms: The Music of 2 Tm 2,3 and Listeners' Religious Lives in an Empirical Study

Od chrześcijańskiego rocka do psalmów: muzyka zespołu 2 Tm 2,3 a życie religijne słuchaczy w świetle badań empirycznych

Artur Chejnowski

Independent Researcher,
Sweden

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1528-6093>

a.chejnowski@gmail.com

Received: 30 Dec 2025

Revised: 2 Apr 2026

Accepted: 15 Jun 2026

Published Online First:
30 Jun 2026

Abstract: This article examines the evangelising activity of the Polish Christian rock band 2 Tm 2,3 and listeners' perceptions of its influence on their religious lives and engagement with Scripture. The study combines a historical and descriptive analysis of the band's development, concerts, recordings, and use of biblical lyrics with the findings of an online survey conducted between 3 January and 23 April 2024. A mixed-format questionnaire comprising 33 items was completed by 285 respondents, with a mean age of 42 years. The survey explored attitudes towards rock music as a means of evangelisation, the reception of the band's biblical lyrics and concerts, and the self-reported influence of its music on engagement with Scripture, prayer, and sacramental life. 90% of respondents knew that the lyrics were based on biblical passages, while 88% expressed a positive assessment of the band's influence on the presence of the Word of God in their everyday lives. Furthermore, 57% reported increased interest in biblical narratives and characters. Respondents also emphasised the musicians' authenticity, witness of faith, professionalism, and the communal character of their concerts. The findings indicate that Christian rock and biblical lyrics can support religious reflection and engagement among listeners. However, because the survey involved a self-selected and predominantly adult audience, the results concern perceived religious influence and should not be generalised to youth religiosity or interpreted as evidence of a causal effect.

Keywords: Christian rock, 2 Tm 2,3, evangelisation through music, biblical lyrics, audience reception, religious life, engagement with Scripture

Abstrakt: Artykuł analizuje działalność ewangelizacyjną polskiego zespołu rocka chrześcijańskiego 2 Tm 2,3 oraz postrzegany przez słuchaczy wpływ jego twórczości na ich życie religijne i kontakt z Pismem Świętym. W opracowaniu połączono historyczno-opisową analizę rozwoju zespołu, jego działalności koncertowej, nagrań i wykorzystywania tekstów biblijnych z wynikami badania ankietowego przeprowadzonego online od 3 stycznia do 23 kwietnia 2024 roku. Kwestionariusz o mieszanej strukturze, obejmujący 33 pytania, wypełniło 285 respondentów, których średni wiek wynosił 42 lata. Badanie dotyczyło postaw wobec rocka jako narzędzia ewangelizacji, recepcji tekstów biblijnych i koncertów zespołu, a także deklarowanego wpływu jego muzyki na kontakt z Pismem Świętym, modlitwę i życie sakramentalne. Dziewięćdziesiąt procent respondentów wiedziało, że teksty utworów opierają się na fragmentach Biblii, natomiast 88% pozytywnie oceniło wpływ zespołu na obecność słowa Bożego w swoim codziennym życiu. Ponadto 57% badanych deklaroowało wzrost zainteresowania narracjami i postaciami biblijnymi. Respondenci podkreślali również autentyczność muzyków, ich świadectwo wiary,



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

profesjonalizm oraz wspólnotowy charakter koncertów. Wyniki wskazują, że chrześcijański rock i teksty biblijne mogą wspierać refleksję religijną i zaangażowanie słuchaczy. Ze względu na samodzielny dobór uczestników oraz przewagę osób dorosłych, rezultaty dotyczą postrzeganego wpływu religijnego i nie powinny być uogólniane na religijność młodzieży ani interpretowane jako dowód związku przyczynowego.

Słowa kluczowe: rock chrześcijański, 2 Tm 2,3, ewangelizacja przez muzykę, teksty biblijne, recepcja odbiorców, życie religijne, kontakt z Pismem Świętym

INTRODUCTION

Since its emergence, rock music has generated considerable debate and controversy. Frequently characterised as a loud and aggressive musical genre, it has exerted an influence on audiences not only in artistic terms but also in social, cultural, and moral dimensions. Rock music and its various subgenres have often been regarded as expressions of the younger generation's rebellion against established social order and traditional values.

Although rock, with all its aesthetic and ideological load, was long perceived as being in conflict with the teachings of the Church, the emergence of the New Evangelization encouraged some Christian artists to reach for this musical form as a means of proclaiming the Gospel.

One study devoted to rock music states that the desire to use this genre for evangelistic purposes is inherently paradoxical. As the author points out, Christian musicians may be authentic witnesses to faith in Jesus Christ, but the music they use is of a different spirit and undermines the devotional nature of their work. "Since 'Christian' rock music has been around for about 20 years, one would expect clear and lasting effects of rock music evangelization" (Schlink 1994, 20). The case of the band 2 Tm 2,3 was therefore selected to examine and verify this claim.

1. ORIGINS OF THE BAND 2 Tm 2,3

The Polish band 2 Tm 2,3 has existed for over twenty-five years. It performs rock music that may be classified as Christian rock. The members of 2 Tm 2,3 openly profess the Christian faith.

1.1. Prologue 2 Tm 2,3

The idea for 2 Tm 2,3 originated in 1996 and was conceived by three musicians: Robert "Litza" Friedrich, Tomasz "Budza" Budzyński, and Dariusz "Maleo" Malejonek.¹ According to Tomasz Budzyński, the establishment of the band was not only "our desire, but also a necessity" (Kowalczyk 1997, 17). This "necessity"

¹ At the time of recording the first album, in addition to the musicians mentioned above, the band included Marcin Pospieszalski, Piotr "Stopa" Żyżelewicz, Tomasz Goehs, Robert Drężek, Jozsko Broda, and Angelika Korszyńska-Górny.

resulted from the musicians' experience of religious conversion² and their desire to proclaim the Good News. The creation of the band caused a stir, as the musicians, known for their hard-hitting music and rock-and-roll lifestyle, decided to establish a band that would speak directly about God (Horubała and Chmiel 1996).

The enigmatic name of the band, "2 Tymoteusz 2,3," emerged from the musicians' personal experience. As Robert recalls, when he and Tomek were "getting an earful," they would call each other and say, "2 Tymoteusz, two, three," as a form of encouragement to persevere in adversity (Horubała and Chmiel 1996). The name refers to a verse from the Second Letter of St. Paul to Timothy: "Bear your share of hardship along with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (USCCB 2011, 2 Tim. 2:3).³

The band soon faced further controversy they had sparked. This new chapter in their careers did not mean abandoning their previous musical style. Instead, 2 Tymoteusz 2,3 decided to reconcile rock music with Christianity. The musicians wanted to speak the musical language that had become part of their lives: "Jesus (...) didn't teach me to speak the language of hard rock music so that I could withdraw from it and learn something new (...) I'm going with this language to people who speak the same way" (Robert Friedrich) (Koziczyński 1997, 52).

The performers repeatedly addressed this fact in interviews. "Music itself is an empty form into which you can insert specific content" (Tomasz Budzyński). "Our album is a new language. You have to speak a new language to be understood in today's times, especially by young people" (Robert Friedrich) (Kowalczyk 1997, 18). "In the Gospels, we read that when God said, 'This is my beloved Son,' people thought it was a thunderclap from heaven. If God can use thunder, why not loud rock music?" (Darek Malejonek) (Nowak 2007). The artists treat rock music as a form of expression that aligns with the language of the younger generation and does not have to be tied to the political and cultural ideals on which they grew up. "We do not engage in any political activities, because 'our kingdom is not of this world,'" commented Tomasz Budzyński in an interview (Leszczyński 1999).

The musicians decided that the source of their lyrics would be quotations from the Holy Scriptures, occasionally adapted to fit the musical composition. For some, this idea represented an attempt to combine elements that should not be combined, namely, heavy guitar riffs, powerful drums, and emotional vocals with the Word of God. For others, however, "Tymoteusz" became a discovery, communicating the Word of God in a form they found accessible and meaningful.

The lyrics of 2 Tymoteusz 2,3 have a life-giving character. The music seeks only to serve the power of God's Word. The musicians wanted to avoid the danger of misinterpretation or a weakening of the message. "So we decided to convey the Word in its purest form. (...) I don't want, I don't see a better word than the one written in Holy Scripture" (Robert Friedrich) (Wysocki 2000). According

² Interviews with the musicians can be found in the bestselling book (Jakimowicz 1997b) or the article (Jakimowicz 1997a).

³ The abbreviations also include the alternate names "Tymoteusz" or "Tymek."

to Tomasz Budzyński: "Some Psalms are simply created to be performed in this style" (Nowak 2007). The choice of biblical passages was reflected the universality of the truths contained in Holy Scripture. For centuries, the Bible has accompanied humanity in moments of joy, suffering, and the search for hope. "We sing psalms, texts that have existed for 3,000 years and concern every generation that has lived on earth during that time. And now it turns out that my life is also inscribed in these psalms, that I find myself in them and can sing them" (Leszczyński 1999). "When you realize you're a sinner, it's not a happy time. Then you have to cry out for help, for God to have mercy. We don't sing psalms because they're beautiful and have literary value, but because they speak about our lives" (Robert Friedrich) (Nowak 2008).

2 Tymoteusz 2,3 has often faced criticism for its perceived lack of respect for the Word of God. "For people of the Church, it can be too harsh, and for those outside it, too pious" (Robert Drężek) (Rakowska 2014). The disapproval expressed by some members of the clergy stemmed, among other things, from their perception of rock music as "the work of Satan." For others, it was unacceptable for the Word of God to be expressed in such a forceful musical form. "I think it was a bit of a shock for people at first, because how could you play such music? This music is usually associated with something else, with a message of darkness. And then it turns out it's just a form, a vehicle" (Darek Malejonek) (Bzducha 2018). For fans unrelated to Christianity but appreciating the artists' musical artistry, Tymoteusz's songs were overly pious, which, in their opinion, diminished their appreciation of the band's music. The band was also occasionally booed and verbally abused for its message (Perluński 1997, 29).

In an effort to reconcile the Bible and rock music, there was a clear attempt to place "Tymoteusz" within the category of so-called Christian rock. This label classified the musical genre and gave it a specific thematic scope, distancing it from the negative associations traditionally attached to rock music. The musicians of 2 Tymoteusz 2,3 themselves were (and still remain) opposed to such categorisation of their work. According to the musicians, this label discourages many young people from engaging with the band and automatically excludes it from their sphere of interest (Jakimowicz 1997b, 35).

The musicians insist that their work should not be categorised. The music they perform certainly does not fit the definition of liturgical music. However, its value in proclaiming the Good News and its evangelising function cannot be denied. "Tymoteusz" enters the world of the young generation and proclaims the Word of God where, under ordinary circumstances, it would have no place. This has opened up a new, broad horizon for evangelisation. Drummer Beata Kozak aptly expressed this idea: "There are certainly many young people who can be brought closer to God and others through music. Jesus once spoke to fishermen, but today we have rebellious youth to whom we need to offer something. (...) In Tymoteusz, we sing psalms, and they are very warmly received. So I think evangelisation through music has its justification and is effective" (Bialik 1999).

The musicians want their listeners to become anchored in the Church, and what they do is intended to be a hook that can initiate this process. "We've put content from the Holy Scriptures into this form. People love the music we play. That's the hook, that's why they come," the artists comment. This form of evangelisation creates a counterweight to the secularised world, which constantly proclaims that there is no God and that only money and pleasure matter in life.

1.2. Concert activity

An important setting for the evangelising activity of "Tymoteusz" is its concerts. Robert Friedrich said that he enjoys performing at concerts where admission is open to everyone. This allows the Word of God to reach those on the margins. "The Good News must be brought where it is lacking. I've noticed that at such open concerts, people wearing T-shirts with pentagrams are sitting somewhere in the bushes. I assure you – they have the biggest ears" (Koziczyński 1999). In another interview, Robert elaborates on the presence of 2 Tm 2,3 at Przystanek Jezus and Przystanek Woodstock. "Why carry wood to the forest? Just like we sing: 'Tell it to the poor, tell it to the suffering.' Those at Przystanek Jezus have a lot of Good News. I identify more with the people standing in front of the stage who are suffering and seeking meaning in life through music. (...) Many people who come to Woodstock are searching for meaning" (Majchrzyk 2017).

From the beginning, "Tymoteusz" performed in small towns and in large cities as part of its concert tours. Interestingly, despite belonging to what some regarded as a "disreputable" musical genre, the concerts were organised by priests, parish communities, and church institutions. Over time, 2 Tm 2,3 also appeared on major festival stages. In 2006, "Tymoteusz" performed in Kostrzyn nad Odrą during the Przystanek Woodstock Festival, where the band was very well received.⁴ Tomasz Budziński recalls the concert: "The media write that Woodstock is attended mainly by an anti-clerical audience. These are myths. There are ordinary people there, searching for their place in life and for hope" (Jakimowicz 2006).

To present the full scope of the band's stage activity, it is also worth mentioning the well-known acoustic concerts performed during Lent. Previously known rock compositions acquired a completely different aesthetic (Gurdek and Pospieszalski 2008). Pieces that had previously been associated primarily with stage performances could now be performed within church buildings and serve as musical settings for prayer with the Word of God.⁵

2 Tymoteusz 2,3 concerts have always attracted a wide range of audiences, from metalheads to nuns. The concerts are attended by both professed believers

⁴ The full concert recording, made available by the festival organiser, is available on YouTube (KręciolaTV n.d.).

⁵ The difference between Tymoteusz's acoustic and rock-oriented side is demonstrated by the Lenten concert "Każda rzeczy ma swoim czas" (Every Thing Has Its Time), which took place at the Polish Theater in Poznań on March 11, 2008, and was recorded by Polish Television.

and non-believers, including fans of the original bands from which the members of “Tymoteusz” came, eager to meet their musical idols. “I like the band’s line-up. The musicians come from bands I grew up listening to. I also think the message is interesting, although I don’t fully embrace it,” Paweł said. There are also many people who, despite not knowing the band beforehand, attend out of curiosity. “When I heard about 2 Tm 2,3, I boarded the train with my friends to the concert. This is my second Tymoteusz concert. I was intrigued by the idea that they play to religious texts” (Kaczorowski 2006, 6). Over the years, parents have also begun bringing the next generation of fans – their children.

Audience behaviour during concerts varies. Some listeners remain silent, while others sing along. There are also those who organise a pogo dance in front of the stage (Matera 1999). “The only difference you can experience is that during 2 Tm 2,3 concerts, we sometimes pray together with those standing in front of the stage. We all say the ‘Our Father,’ for example” (Robert Friedrich) (Kaliszewski 2000). The band’s two concert formats do not mean that its fans can be divided into two groups: “acoustic” and “rock” (Gurdek and Pospieszalski 2008).

The band’s long-term engagement with the biblical text has also influenced the artists themselves. When asked about her experience, Beata Kozak replied: “Definitely! I look at life and the reality around me completely differently today. It was only on the Neocatechumenal Way that I truly matured. For me, these performances are a great blessing” (Bialik 1999). As Tomasz Budzyński emphasises, his relationship with the Word of God has changed – it has become deeper and more mature. He also began to understand more fully the texts performed by the band (Koziczyński 1999). Robert Friedrich likewise emphasised the connection between singing the Word of God and his own life: “When I sing ‘Marana Tha,’ I really want God to finally come and help me, because I can’t cope with many things here; I’m weak” (Kaliszewski 2000).

As the artists report, audiences attending their concerts are often deeply moved by what they hear. Some say that they prayed authentically as never before and experienced a true sense of community (Nowak 2007). “Sometimes people are moved by what they heard at a concert, but the point is that when they return home, they don’t lose that spirit and aren’t the same as before,” says Tomek (Matera 1999). Some listeners also share with the musicians that, after listening to the album, they began reading Holy Scripture, started to pray, or received the sacrament of confession (Perluński 1997, 28–29; Kasjaniuk 2013; Galek 2019).

1.3. Studio Work

A fundamental characteristic of 2 Tm 2,3 is that the band has remained far removed from commercialisation and has not followed current fashions or trends in the music industry. Each album is regarded as the fruit of God’s inspiration.

This (positive) approach is related to several factors. The first is the authenticity of the musicians. Tymoteusz is a band born out of a heartfelt desire to share what

God has done in the members' lives. The strength of this motivation is reflected in their consistent, committed, professional, and passionate approach to their work. As the musicians have repeatedly stated, they follow the Neocatechumenal Way, which leads them to a deeper relationship with God and renews their faith, protecting them from the danger of instrumentalising the Word of God for artistic purposes.

With a few exceptions, 2 Tymoteusz 2,3 has never attracted significant media attention. The band has usually been mentioned in connection with the release of new albums, participation in major concerts, or interviews presenting it as an alternative musical phenomenon.

Although largely absent from the mainstream media, the band's albums have received favourable reviews from critics. This is reflected in the band's nominations for the Fryderyk Music Award in the "Album of the Year – Hard & Heavy" category for its first three albums, as well as the award received for its second album (Babuchowski 2015).

To date, 2 Tm 2,3 has released seven studio albums: *Przyjdź* (1997), *2Tm2,3* (1999), *Pascha 2000* (2000), *888* (2006), *Dementi* (2008), *Źródło* (2015), and *Svrsvm (Sursum) Corda* (2024).⁶ The band's discography also includes four live albums: *Propaganda Dei* (2004), *Koncert* (2006), *Koncert w teatrze* (2009), and *Słowo* (2018), as well as the remix album *Pascha 2000 Tour*. For the purposes of this article, the following discussion is limited to the band's studio albums.

Although all the albums were released under the name 2 Tm 2,3, they represent a diverse musical style. Alongside heavy guitar riffs, they incorporate elements of reggae, funk, punk, and folk music (thanks to Jozsko Broda's traditional flutes), as well as the operatic vocals of Angelika Korszyńska-Górny. Consequently, Tymoteusz's repertoire is highly diverse. The band's sound is also shaped by changes in its line-up, which varied depending on the availability of musicians and the character of each recording project (Lerch 1999, 40). The selection of biblical passages is not based on literary criteria. "Tomek often thanks God and sings thanksgiving psalms. Maleo enters into mysterious passages: 'who is this that emerges from the desert?' etc. However, I like to shout one slogan: 'save me, open up, efatha...'" (Robert Friedrich) (Koziczyński 2006, 24). Each album constitutes a form of emotional expression of the musicians' spiritual experience. The albums were created at different stages of the band's journey within the Church community, which explains the noticeable differences between them (Gurdek and Pospieszalski 2008). For example, on the first album, *Przyjdź*, the lyrics are "teaching and a signpost (...) It is an expression of gratitude for what God has done in our lives" (Darek Malejonek) (Kowalczyk 1996, 13). By contrast, *888* has a strongly apocalyptic character because, as Tomasz Budzyński explained, "I feel that its time has come" (Babuchowski 2015). The fifth album opened a new chapter in the history of 2 Tm 2,3. The musicians decided to record an entirely acoustic

⁶ During the work on this section, three singles were released announcing the upcoming album *Svrsvm Corda* (Premiere February 24, 2024). Therefore, it will not be included in the research section. Furthermore, due to publishing restrictions, only the studio albums will be described.

album, which later diversified their concert repertoire with new arrangements (Urny 2008, 20). *Dementi* can be described as a cry to God filled with longing, nostalgia, and hope. “The psalms exorcise. They say that there is a God who wants to help you, that man is not left alone in the darkness, that there is light” (Tomasz Budzyński) (Nowak 2008). The album *Svrsvm (Sursum) Corda*, summarising thirty years of life in the Neocatechumenal community, encourages listeners: “Lift up your hearts, lift up your heads, the day of salvation is getting near” (Kozicznyński 2024, 22).

The table presents biblical passages used in the seven studio albums released by 2 Tm 2,3. The columns correspond to individual albums and list the scriptural references incorporated into their lyrics. Psalms appear most frequently across the discography, while passages from Isaiah, the Pauline letters, and Deuteronomy are also used repeatedly.

Table 1. Biblical passages used in the seven studio albums of 2 Tm 2,3

The table presents biblical passages used in the seven studio albums released by 2 Tm 2,3. The columns correspond to individual albums and list the scriptural references incorporated into their lyrics. Psalms appear most frequently across the discography, while passages from Isaiah, the Pauline letters, and Deuteronomy are also used repeatedly.

<i>Przyjdź</i>	<i>2Tm2,3</i>	<i>Pascha 2000</i>	<i>888</i>	<i>Dementi</i>	<i>Źródło</i>	<i>Svrsvm Corda</i>
Isa 42:1–7	Deut 6:4–9	Isa 61:2–3	Matt 25:35–46	Eccl 3:1–15	Ps 19	Gal 2:20
Rev 22:20	Isa 49:1–16	Ps 40	Rev 18	Ps 63	Matt 6:24–33	Gen 22:1–18
Phil 2:5–11	Ps 13	Ps 122	Rev 19:11–20	Ps 108	Ps 86:1–4	Ps 27
Rom 10:9	Isa 25:1–8	Deut 6:4–9	Ezek 36:24–28	Hos 11:1–11	Ps 100	Ps 143
Ps 8	Isa 45:8	John 13:34	Ps 108	Ps 116	Josh 24:2–13	John 19:34
Rom 8:35–39	John 3:8	Ps 23	1 Cor 13	Ps 6	Lam 3:1–33	Exod 17:9–14
Dan 3:57–90	Ps 34	Isa 11:6–9	Ps 22	Ps 40	Song 4:8	Ps 90
Jer 20:7	Ps 103	Isa 16	Ps 118	Ps 131	Deut 6:4–9	John 21:17
1 John 4:7–21	Ps 18	Luke 18:15–23	Isa 9:1–5	Ps 137	Ps 22	Rom 8
1 John 5:1–3	Isa 53:2ff	1 Cor 15:54ff	Judg 5:1ff	Ps 143		2 Cor 4:7–18
Song 8:6	Matt 26:42	Dan 6:17–28	Isa 35:4	Ps 53		2 Cor 5:14–17
Luke 1:68–79	Rev 7:12–14	Ps 130	Ps 63	Ps 42		Matt 28:20
Ps 138	Song 8:5–7		Matt 24:13	Ps 118		Rev 12:1–17
Luke 1:46–49	Phil 2:1–11					Isa 45:8
Mark 4:34–41	Ps 51					Ps 150
Deut 6:4						

Source: Own study.

The summary indicates that listeners to “Tymoteusz” have the opportunity to hear passages from both the Old and New Testaments. The most frequently used biblical books are the Psalms, which constitute more than one-third of all the texts, followed by the Book of Isaiah and the Letters of St. Paul. Interestingly, the *Shema Yisrael* passage from Deuteronomy 6:4–9 appears four times. The passages from Holy Scripture present a picture of God who loves humanity, cares for it, teaches it, and, in His mercy, rescues it from suffering. In turn, as recipients of this love, people are called to listen to the voice of the Creator and to praise and

worship Him for His mighty works and for the saving work of Jesus Christ. The texts also address the human condition, humanity's sinfulness, human longings, and the hope placed in God.

2. THE SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECT OF THE WORK OF 2 Tm 2,3

The long-standing presence of 2 Tm 2,3 on the Polish music scene has enabled the band to build a loyal audience for whom the songs performed by "Tymoteusz" have become a permanent part of their music collections. Numerous concerts have also allowed the band to reach a broader audience, many of whom first encountered its music by chance and subsequently remained faithful listeners.

The audience of 2 Tm 2,3 experienced the message of the Word of God in a musical style that differs from traditional forms of church music. Therefore, questions concerning the work of 2 Tm 2,3 should not focus solely on its artistic merits but should also address its role in the religious lives of its listeners and its potential impact on their faith.

2.1. Survey

The purpose of this study was to explore opinions on the role of music in people's lives, the existence of a rock band using quotations from Holy Scripture, and the impact of this type of music on religious life.

The survey was conducted between 3 January and 23 April 2024 using an online questionnaire. More than 1,000 individuals were reached, of whom 285 completed the questionnaire.⁷ The questionnaire had a mixed format and consisted of 33 items, including open-ended, semi-open-ended, closed-ended, and Likert-scale questions. The survey was divided into several sections. The first contained general questions concerning music. The questions relating to "Tymoteusz" were divided into two parts. The first focused on 2 Tymoteusz 2,3 as an artistic project, while the second enabled participants to express their opinions on the influence of the band's work on religious life and their relationship with the Bible.

Of the 285 respondents, 183 (64%) were men and 102 (36%) were women. Their marital status was as follows: married – 72%; single – 21%; consecrated/clergy – 6%; single/other – 1%. The youngest respondent was born in 2006, the oldest in 1955. The mean age of the respondents was 42 years.

2.1.1. Introductory Issues

Music has become an inseparable part of human life. It is therefore not surprising that many people consider music to be an important part of their lives. The respondents expressed a similar view.

⁷ Data processing only applies to full responses.

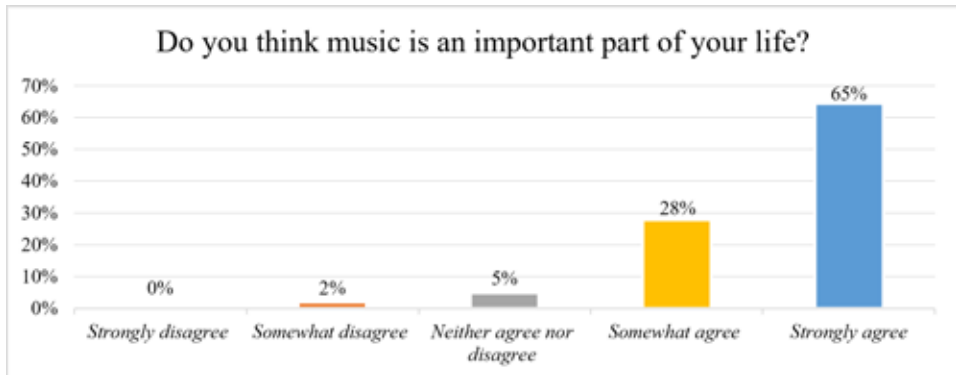


Figure 1. Respondents' opinions on the importance of music in their lives

Source: Own study.

The turbulent history of rock music has given rise to many stereotypes, including the belief that it conveys a demonic message which, by its very nature, disqualifies it as a tool for evangelization. The results of the following question reflect the persistence of this belief.

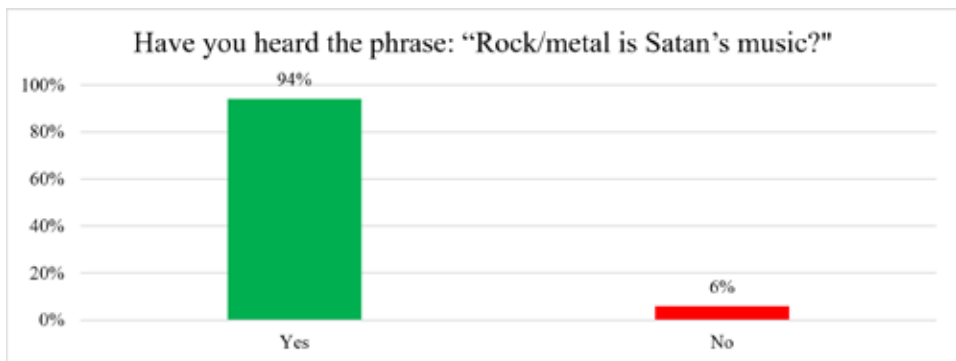


Figure 2. Familiarity with the stereotype that rock and metal are "Satan's music"

Source: Own study.

As we know, a common belief in society does not necessarily mean that it is accepted as one's own. The statement that "rock is Satan's music" was often repeated by people who neither included this type of music among their musical preferences nor knew this musical environment firsthand.

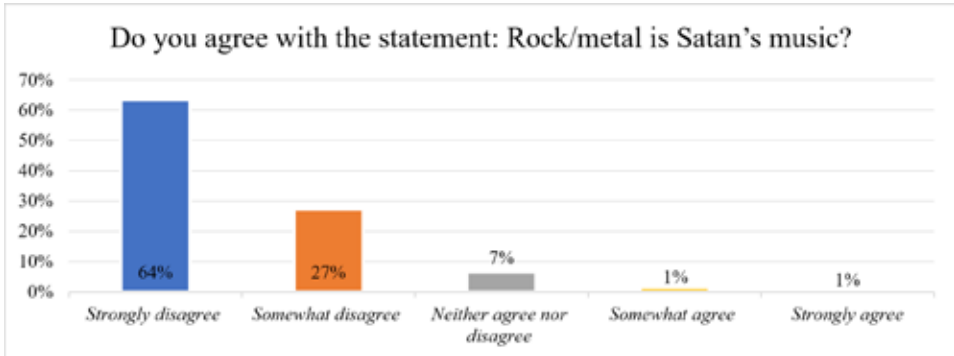


Figure 3. Respondents' agreement with the statement that rock and metal are "Satan's music"
Source: Own study.

The responses above indicate that the prevailing stereotype does not reflect the actual opinions of the respondents. It is true that many bands performing this genre of music employ diabolical imagery, symbols, lyrics, and stage personas. However, such generalisations are unfair both to the artists and to their fans.

In addition to the repertoire they perform, rock musicians' fans are also interested in the artists' private lives. In previous decades, access to such information was limited. However, new forms of communication have enabled listeners to obtain this type of information more easily.

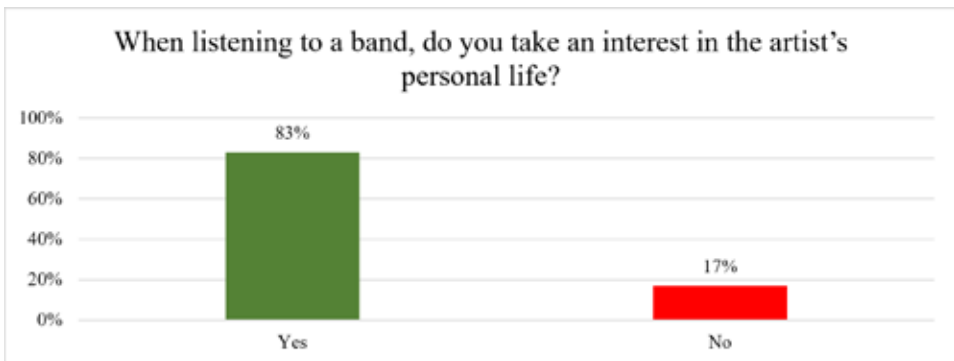


Figure 4. Respondents' interest in musicians' personal lives
Source: Own study.

Artists are not merely stars or idols but are also perceived as role models who influence the behaviour, attitudes, and even the political and moral views of their audiences. In the case of evangelistic groups, this phenomenon has a positive dimension. It requires authenticity, that is, consistency between the values promoted on stage and the artists' personal lives. A lack of such consistency would suggest an instrumental approach to religion.

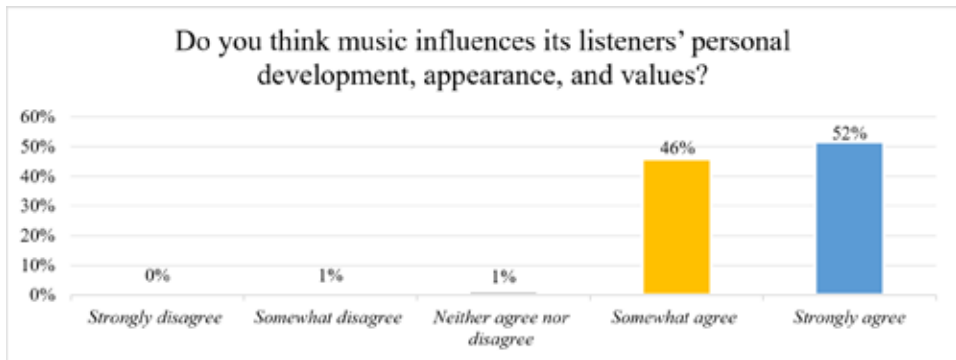


Figure 5. Perceived influence of music on listeners' personal development, appearance, and values
Source: Own study.

The public awareness of the impact of music on people is also reflected in ongoing research on this phenomenon. Suffice it to mention the increasingly widespread use of music as a therapeutic tool, known as music therapy (Stachyra 2022).

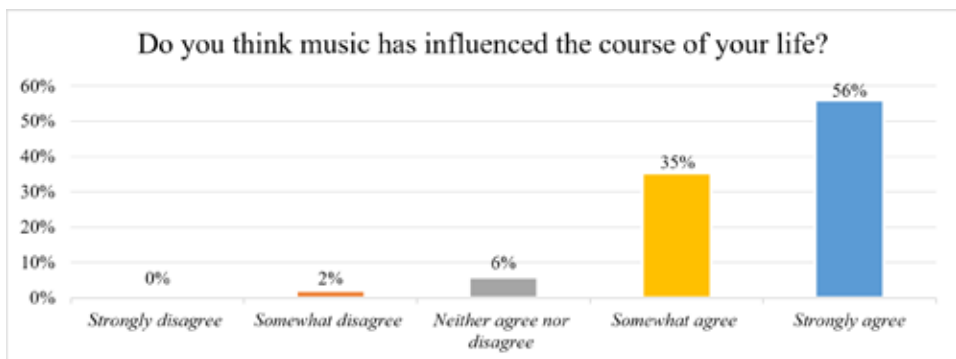


Figure 6. Perceived influence of music on the course of respondents' lives
Source: Own study.

More than half of the respondents confirmed that music has a significant influence on shaping their personal lives. The results also demonstrate the importance of the music people listen to on a daily basis. They further serve as a reminder to parents to take an interest in the music their children listen to and, in doing so, become familiar with the messages and values that shape young people's lives.

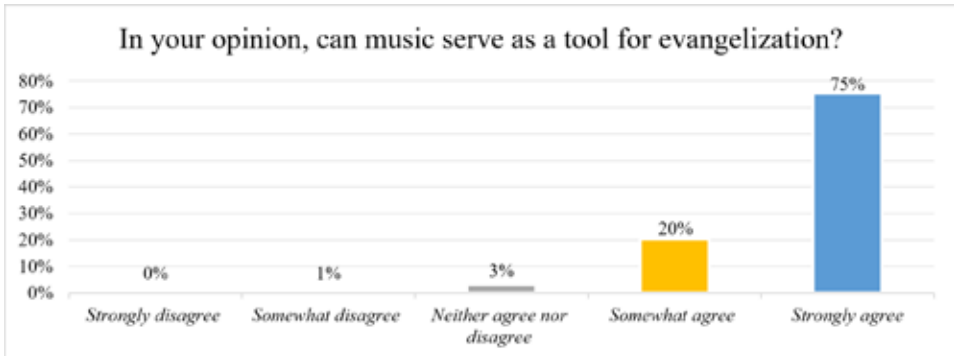


Figure 7. Music as a tool for evangelisation

Source: Own study.

According to 75% of the respondents, the educational value of music allows it to be regarded as a tool for evangelization that can influence spiritual life. The practice of Church communities inviting such bands to perform may also be seen as evidence of this evangelizing potential. Bands performing popular music with an evangelizing message are generally accepted. However, doubts arise when such bands perform genres regarded as aggressive and capable of evoking negative emotions, such as rock music.

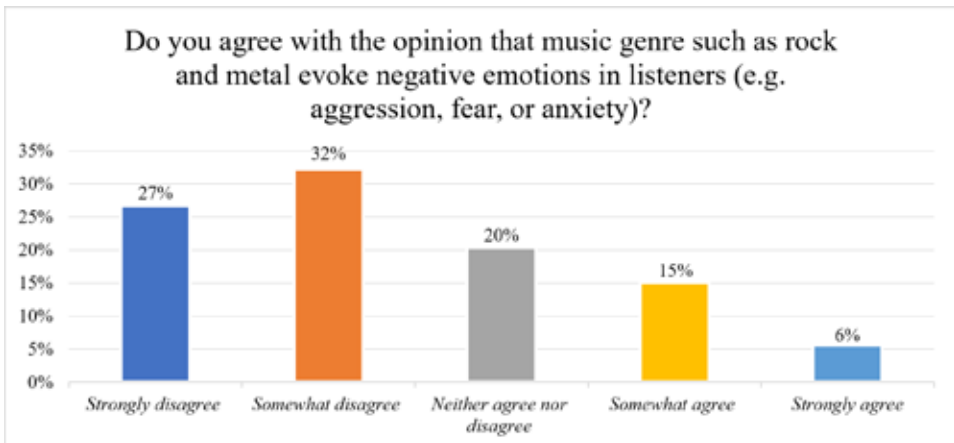


Figure 8. Perceived negative emotional effects of rock and metal music

Source: Own study.

The results obtained indicate greater diversity than those observed in the previous questions. However, the vast majority of respondents do not associate the musical genres mentioned in the question with increased feelings of aggression, fear, or anxiety. Secondary media reports have linked metal fandom with intelligence, emotional regulation, and positive online community language

(Chojnacka 2019; Scarlett 2021), while qualitative research has described flow and emotion-channeling among metal musicians during live performance (Kaltwasser Hamilton et al. 2019). These sources do not establish that listening to metal causes higher intelligence, well-being, or happiness.

2.1.2. 2 Tymoteusz 2,3 – A Musical Project

After answering the introductory questions, the respondents proceeded to questions concerning 2 Tymoteusz 2,3 as a musical project. The formation of a band performing biblical verses accompanied by rock music caused a stir among fans of the genre.

The responses indicate that the average age at which respondents began listening to “Tymoteusz” was 17. As many as 90% of them were aware that the band’s lyrics were based on passages from Holy Scripture.

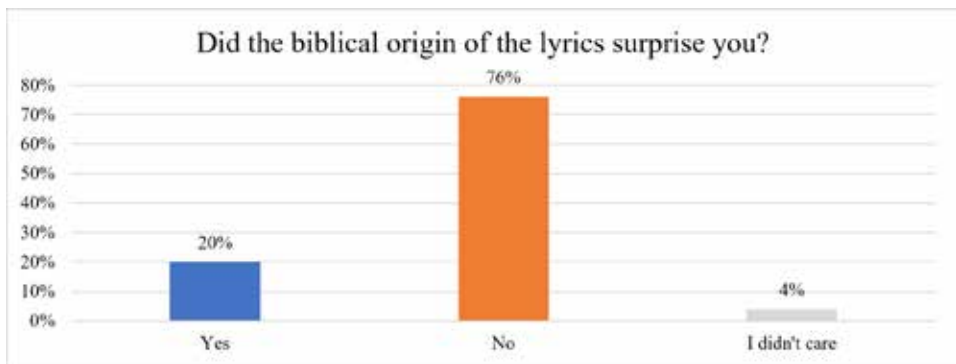


Figure 9. Respondents’ reactions to the biblical origins of 2 Tm 2,3 lyrics

Source: Own study.

The biblical origins of the songs came as a surprise to 20% of the respondents. The comments provided in response to this question indicate that this was generally perceived as a positive experience. For example, combining the Word of God with rock music was regarded as a radical way of proclaiming the Good News, prompting profound reflection.

The popularity of “Tymoteusz” is also reflected in attendance at the band’s concerts. Concert tours and festival performances attracted considerable interest from audiences, who, over time, formed a community gathered around this evangelising initiative.

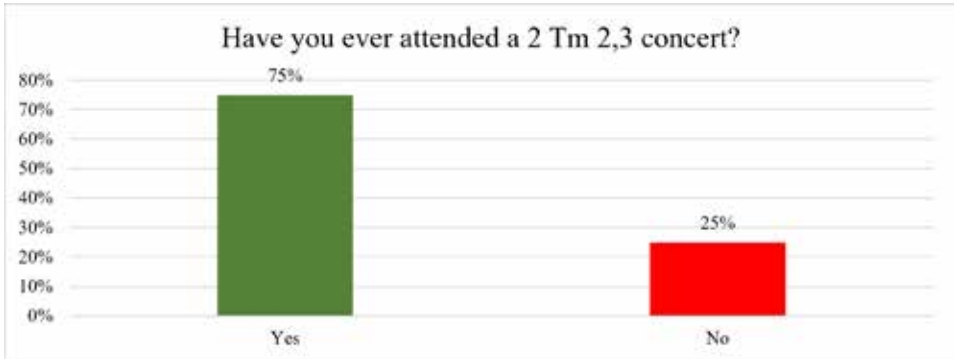


Figure 10. Attendance at 2 Tm 2,3 concerts

Source: Own study.

Despite this, 25% of the respondents gave a negative answer. This may be due to the fact that the band has significantly reduced its concert activity in recent years. During the first years of its recording career, the release of new albums was accompanied by concert tours promoting them. The release of the album *Svrsvm Corda* (2024) marked the band's return to touring. Therefore, once the current tour has concluded, the proportion of negative responses may decrease.

When asked about their memories of attending a concert, the respondents most frequently highlighted the positive, non-aggressive atmosphere, the strong gospel message, the professionalism of the musicians, audience participation (e.g. singing together), the prayer after the concert, the contact between the artists and their fans, and the musicians' authenticity. For many, the concert was a spiritual experience characterised by prayer and a sense of community. The respondents also emphasised that the concerts featured elements typical of rock performances, such as pogo dancing and stage diving.

The lack of promotion in the traditional media led to the development of alternative ways of promoting "Tymoteusz." Figure 11 presents the circumstances in which the respondents first encountered 2 Tm 2,3.

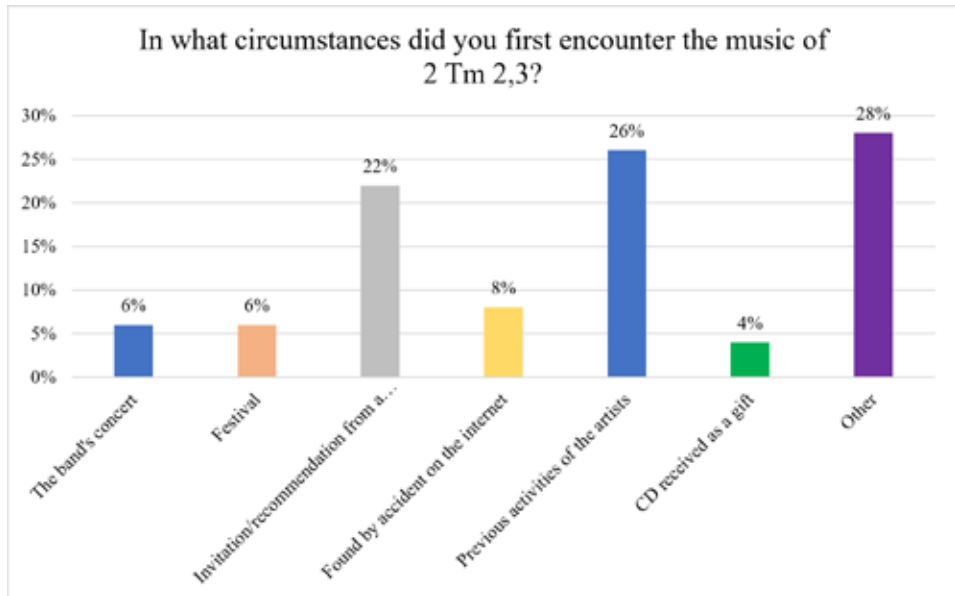


Figure 11. Circumstances in which respondents first encountered the music of 2 Tm 2,3

Source: Own study.

Of the seven response options, the respondents most frequently selected three. One natural characteristic of fans is their interest in the future projects of their favourite artists. This is also evident in the case of 2 Tm 2,3, as 26% of the respondents first discovered the band's music in this way. The fans themselves also played a significant role in promoting 2 Tm 2,3. Through personal recommendations and active promotion (e.g. inviting others to concerts or giving the band's albums as gifts), they helped "Tymoteusz" reach an increasingly wider audience.

The comments provided under the "Other" category included evangelistic events, television, borrowing a cassette or CD, and becoming familiar with the band because older siblings, cousins, or parents listened to 2 Tm 2,3. More than half of the respondents (56%) had taken someone else to a concert (e.g. a child, spouse, or friend).

The next two survey questions concerned the respondents' preferences. The first asked about their favourite album by "Tymoteusz."⁸

⁸ The survey did not include the album *Svrsvm Corda* as it was published before its release.

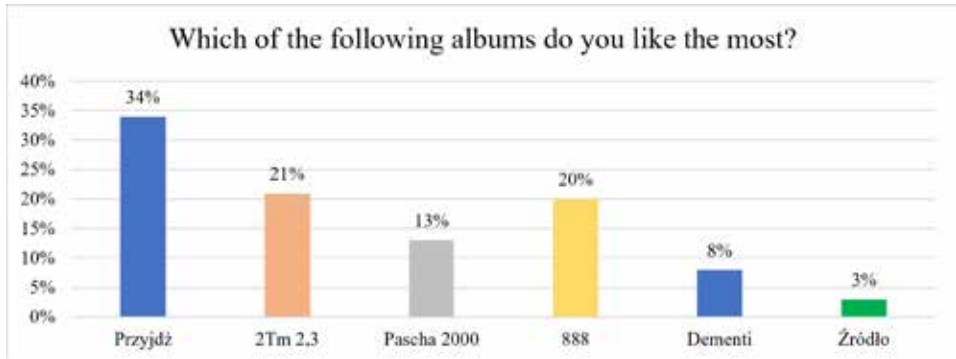


Figure 12. Respondents' favourite studio albums by 2 Tm 2,3

Source: Own study.

More than one-third of the respondents chose 2 Tm 2,3's first album, *Przyjdź*, as their favourite. The band's second and fourth studio albums were also very popular, receiving almost the same number of responses. In the comments accompanying this question, the respondents pointed out how difficult it was to make a clear choice. Some emphasised that they did not have a single favourite album but rather favourite songs from each of them. This observation supports the inclusion of the following question, which asked the respondents to identify their favourite songs by the band. Each respondent could select their top five songs.

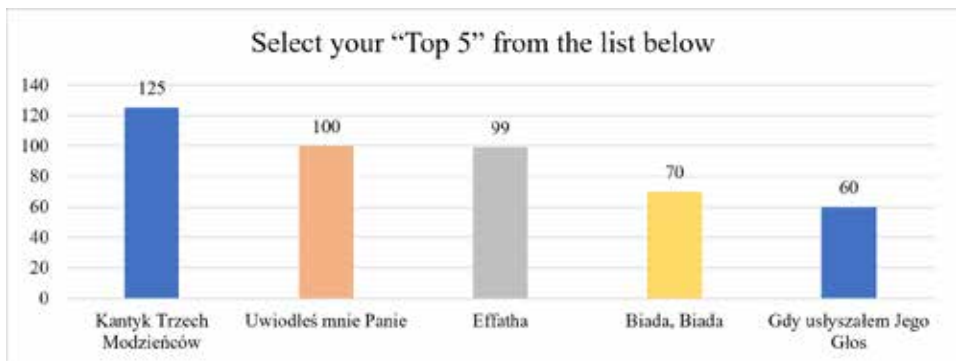


Figure 13. Respondents' favourite songs by 2 Tm 2,3

Source: Own study.

The chart above shows the five most frequently selected songs: "Kantyk Trzech Młodzieńców," "Uwiodłeś mnie Panie," "Effatha," "Biada, Biada," and "Gdy usłyszałem Jego głos."

The second part of the questionnaire concerning 2 Tm 2,3 focused on the respondents and the relationship between their religious lives and the work of "Tymoteusz." In the first question, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of interest in Holy Scripture before they began listening to 2 Tm 2,3.

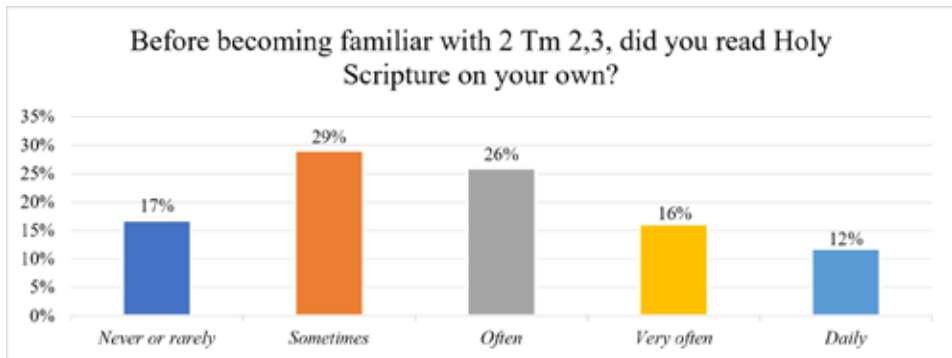


Figure 14. Frequency of respondents' Bible reading before becoming familiar with 2 Tm 2,3
Source: Own study.

An analysis of the responses reveals diverse approaches to reading the Bible. The largest group consisted of respondents who “sometimes” or “Never or rarely” read the Word of God (46%). Nevertheless, it is encouraging that 28% of the respondents reported reading Holy Scripture “daily” or “very often.”

As we read in Isaiah 55,11: “So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; My word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.” Can the proclamation of the Word of God by “Tymoteusz,” therefore, become an opportunity for conversion?

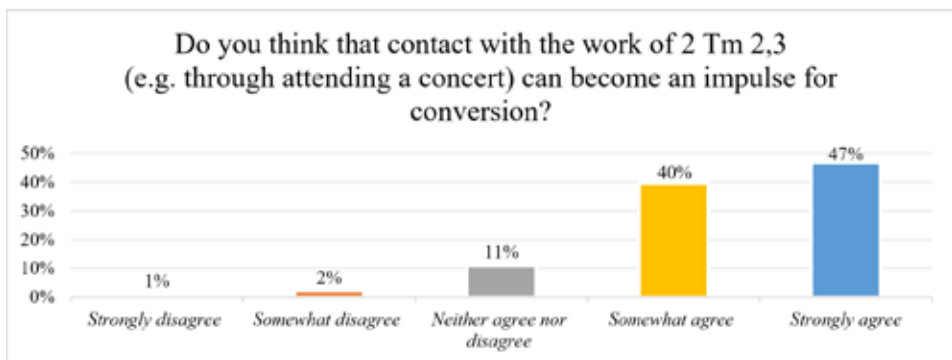


Figure 15. 2 Tm 2,3 as a potential impulse for conversion
Source: Own study.

The majority of the respondents expressed the belief that 2 Tm 2,3 can serve as a catalyst for deepening one's religious life. It was therefore appropriate to ask about their personal experiences in this regard.

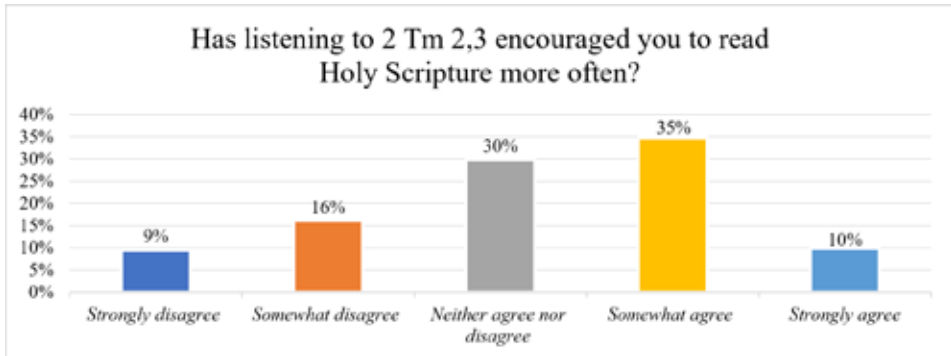


Figure 16. Perceived influence of 2 Tm 2,3 on the frequency of Bible reading

Source: Own study.

As many as 30% of the respondents were unable to determine whether there was a relationship between listening to 2 Tymoteusz 2,3 and the frequency with which they read the Bible. A clear relationship was reported by 10% of the respondents, while a possible relationship was indicated by 35%. The “Strongly disagree” response remains difficult to interpret, as it may reflect two different situations: a negative one (no previous contact with the Bible and no subsequent change) or a positive one (frequent or daily Bible reading and therefore no need for further change).

Repeated listening to the songs leads listeners to memorise their lyrics. This mechanism also applies in the case of 2 Tm 2,3, as confirmed by the respondents. However, it is worth emphasising the additional benefit of memorising passages from Holy Scripture.

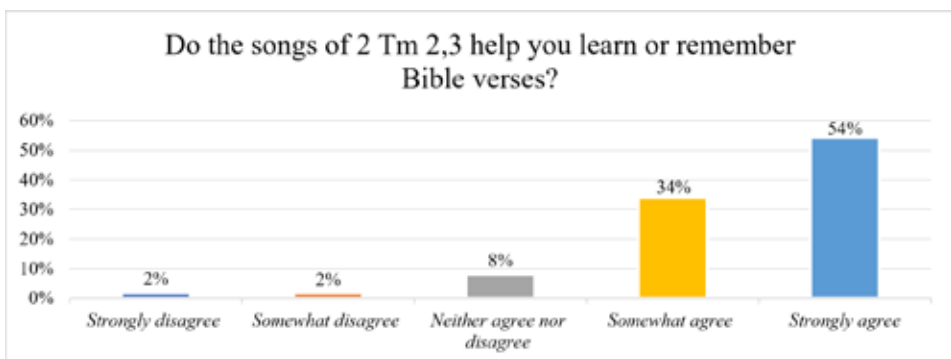


Figure 17. Perceived role of 2 Tm 2,3 songs in learning and remembering Bible verses

Source: Own study.

The respondents were also asked about their increased interest in the biblical narratives, events, and characters appearing in the passages used in the songs.

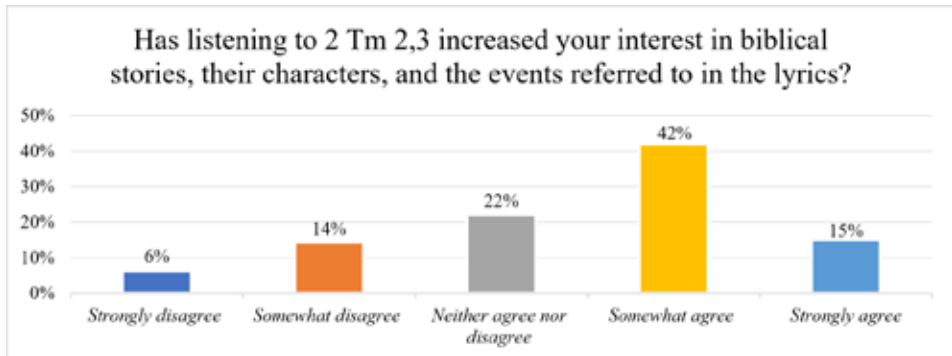


Figure 18. Perceived influence of 2 Tm 2,3 on interest in biblical narratives, characters, and events
Source: Own study.

The responses, ranging from “Somewhat agree” (42%) to “Strongly agree” (15%), suggest that listening to “Tymoteusz” can stimulate listeners’ interest and encourage them to deepen their knowledge of the Bible.

Another positive effect of listening to 2 Tm 2,3 is a more frequent presence of the Word of God in everyday life.

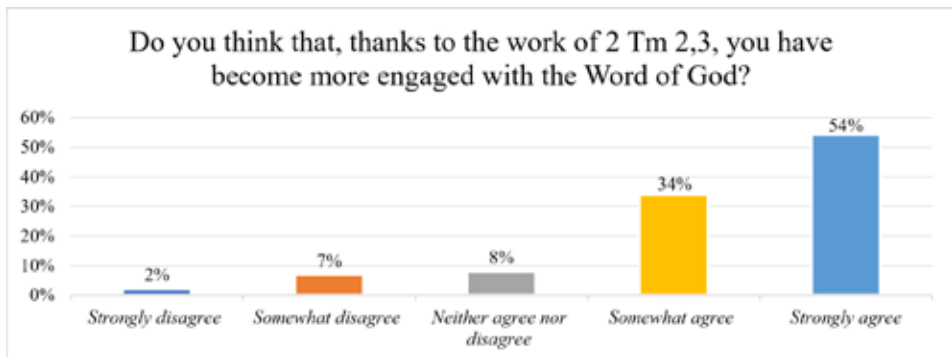


Figure 19. Perceived influence of 2 Tm 2,3 on engagement with the Word of God
Source: Own study.

54% of the respondents clearly indicated that 2 Tm 2,3 had positively influenced their relationship with Holy Scripture. When combined with the second most frequently selected response, which also expressed a positive opinion, this gives a total of 88% positive responses.

The final question concerning personal experience addressed the respondents’ prayer and sacramental life.

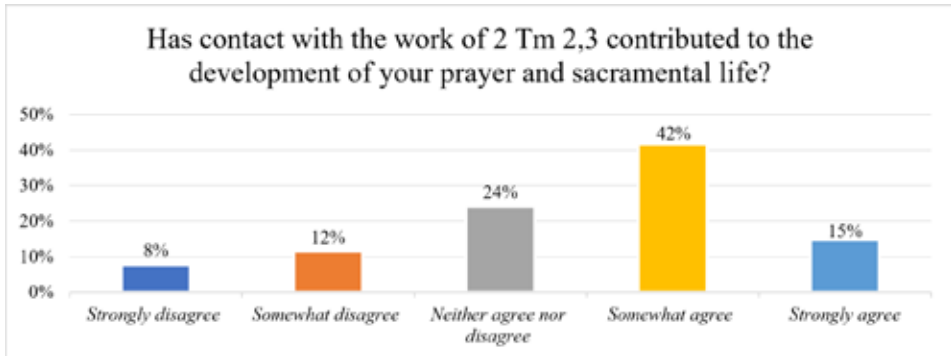


Figure 20. Perceived influence of 2 Tm 2,3 on prayer and sacramental life

Source: Own study.

40% of the respondents gave positive responses to this question and indicated a relationship between the development of their prayer and sacramental life and listening to “Tymoteusz.” For 15% of the respondents, this form of proclaiming the Word of God had significantly contributed to this development. Nearly one-quarter of the respondents had no opinion on the matter, while 8% did not perceive such a relationship.

When asked about the aspects that distinguish 2 Tm 2,3 from other bands, the respondents most frequently pointed to the musicians’ authenticity and their witness of faith, which they considered essential to performing this type of music.

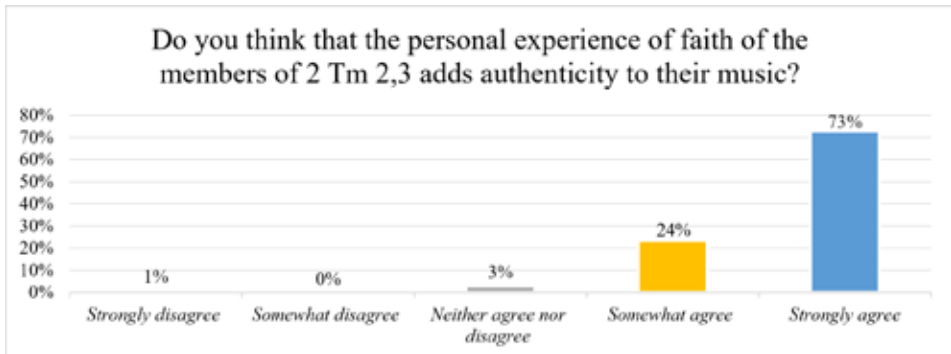


Figure 21. The role of the musicians’ personal faith in the perceived authenticity of 2 Tm 2,3

Source: Own study.

Other responses included the band’s lack of commercialism, its independence, its bridging of the gap by using a genre of music traditionally regarded as “disgraceful” for evangelization, its provision of opportunities for spiritual growth, its motivational role, and its capacity to inspire reflection. The respondents also emphasised the musicians’ professionalism, charisma, and high level of technical skill, as well as the long-standing friendship among these “brothers in faith.”

Finally, the questionnaire gave the respondents an opportunity to share their personal reflections on 2 Tm 2,3. Unfortunately, it is impossible to present them all here. Among the responses were expressions of gratitude that a band such as “Tymoteusz” exists, proclaims the Word of God, supports spiritual and personal transformation, contributes to conversion, and serves as a form of prayer. For many, “Tymoteusz” has become a lifelong companion, associated with both joyful and difficult moments. The respondents also expressed the wish that the band would perform more concerts and that its earlier albums would be reissued.

CONCLUSION

The band’s many years of activity have shown that it has gathered a diverse group of fans who have been accompanied by the Word of God expressed through rock music for many years. “Tymoteusz” has filled a gap by offering a positive message within a rock context, contributing to a greater presence of the Bible in everyday life and strengthening listeners’ relationship with God. The band has served an educational role by motivating, inspiring hope, and offering encouragement. Based on the literature reviewed and the survey findings, several conclusions can be drawn.

Any summary of the evangelising potential of 2 Tm 2,3 should begin with the artists themselves. The foundation of the band’s work is the musicians’ personal experience of faith, which also protects the Word of God from being treated instrumentally.

Because of stereotypes associated with combining biblical texts with rock music, not everyone accepted this approach, and some questioned the purpose of such activity. Nevertheless, this way of presenting the Word of God encouraged reflection among rock music fans. Furthermore, 2 Tm 2,3 concerts provide an opportunity to experience a sense of community centred on shared spiritual and artistic values. This, in turn, encouraged listeners to promote the band themselves, thereby expanding its audience.

The work of 2 Tm 2,3 may become an impulse for conversion, encourage more frequent engagement with the Word of God, and stimulate greater interest in biblical and theological themes. Furthermore, the band’s positive influence on the spiritual and sacramental lives of its listeners was evident.

In light of the above, it may be concluded that, for many listeners, “Tymoteusz” has become a companion on their personal and spiritual journey, helping them rediscover faith in God and in themselves, while encouraging them to live according to the teachings of the Bible in their daily lives. The band’s continued activity, therefore, remains important not only for its existing audience but also for new listeners seeking heavy music who may discover something more than a purely artistic experience.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board / Ethics Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The data are not publicly available due to ethical, legal, copyright, or privacy restrictions, but may be available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to applicable permissions.

AI Tools Declaration: Not applicable. The author declares that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Babuchowski, Szymon. 2015. "Dorosłość Tymoteusza [Tymoteusz Comes of Age]." *Wiara.pl*. Accessed April 24, 2015. kultura.wiara.pl/doc/2412630.Doroslosc-Tymoteusza.
- Bialik, Agnieszka. 1999. "Wywiad z Beatą Kozak [Interview with Beata Kozak]." *2Tm2,3*. Accessed October 26, 2023. 2tm23.kdm.pl/ver_1_0/wywiady/wyw21.html.
- Bzducha, Klaudia. 2018. "'Gdy usłyszałem Jego głos,' czyli wywiad z Dariuszem Malejonkiem 'Maleo' ['When I Heard His Voice': An Interview with Dariusz 'Maleo' Malejonek]." *Coś Nowego*. Accessed November 12, 2023. cosnowego.kul.pl/wywiad/gdy-uslyszalem-jego-glos-czyli-wywiad-z-dariuszem-malejonkiem-maleo.
- Chojnacka, Joanna. 2019. "Badania dowodzą, że metalowcy są mądrzejsi, niż głosi stereotyp [Research Shows That Metalheads Are Smarter Than the Stereotype Suggests]." *Antyradio*. January 14, 2019. antyradio.pl/muzyka/Rock-News/Badania-dowodza-ze-metalowcy-sa-madrzejsi-niz-glosi-stereotyp-28466.
- Galek, Magdalena. 2019. "Nawrócony fan metalu na onkologii. Przechodzi leczenie, modli się i ewangelizuje w szpitalu [A Converted Metal Fan in an Oncology Ward: Undergoing Treatment, Praying, and Evangelizing in the Hospital]." *Aleteia*. February 27, 2019. pl.aleteia.org/2019/02/27/nawrocony-fan-metalu-na-onkologii-przechodzi-leczenie-modli-sie-i-ewangelizuje-w-szpitalu.
- Gurdek, Weronika, and Nikodem Pospieszalski. 2008. "Bez szabli, bez sztandaru. Po prostu – dementi [Without a Saber, Without a Banner: Simply—Dementi]." *Katolik.pl*. Accessed October 22, 2023. katolik.pl/bez-szabli-bez-sztandaru,1705,416,news.html?s=2.
- Horubała, Andrzej, and Maciej Chmiel. 1996. *2 Tm 2,3 – Chrześcijański rock* [2 Tm 2,3—Christian Rock]. Studio Form Telewizyjnych TVP S.A.
- Jakimowicz, Marcin. 1997a. "Nawróceni [Converted]." *Mateusz.pl*. Accessed October 22, 2023. mateusz.pl/ludzie/rock.htm.
- Jakimowicz, Marcin. 1997b. *Radykalni* [Radicals]. Księgarnia św. Jacka.
- Jakimowicz, Marcin. 2006. "W ciemnej dolinie [In the Dark Valley]." *Gość.pl*. Accessed November 10, 2023. gosc.pl/doc/808935.W-ciemnej-dolinie.

- Kaczorowski, Piotr. 2006. "Weź udział w trudach i przeciwnościach jako dobry żołnierz Chrystusa Jezusa [2 Tm 2,3] [Share in Suffering and Adversity Like a Good Soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:3)]." *Goniec Lubelski*, November 6, 2006, 6.
- Kaliszewski, Adam. 2000. "Wywiad z Licą po podpisaniu Paschy 2000 [Interview with Litza after the Signing of Pascha 2000]." *2Tm2,3*. Accessed November 3, 2023. 2tm23.kdm.pl/ver_1_0/wywiady/wyw16.html.
- Kaltwasser Hamilton, Andrés, David Martínez Pernía, Carolina Puyol Wilson, and Daniela Carrasco Dell'Aquila. 2019. "What Makes Metalheads Happy? A Phenomenological Analysis of Flow Experiences in Metal Musicians." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 16 (4): 537–565. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2017.1416210>.
- Kasjaniuk, Grzegorz. 2013. "2 Tm 2,3: Wszystkie moje źródła są w Tobie — nowe nagranie [2 Tm 2,3: All My Springs Are in You—A New Recording]." *wPolityce.pl*. Accessed November 11, 2023. wpolityce.pl/kultura/247352-2-tm-23-wszystkie-moje-zrodla-sa-w-tobie-nowe-nagranie.
- Kowalczyk, Adam. 1996. "11 radykalnych piosenek [11 Radical Songs]." *Brum* 12 (38): 13.
- Kowalczyk, Adam. 1997. "Wszystko co mam oddaję Mu [Everything I Have I Give to Him]." *Brum* 2 (40): 16–18.
- Koziczyński, Bartek. 1997. "2 Tm 2,3. Bracia [2 Tm 2,3: Brothers]." *Tylko Rock* 5 (69): 52–53.
- Koziczyński, Bartek. 1999. "Dawać nadzieję [Giving Hope]." *2Tm2,3*. Accessed October 25, 2023. 2tm23.kdm.pl/ver_1_0/wywiady/wyw09.html.
- Koziczyński, Bartek. 2006. "Spójrzeć w oczy [To Look in the Eyes]." *Teraz Rock* 8 (42): 24–27.
- Koziczyński, Bartek. 2024. "Punkt odniesienia [Point of Reference]." *Teraz Rock* 3 (252): 22–23.
- KręciolaTV. n.d. *2Tm2,3 LIVE Przystanek Woodstock 2006*. YouTube video. Accessed October 25, 2023. youtube.com/watch?v=GOQ8khxDm8c.
- Lerch, Arek. 1999. "Hipermarket 'Babilon.' 2Tm2,3 ['Babylon' Hypermarket: 2Tm2,3]." *Brum* 4 (66): 40–41.
- Leszczyński, Robert. 1999. "Metalowe Psalmy [Metal Psalms]." *2Tm2,3*. Accessed October 25, 2023. 2tm23.kdm.pl/ver_1_0/wywiady/wyw10.html.
- Majchrzyk, Łukasz. 2017. "Tomasz Budzyński, Robert Friedrich: 2Tm2,3 to jest przygoda duchowa [Tomasz Budzyński, Robert Friedrich: 2Tm2,3 Is a Spiritual Adventure]." *Rzeczpospolita*. December 16, 2017. rp.pl/plus-minus/art10031351-tomasz-budzynski-robert-friedrich-2tm2-3-to-jest-przygoda-duchowa.
- Matera, Anna. 1999. "Uwiodłeś nas Panie, miłością [You Have Seduced Us, Lord, with Love]." *Niedziela*. Accessed October 22, 2023. m.niedziela.pl/arttykul/63594/nd/Uwiodles-nas-Panie-miloscia.
- Nowak, Anna. 2007. "Rock to miecz Goliata [Rock Is Goliath's Sword]." *Prasa.wiara.pl*. Accessed November 10, 2023. prasa.wiara.pl/doc/456924.Rock-to-miecz-Goliata.

- Nowak, Anna. 2008. "Cała prawda o 2 Tm 2,3 [The Whole Truth about 2 Tm 2,3]." *Przewodnik Katolicki*. Accessed November 12, 2023. przewodnik-katolicki.pl/Archiwum/2008/Przewodnik-Katolicki-9-2008/Spoleczenstwo/Cala-prawda-o-2-TM-2-3.
- Perluński, Marcin. 1997. "Rockolekcje [Rock Retreats]." *Ruah* 1: 28–29.
- Rakowska, Monika. 2014. "Czadowy Tymoteusz powraca [The Hard-Rocking Tymoteusz Returns]." *DEON.pl*. Accessed October 26, 2023. deon.pl/po-godzinach/muzyka/czadowy-tymoteusz-powraca,321498.
- Scarlett, Liz. 2021. "Study Finds Metalheads among Happiest Music Fans, Clearly Didn't Poll Our Facebook Page." *Louder*. Accessed March 8, 2021. loudersound.com/news/metal-fans-happiest-study.
- Schlink, Basilea. 1994. *Muzyka rockowa – skąd? dokąd?* [Rock Music—Where from? Where to?]. Effata.
- Stachyra, Krzysztof. 2022. "Muzykoterapia – komentarz ekspercki [Music Therapy—Expert Commentary]." *Centrum Prasowe UMCS*. March 1, 2022. umcs.pl/pl/komentarze-eksperckie,22097,muzykoterapia-komentarz-ekspercki,113129.htm.
- Urny, Robert. 2008. "2 Tm 2,3." *Metal Hammer* 4: 20–21.
- USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops). 2011. *New American Bible, Revised Edition*. USCCB. bible.usccb.org/bible.
- Wysocki, Wojciech. 2000. "O Kościele masowym i kulturze powszechnej – rozmowa z Litzą [On the Mass Church and Popular Culture: A Conversation with Litza]." *2Tm2,3*. Accessed November 8, 2023. 2tm23.kdm.pl/ver_1_0/wywiady/wyw19.html.

Chronostructures of Meaning and Rhythms of Subjectivity in Critical Realism

Chronostruktury sensu i rytmy podmiotowości w perspektywie realizmu krytycznego

Marek Woś

Academy of Applied
Sciences of the Association
for Adult Education in
Szczecin, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6756-8045>

mkwos@onet.pl

Received: 31 Jan 2026

Revised: 20 Feb 2026

Accepted: 14 May 2026

Published Online First:

30 Jun 2026

Abstract: This article develops a critical realist framework for analysing subjectivity as constituted through social time. It conceptualises rhythm as an emergent, meaning-generating temporal structure that conditions the relationship between social structure and human agency. The framework comprises four analytical categories: rhythmic chronostructure, rhythms of subjectivity, rhythmic agency, and temporal reflexivity. To illustrate their empirical relevance, the article uses selected CAWI data from the first wave of the *Youth 4.0* project (N = 24,483), comprising adolescents aged 13–14, young people aged 15–25, and parents or guardians, contextually supplemented by focus group material. The data are interpreted heuristically as symptoms of rhythmisation rather than as direct evidence of underlying causal mechanisms. The analysis focuses on national identity, institutional trust, community rituals, and future-oriented agency, examining the synchronisation and desynchronisation of institutional and biographical rhythms. It suggests that disruptions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and technological transformation are linked to the fragmentation of meaning and reduced well-being, whereas progressive synchronisation supports reflexive identity and agency. The article contributes a typology of progressive, stable, and regressive chronostructures and offers a framework for further research on social time, education, youth subjectivity, and well-being.

Keywords: critical realism, rhythmic morphodynamics, social time, youth subjectivity, rhythmic agency, temporal reflexivity, rhythmanalysis, rhythmic chronostructure

Abstrakt: Artykuł rozwija opartą na realizmie krytycznym ramę analizy podmiotowości kształtowanej w strukturach czasu społecznego. Rytm jest ujmowany jako emergentna, temporalna struktura sensotwórcza, która warunkuje relację między strukturą społeczną a sprawstwem jednostki. Proponowana rama obejmuje cztery kategorie analityczne: chronostrukturę rytmiczną, rytmy podmiotowości, sprawczość rytmiczną oraz refleksyjność temporalną. W celu zilustrowania ich znaczenia empirycznego wykorzystano wybrane dane CAWI z pierwszej fali projektu *Młodzież 4.0* (N = 24 483), obejmujące młodzież w wieku 13–14 lat, młodych ludzi w wieku 15–25 lat oraz rodziców lub opiekunów, uzupełnione kontekstowo o materiał z wywiadów fokusowych. Dane są interpretowane heurystycznie jako symptomy rytymizacji, a nie jako bezpośrednie dowody działania mechanizmów przyczynowych leżących u ich podstawy. Analiza koncentruje się na tożsamości narodowej, zaufaniu instytucjonalnym, rytuałach wspólnotowych i sprawstwie ukierunkowanym na przyszłość, uwzględniając synchronizację i desynchronizację rytmów instytucjonalnych oraz biograficznych. Wyniki sugerują, że zakłócenia związane z pandemią COVID-19 i transformacją technologiczną wią-



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

żą się z fragmentaryzacją sensu i obniżeniem dobrostanu, natomiast progresywna synchronizacja wspiera rozwój refleksyjnej tożsamości i sprawstwa. Wkładem artykułu jest typologia chronostruktur progresywnych, stabilnych i regresywnych oraz ramowa koncepcja dalszych badań nad czasem społecznym, edukacją, podmiotowością młodzieży i dobrostanem.

Słowa kluczowe: realizm krytyczny, morfodynamika rytmiczna, czas społeczny, podmiotowość młodzieży, sprawczość rytmiczna, refleksyjność temporalna, rytmoanaliza, chronostruktura rytmiczna

INTRODUCTION: SUBJECTIVITY IN THE RHYTHMS OF SOCIAL TIME

Contemporary sociology is reconsidering the concept of subjectivity. Technological, cultural, and educational changes influence not only the functioning of individuals but also the conditions under which identity and agency are shaped. The concept of time, understood as the socially organised rhythm of individual and institutional life, has therefore become crucial.

This article is set within the framework of critical realism (Bhaskar 1975; Archer 1995) and draws on Polish work on morphodynamics. Against this backdrop, the following research questions are formulated:

- How do social rhythms (institutional, community, and familial) influence the processes of individual self-definition?
- To what extent does the rhythmic structure of time foster the development of reflexivity or contribute to identity regression?
- What are the conditions for achieving synchrony between the rhythm of institutions and the rhythm of an individual's biography?

The aim of this article is to outline a theoretical and empirical framework for analysing the rhythms of subjectivity among young people. The proposed approach complements structuralist, interactionist, and constructivist perspectives, by emphasising the temporal dimension of meaning.

This article develops a rhythm analytical perspective in the spirit of critical realism, conceptualising social rhythms as meaning-generating temporal structures that constitute biographical and axionormative patterns. The point of reference for the analysis is data from the *Youth 4.0* (Młodzież 4.0) project, interpreted as manifestations of the rhythmisation of values, identity, and agency. The central question guiding the analysis is the extent to which social rhythms enable or constrain the constitution of meaning-generating subjectivity. The article's contribution lies in reinterpreting rhythm as a generative mechanism within the ontology of critical realism and introducing the category of the chronostructure as a form of temporal organisation that conditions the relationship between reflexivity and agency.

1. THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The starting point for the present discussion is the concept of the human person as a dynamic subject, shaped by educational, cultural, and meaning-generating

rhythms. Individual development is understood as a process of the rhythmisation of meaning in relation to changing social forms. The theoretical framework is based on critical realism (Bhaskar 1975; Archer 1995) and the concept of morphodynamics developed in Polish sociology (Woś 2024c). This approach is complemented by theories of social time developed by Rosa (2013), Adam (1990), and Lefebvre (2004), who conceptualise time as a social structure that organises experience. In axionormative sociology, upbringing is understood as the rhythmic introduction of the individual into the world of values (Woś 2024b). This framework provides the starting point for the empirical analysis that follows.

1.1. Morphodynamics and Critical Realism (Bhaskar, Archer, Woś)

Morphodynamics, developed in Polish sociological circles (Woś 2024c, 121–127), integrates the principles of Bhaskar's (1975) critical realism and Archer's (1995, 2003) theory of morphogenesis, explaining how individuals construct their identity in relation to the axionormative social order. Social change occurs through rhythmic sequences of fluctuations in structures and meanings, referred to as "fluctuations of forms."

Within Bhaskar's stratified ontology, rhythmicity may be interpreted as an emergent property rooted in the real domain and manifested in the relationship between structure and experience (Bhaskar 1975, 12–34). Archer (1995, 154–165; 2003, 130–133) develops this ontological foundation through her theory of morphogenesis – a four-stage model of social change (T1–T4) in which structures and actions jointly produce a cyclical dynamic: from the initial structure, through interaction and elaboration, to a new structure that becomes the starting point for the next cycle. In the Polish context, Woś (2024c, 121–127) emphasises the importance of this theory for understanding the relationship between structure and agency, extending it to include the axionormative and temporal dimensions.

Archer (2003, 84–85, 130–135) argues that the individual is not a passive product of structures, but a reflexive subject who, through the "internal conversation," transforms structural influences into strategies for action. Woś's morphodynamics emphasises the rhythmic and meaning-generating dimension of subjectivity: rhythm becomes a form through which meaning emerges in the relationship between structure and agency.

Table 1. Relationships between Bhaskar, Archer and Woś in the perspective of rhythmic morphodynamics

This table compares the theoretical contributions of Roy Bhaskar, Margaret S. Archer, and Marek Woś across ontological, epistemological, and methodological dimensions. It shows how their concepts are integrated into the framework of rhythmic morphodynamics, with each approach contributing to the understanding of rhythm as a mechanism linking structure, meaning, and agency.

Author / theory	Ontological level	Epistemological level	Methodological level	Contribution to the rhythmic approach
Roy Bhaskar (1975)	Stratified reality: <i>the real, the actual, and the empirical domains</i> ; emergence as the organising principle of the social world.	Knowledge as the discovery of real causal mechanisms.	Critical analysis of the conditions of possibility for action and change.	Enables rhythm to be interpreted as an emergent mechanism operating within the real domain.
Margaret S. Archer (1995, 2003)	The relationship between structure and agency in temporal sequences (T1-T4).	Reflexivity as a mediator between structure and action (<i>internal conversation</i>).	Morphogenetic model: analysis of cyclical change.	Introduces rhythm as a morphogenetic trajectory that conditions agency.
Marek Woś (2023a, 2024c)	Time and values as elements of the rhythmic structure of social reality.	Subjectivity as the outcome of the rhythmic synchronisation of meaning and action.	Morphodynamics: analysis of the fluctuations of forms and meanings in the rhythmic cycles of upbringing.	Introduces the category of the rhythms of meaning and “fluctuations of forms” as the foundation of the concept of rhythmic subjectivity.

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on Bhaskar (1975), Archer (1995, 2003) and Woś (2023a; 2024c).

1.2. Social Rhythm as a Structure of Meaning (Lefebvre, Adam, Rosa et al.)

Rhythm is a category that connects social time with the constitution of meaning and action. From Lefebvre’s (2004) perspective, it is the repetitive structure of everyday life, encompassing biological, social, and spatial orders. Barbara Adam (1990) argues that time functions as a normative regime regulating practices and expectations, while Rosa (2013) describes the acceleration of modernity as a process of the destabilisation of rhythms, leading to alienation and a loss of rootedness.

In classical approaches (Elias 1992; Bourdieu 1990), time is not conceptualised rhythmically but through the temporality of practices and the reproduction of social order. In the present approach, rhythm is conceptualised as a relational temporal structure that mediates between institutions and biography, organising the course of action and its meaning over time.

This approach gives rise to the concept of the rhythmic chronostructure – a socially organised temporal system in which identity and agency are constituted.

This concept aligns with Polish studies of social time, which emphasise the normative and institutional dimensions of temporality (see Bukowski and Kopczyńska 2025; Zajadacz et al. 2010). The rhythmic chronostructure serves as a bridge between critical realism and symbolic constructivism, laying the groundwork for an ontological understanding of rhythmic subjectivity (see Section 1.3).

These approaches are not treated symmetrically or cumulatively. Lefebvre's concept provides a language for describing the repetition and variation of rhythms but remains at the phenomenological level and does not explain their generative power (Lefebvre 2004). Barbara Adam's approach captures the normative dimension of time as a regulator of practices but does not reconstruct the mechanisms through which it operates (Adam 1990). Rosa's diagnosis of acceleration, in turn, points to the effects of the destabilisation of rhythms, but is macro-sociological in nature and does not provide tools for analysing the relationship between structure and agency at the micro level (Rosa 2013, 22–30, 106–121).

In the proposed model, the following elements are selectively reworked: the concept of rhythm as a pattern of repetition is adopted from Lefebvre; its normative dimension from Adam; and the diagnosis of acceleration as a condition of disruption from Rosa. However, all these approaches are embedded in the ontology of critical realism, in which rhythm is treated as an emergent mechanism operating within the real domain and conditioning the possibilities of action and the constitution of meaning (Bhaskar 1975, 13–17). The proposed approach forms a part of a growing body of research on temporality and the technological conditions of action that has emerged in recent years within the sociology of time and technology studies.

1.3. Ontology of Rhythm: A Proposal for Rhythmic Subjectivity

Analysing rhythm as a structure of meaning leads to the question of its role in the constitution of subjectivity. Subjectivity is shaped by configurations of practices embedded in time, whose organisation takes the form of rhythms. In the subsequent analysis, two categories assume central importance: the chronostructure and rhythmic agency, while the remaining categories play a complementary role. Accordingly, the chronostructure is understood here as a socially produced temporal framework that organises the course of actions and their meaning over time.

According to Woś (2023a, 22–27), social time shapes personal structures through the rhythms of upbringing, values, and culture. Mead's (1934, 173–178) account of the relationship between the "I" and the "Me" may be interpreted here as a rhythmic dialectic of spontaneity and the internalisation of norms – analogous to rhythmic morphodynamics, in which subjectivity arises at the intersection of internalised norms and the creative transformation of social rhythms.

On this basis, the concept of morphodynamics (Woś 2024c, 131–135) was extended, in line with critical realism (Archer 1988, 78–83), to include the dimension of the rhythms of subjectivity, understood as temporally and

meaningfully structured patterns through which identity and agency are constituted. Four related analytical categories are distinguished:

1. Rhythmic chronostructure – the order of institutional rhythms (the real domain).
2. Rhythms of subjectivity – patterns of individual synchronisation with institutional, community, and biographical rhythms (the actual domain).
3. Rhythmic agency – the emergent capacity to challenge and reinterpret rhythms, whose potential belongs to the real domain, whose enactment occurs in the actual domain, and whose effects may be experienced in the empirical domain.
4. Temporal reflexivity – the awareness of, and the capacity to, transform rhythms through reflection on their meaning-generating dimension.

These categories are heuristic in nature, but they are rooted in Bhaskar's ontology of emergence, in which rhythms are emergent properties of social relations that organise the possibilities for action. Rhythm simultaneously performs ontological, epistemological, and critical functions, organising the conditions of action, its interpretation, and the possibilities for its transformation.

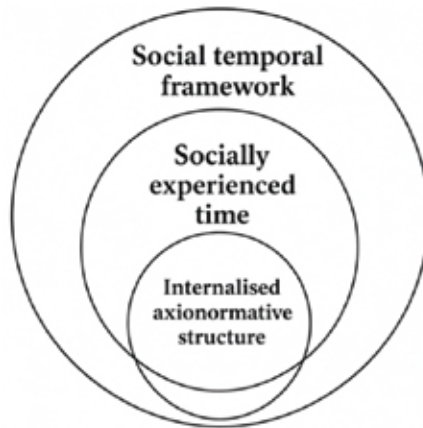


Figure 1. The structure of social time as a dynamic configuration of layers in the rhythmisation of meaning

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The proposed categories can be studied using qualitative methods – biographical interviews, narrative analysis, and observation of rituals. Figure 1 illustrates three levels at which meaning is rhythmised – the institutional, communal, and identity levels – presenting time as a carrier of meaning and a frame of reference for agential action. Contemporary research on social time (Bergmann 1992; Baert 1992, 97–101; Abbott 2001, 130–135) points to the need for further operationalisation of rhythms of meaning in empirical research, which forms the focus of the following section.

2. METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND DATA SOURCES

Based on the theoretical assumptions outlined above, an analysis of selected empirical data illustrating the rhythmic dimension of young people's subjectivity was conducted. The aim of the research is not to reconstruct social practices in a statistical sense but to identify symptoms of the rhythmisation of meaning in the experiences of young people. Data from the *Youth 4.0* project were used for this purpose, interpreted as manifestations of synchrony, desynchrony, and reconfiguration of social rhythms.

2.1. Nature and Sources of Data (*Youth 4.0* Project)

The empirical analysis is based on data from the *Youth 4.0* project, conducted by the TWP Academy of Applied Sciences in Szczecin and funded by the Polish Ministry of Education and Science. The project, *Determinants of Behaviour and the Anchoring of the Attitudes of the Young Generation of Poles Towards Socio-Cultural Risk Areas (from the Perspective of Resilience Theory)*, aimed to identify patterns of values, identity, and agency among young people. The purpose of this section is to illustrate the rhythmicity manifested in declarations, rituals, and temporal tensions, rather than to provide a statistical reconstruction of social practices.

The study is based primarily on the CAWI method; selected components (including analyses by Kurzępa and Kopeć, and by Woś) were supplemented with focus group interviews (FGIs), giving the project the character of an initial triangulation, rather than a full-scale ethnographic study (Urbanik 2023). Data from the first wave of the main study (Q3-Q4 2022) were used, comprising $N = 24,483$ individual responses across three groups: adolescents aged 13–14 ($N = 1,733$), young people aged 15–25 ($N = 20,776$), and parents or guardians ($N = 1,974$). The analysis is illustrative in nature and focuses on identifying patterns of recurrence interpreted as symptoms of the rhythmisation of meaning and values.

Triangulation and limitations. The project incorporates an FGI component used in publications stemming from the *Youth 4.0* project (Woś 2023b; Kurzępa and Kopeć 2023b), which supports the claim of partial triangulation. Its limitations include: (1) the absence of long-term participant observation, (2) the absence of panel data, and (3) the lack of a systematic application of qualitative methods specifically designed for rhythm analysis (e.g., rhythm diaries and temporal calendars).

Ethical aspects. CAWI data were collected in accordance with the principles of research ethics and the GDPR. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and gave their informed consent to participate. The data are presented in an aggregated and anonymised form.

Analytical assumptions. For the initial operationalisation of rhythmicity, a heuristic typology of indicators was adopted, consistent with Lefebvre's rhythm analysis and Zerubavel's theoretical insights. The responses are treated as traces of rhythm (patterns), rather than as causal evidence. Three categories were distinguished:

1. Indicators of the recurrence of declarations (e.g. national pride as a manifestation of the ritualisation of identity);
2. Indicators of belonging to structures of meaning (e.g. trust in the school, the Church, and the state as institutions that rhythmatises life);
3. Indicators of the temporal orientation of the subject (e.g. planning for the future and reflecting on the past as elements of temporal reflexivity).

To illustrate this heuristic framework, the table below presents selected survey questions together with their classification according to rhythm category, type of rhythmicity, and analytical interpretation.

Table 2. Heuristic rhythmic codes in the Youth 4.0 study

This table presents selected survey questions from the Youth 4.0 study together with their classification into rhythm categories, types of rhythmicity, and rhythmic interpretations. The examples illustrate how recurring social practices and declarations can be interpreted as indicators of identity formation, institutional trust, community participation, and agency within a rhythmic analytical framework.

CAWI question	Rhythm Category	Type of Rhythmicity	Rhythmic Interpretation
Do you feel proud to be Polish?	National identity	Stable/Disrupted	Indicator of the ritualisation of national identity (intergenerational transmission)
Do you trust the school as an institution?	Institutional trust	Stable/Withdrawn	Symptom of embeddedness in the educational rhythm (institutional chronostructure)
Do you regularly participate in religious practices?	Community rituals	Progressive/Fading	Reflection of the ritualisation of meaning and community values
Do you feel you have control over your own future?	Agentic subjectivity	Dissonant/Coherent	Indicator of the rhythm of reflexive planning (trajectory of agency)
How often do you talk to your family about important matters?	Communicative rhythm	Coherent/Unstable	Indicator of the maintenance of family bonds and the transmission of meaning

Source: Author's own elaboration based on data from the *Youth 4.0* project (Urbanik 2023)

This classification is not intended as a measurement instrument; rather, it is designed to identify rhythms as patterns of meaning rooted in repetitive responses and social practices. Qualitative data from FGIs serve a contextual function and provide a basis for further research on rituals and temporal reflexivity.

2.2. The Rhythm Heuristic as a Research Framework

The aim of this section is to present a heuristic framework for identifying rhythmic subjectivity in empirical material. These assumptions are heuristic in nature and serve as a basis for designing processual research.

Three qualitative approaches:

1. Biographical narratives – enable the identification of temporal patterns (development, crises, turning points) and points of synchrony and desynchrony between institutional rhythms and individual biographies.
2. Rhythm diaries – document daily cycles of activities, interruptions, and tensions, revealing the microrhythms of everyday practices (Lefebvre 2004; Zerubavel 1985).
3. Observation of everyday rituals – reveals social rhythmic structures (school, community, and technological rituals) and their meaning-generating function.

The analytical procedure includes:

- (1) identifying temporal episodes as units of analysis;
- (2) coding rhythmic events (repetition, cyclicity, interruptions) and their carriers (institutions, communities, technologies);
- (3) classifying them according to rhythm categories (identity, institutional, community, reflexive-agential);
- (4) analysing the relationships between rhythms – synchrony, desynchrony, and resynchronisation;
- (5) identifying temporal mechanisms operating within the real domain (e.g., assessment cycles, ritual calendars);
- (6) validating and triangulating sources (Bhaskar 1975; Archer 1995).

For the purposes of the proposed qualitative procedure, a recurrent pattern may be provisionally coded as rhythmic when it occurs at least three times within the same type of activity and displays regularity, meaning-generating significance, and social embeddedness. Interpretive rigour is ensured by maintaining a transparent coding log and checking the consistency of the coding.

In the analysis of the CAWI data, a symptomatic reading is adopted: responses are interpreted as traces of rhythm rather than as causal evidence. Repetitive declarations (e.g. national pride) are treated as manifestations of the ritualisation of identity; trust in institutions as an indicator of embeddedness in chronostructures; and the sense of having an influence over one's future as an expression of temporal reflexivity.

The purpose of this heuristic is to identify the mechanisms of synchronisation, desynchronisation, and the reorganisation of rhythms that condition the development of reflexive and agentic subjectivity. The analysis highlights the particular role of three spheres of rhythmic meaning: national identity, institutional trust, and community rituals. These proposals are programmatic, serving as a starting point for further narrative, diary-based, and observational research.

2.3. Notes on the Interpretation of Data as Indicators of the Rhythms of Meaning

Empirical data are treated as symptoms of rhythmisation – or its disruptions – within the domain of meaning, indicating the operation of hidden temporal mechanisms. Unlike classical quantitative indicators, they reflect patterns of

repetition present in individuals' practices and declarations. Indicators such as national identification, community participation, pride in belonging, and trust in institutions reveal the rhythmic foundations of the constitution of meaning.

In the spirit of critical realism (Bhaskar 1975), the rhythmic patterns observed in responses reflect the operation of structures rooted in the real domain, which become manifest through empirical practices. Particular importance is attached to the triangulation of data and to taking into account temporal variables such as the school cycle, the rhythm of the year, and rites of passage, as these reveal the mechanisms of synchrony and desynchrony in the process of the constitution of meaning.

Combining quantitative and qualitative methods allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the rhythmic mechanisms of subjectivity. The next section discusses how rhythmic patterns of meaning are reflected in the practices of young people, constituting symptoms of the rhythmic organisation of meaning and agency. A symptomatic reading assumes that repetitive response patterns indicate the operation of hidden temporal mechanisms, whose reconstruction constitutes the primary objective of the analysis.

3. RHYTHMS OF SUBJECTIVITY – ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL DATA

The analysis of the empirical data reveals the rhythms of subjectivity as symptoms of diverse temporal configurations that can be interpreted as manifestations of rhythmic mechanisms operating within the real domain. In the spirit of critical realism (Bhaskar 1975; Archer 1995), subjectivity does not develop linearly but oscillates between rhythms of meaning shaped by social structure, values, and the experience of time.

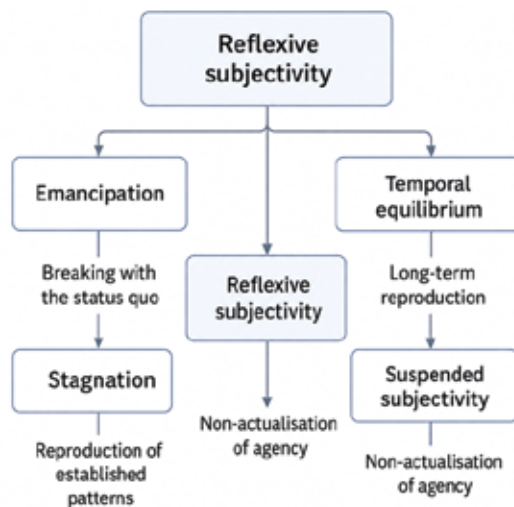


Figure 2. A map of the temporal trajectories of rhythmic subjectivity from a morphodynamic perspective

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The diagram illustrates the need for the continuous renewal of rhythmic agency: temporal equilibrium may stabilise identity, but an excess of equilibrium risks leading to inertia; emancipation breaks the status quo, but without the renewal of rhythmic agency, it may be short-lived. Rhythmic agency denotes the capacity to regulate social rhythms creatively in accordance with the individual's values and goals. It is not passive adaptation but the management of the relationship between personal and institutional rhythms. Indicators such as national pride, institutional trust, and participation in community rituals are interpreted here as symptoms of the (de)synchronisation of the rhythms of meaning.

3.1. National Identity and Pride as Indicators of Rhythm

Data from the *Youth 4.0* project show that 49.1% of 13–14-year-olds and 33.5% of 15–25-year-olds experience national pride rarely, very rarely, or never (Kurzępa and Kopeć 2023a, 213–214). This suggests a weakening of embeddedness within structures of meaning. At the same time, 37.6% of the younger respondents and 53.4% of the older group report experiencing pride always, very often, or often. FGI material from the *Youth 4.0* project also indicates the recurrence of symbolic practices associated with national commemoration.

Table 3. National identity and pride as indicators of the rhythmic structure of meaning (Youth 4.0)

This table presents selected indicators of national identity and national pride among adolescents, young adults, and parents or guardians. The data show differences between age groups in patterns of identification and attachment to national belonging, with lower levels of national pride among younger respondents suggesting a weaker synchronisation between institutional narratives and personal identity.

Category	13-14 years	15-25 years	Parents/ Guardians	Rhythmic interpretation
Identification as "Polish"	44%	49%	47%	Stable rhythm, less pronounced among the younger cohort
Identification as a "European"	26%	14%	23%	Pluralistic rhythm (broader frame of reference)
National pride ("rarely" or "never")	49%	36%	35%	Disrupted rhythm (desynchronisation between institution and biography)

Source: Author's own elaboration based on data from the *Youth 4.0* project (Kurzępa and Kopeć 2023a, 213–214)

The results suggest the fragmentation of the identity rhythm – values and patterns of identification do not form a coherent temporal sequence.

3.2. Disruptions and Types of Chronostructures: Pandemic, Technology, Resynchronisation

The COVID-19 pandemic and technological transformation disrupted educational, community, and family rhythms (Woś 2024a, 116–117), causing temporal disorientation and weakening agency. The literature emphasises the consequences of such disruptions: declining well-being, alienation, and the loss of resonance (Rosa 2013, 198–212, 290–310; Han 2015, 21–25, 46–53; Woś 2023b, 115–117).

Against this background, the following condensed typology of chronostructures may be proposed:

Table 4. Types of rhythmic chronostructures

This table presents a typology of rhythmic chronostructures and their social and individual consequences. Progressive chronostructures support development and reflexive identity, stable chronostructures maintain order but may lead to stagnation, whereas regressive chronostructures are associated with disruption, disorientation, and identity crises.

Type	Social Function	Effects on Subjectivity
Progressive	Supports development, integration, and dialogue	Reflexivity and a stable identity
Stable (passive)	Maintains order and predictability	Risk of stagnation and formalism
Regressive	Disrupts the rhythms of meaning and undermines community cohesion	Identity crisis and disorientation

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the concept of rhythmic morphodynamics

The pandemic is an example of a regressive chronostructure (the loss of rituals and interrupted cyclicity). At the same time, technologies – although they generate acceleration and fragmentation – can also perform a resynchronising function by compensating for isolation, placing new demands on the body while simultaneously expanding the possibilities for action (Bukowski and Kopczyńska 2025, 25–26).

The findings are consistent with research on social acceleration and its consequences for subjectivity. Rosa argues that acceleration leads to the shortening of action horizons and weakens the possibility of the stable integration of experience over time (Rosa 2013, 106–121). Similar conclusions have been reached in research on young people functioning in the digital environment, where high levels of declarative reflexivity coexist with a limited capacity for long-term action. The findings of the *Youth 4.0* project are consistent with this line of research, pointing to the importance of temporal disruptions as a factor mediating between social structure and individual agency.

3.3. Rhythm Synchronisation in Upbringing: The Role of the Teacher and Well-Being

The teacher, as the organiser of institutional time, co-creates rituals, repetitions, and pauses that give meaning to students' everyday practices. From the perspective of rhythmic morphodynamics, this role operates across three domains (Bhaskar 1975):

the real domain (the creation of temporal and normative frameworks), the actual domain (the organisation of practices), and the empirical domain (participation in students' experience of social rhythms). For example, the environment of Salesian schools – combining educational, liturgical, and community rhythms – fosters progressive synchrony through the shared rhythm of the day, the week, and the year.

In Woś's approach, social forms are understood as rhythmic responses to structural and cultural challenges; upbringing, as an axionormative rhythm, shapes the microdynamics of identity (Woś 2023a, 87–94, 189–197, 213–220). Synchronisation does not imply rigid standardisation; rather, it involves coordinating institutional and biographical rhythms in order to sustain resonance and well-being (Rosa 2013; Han 2015). This is the teacher's role as a mediator between structure and biography – a prerequisite for maintaining progressive rhythms and reducing desynchronisation.

4. RHYTHMIC AGENCY AND TEMPORAL REFLEXIVITY IN RHYTHMIC CHRONO-STRUCTURES

Rhythmic subjectivity emerges from the relationship between the structure of time and the individual's reflexivity. Two key mechanisms are rhythmic agency and temporal reflexivity – the capacities that enable individuals to reinterpret, modulate, and synchronise social rhythms within existing chronostructures. In critical realism, agency is not a mechanical reaction but the result of the internal conversation, which transforms structural influences into strategies for action (Archer 2003, 84–85). Meanings, in turn, are constituted through interaction (Blumer 1969, 2–6), co-generating the rhythms of meaning experienced in everyday practices. Within the context of education, progressive rhythms emerge where the school and the broader social environment enable individuals to enter the world of values in a rhythmic manner. In this context, volunteering can be understood as a form of translating social rhythms into personal rhythms (Woś 2022, 55–66).

4.1. Rhythmic Agency

Definition: The capacity to consciously regulate the rhythms of life through their reinterpretation, modulation, synchronisation, and – when necessary – transcendence. It is neither passive adaptation nor alienation, but the creative recombination of personal and institutional rhythms.

Function under conditions of acceleration: Under conditions of sensory overload and perceptual acceleration (Rosa 2013, 149–174; Han 2015, 7–15), rhythmic agency sustains the continuity of personal narrative, enabling the creation and maintenance of the rhythms of meaning (Rosa 2013, 280–287; Han 2015, 25–31).

Ontological anchoring: As a temporal competence, rhythmic agency is grounded in the emergent properties of subjectivity (Bhaskar 1975; Archer 2003) and operates across three domains:

- (1) the real domain – the potential embedded in the structure of subjectivity;
- (2) the actual domain – practical modulation of rhythms in social contexts;
- (3) the empirical domain – experienced self-regulation and the experience of meaning in the rhythms of everyday life.

4.2. Temporal Reflexivity

Definition: The capacity to manage rhythms across the biographical and institutional dimensions by recognising, evaluating, and reorganising them in accordance with one's values and goals. The underlying mechanism is the internal conversation (Archer 2003), which mediates between structure and agency.

Minimal procedure (three steps).

1. Diagnosing overload, monotony, and the (im)balance of rhythms;
2. Assessing their alignment with one's values (what supports development and what fragments meaning);
3. Designing alternative sequences of action that foster personal, community, and institutional synchrony.

Practical significance: Within the context of education (with adult support), temporal reflexivity is not a luxury but a prerequisite for maintaining self-coherence and the capacity for conscious action under changing temporal regimes.

4.3. Practices and Well-Being: Rituals, Narratives, Initiatives

Three dimensions of practices of rhythmic agency:

- Rites of passage (the beginning and end of the school year, final examinations, celebrations) anchor biography by connecting personal and institutional rhythms.
- Narratives of meaning – stories of crises and turning points – organise sequences of experience, giving them a coherent biographical rhythm.
- Grassroots initiatives (student self-government, social projects, volunteering) introduce alternative rhythms of participation grounded in community values.

Synchrony and well-being. These rhythms produce lasting effects only when they are synchronised with institutional rhythms. Synchrony fosters security, meaning, and agency, whereas desynchronisation generates tension, overload, and a loss of embeddedness. Hence the importance of rhythmic agency and temporal reflexivity as protective and emancipatory mechanisms that enable individuals not only to adapt to the rhythms of their environment but also to retune them in accordance with their values (Rosa 2013; Han 2015). From this perspective, well-being is understood as the dynamic synchrony of personal, community, and institutional rhythms – a state achieved through continuous reflection on time, values, and meaning (cf. Woś 2023a).

CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This article has developed a theoretical reflection on subjectivity through the lens of critical realism, focusing on the relationships between structure, agency, and social time. It proposes a rhythmic conceptual framework that combines critical realism with the concept of rhythm as a temporal, meaning-generating structure, illustrated through data from the *Youth 4.0* project, treated as symptoms of the rhythmisation of values and agency. The analysis of three types of rhythm – progressive, stable, and regressive – shows that the synchronisation of individual and institutional rhythms fosters the development of reflexive subjectivity, whereas their disruption leads to alienation and the fragmentation of meaning. Rhythm, understood ontologically, constitutes a mediating structure between the social world and individual agency.

The paper's principal contributions include: (1) conceptualising rhythm as a mediator between structure and agency; (2) introducing four analytical categories – rhythmic chronostructure, rhythms of subjectivity, rhythmic agency, and temporal reflexivity; (3) developing a typology of chronostructures – progressive, stable, and regressive; and (4) proposing a model of rhythmic synchronisation as a condition for well-being and identity. The rhythmic chronostructure, understood as a rhythmic order of meaning, defines the space of possible individual action, enabling or constraining agency. Time, from this perspective, is not merely a backdrop to social processes but a constitutive element of the structure of action, organising experience and its meaning.

The rhythmic subject, endowed with reflexivity and agency, retains the capacity to reconstruct the rhythms of meaning even under conditions of chronodestruction, provided that appropriate axionormative resources and reflexive competencies are available. Similar phenomena are described by Bukowski and Kopczyńska (2025, 25–26), who argue that communication technologies can both strengthen and disrupt the rhythmicity of social life by imposing new temporal orders and forcing the renegotiation of the rhythms of meaning in education, work, and communication.

The proposed framework opens up three directions for further research:

1. Empirical – identifying rhythms of meaning in educational, biographical, and community practices;
2. Methodological – combining qualitative strategies (rhythm diaries, narratives, observations) with quantitative analysis in the spirit of triangulation;
3. Theoretical – placing the proposed framework in dialogue with the phenomenology of time, symbolic constructivism, relational sociology, and new materialism.

In this way, the article returns to the question posed at the outset concerning the role of social rhythms in the constitution of subjectivity. At the interpretive level, the findings contribute to a broader stream of research on the transformation of subjectivity in late modernity, which emphasises the tension between increasing

reflexivity and the limited possibility of translating it into action. The proposed rhythmic framework extends these findings by highlighting the importance of rhythmic chronostructures as a condition for integrating reflexivity, agency, and meaning over time.

The integration of the proposed rhythmic framework with critical realism appears particularly promising, as it preserves a reference to real structures while simultaneously recognising the subject's reflexive agency. A rhythmic sociology of subjectivity combines reflection on temporality with theories of agency and social structure, offering a new interpretive framework for research on identity and social change. This model does not claim universality; rather, it is heuristic, drawing attention to the relationships between time, structure, and identity in late modernity. The rhythmic approach allows subjectivity to be understood as a dynamic process of synchronising meaning, time, and action – a process that constitutes both a challenge and an opportunity for the contemporary humanities and reflexive pedagogy.

Funding: This research was funded by the Polish Ministry of Education and Science under the *Youth 4.0* research and development project, Agreement No. MEiN/2021/DPI/117.

Role of the Funder: The funder had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data; in the preparation of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

Institutional Review Board / Ethics Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data are not publicly available due to ethical, legal, copyright, or privacy restrictions. Access to the underlying data may be possible subject to the applicable permissions of the institution responsible for the *Youth 4.0* project.

Acknowledgments: The author would like to thank his colleagues and the *Youth 4.0* project team for providing empirical materials, and Professor Krzysztof Wielecki and Professor Waldemar Urbanik for inspiring discussions on the development of the concept of rhythmic morphodynamics.

AI Tools Declaration: During the preparation and revision of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT, provided by OpenAI, for stylistic editing. The author reviewed the AI-assisted output and takes full responsibility for the content of this publication.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Abbott, Andrew. 2001. *Time Matters: On Theory and Method*. University of Chicago Press.
- Adam, Barbara. 1990. *Time and Social Theory*. Polity Press.
- Archer, Margaret S. 1988. *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory*. Cambridge University Press.
- Archer, Margaret S. 1995. *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511557675>.
- Archer, Margaret S. 2003. *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139087315>.

- Baert, Patrick. 1992. *Time, Self, and Social Being: Temporality within a Sociological Context*. Avebury.
- Bergmann, Werner. 1992. "The Problem of Time in Sociology: An Overview of the Literature on the State of Theory and Research on the 'Sociology of Time,' 1900–82." *Time & Society* 1 (1): 81–134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X92001001007>.
- Bhaskar, Roy. 1975. *A Realist Theory of Science*. Leeds Books.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. University of California Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford University Press.
- Bukowski, Andrzej, and Ewa Kopczyńska. 2025. "Socjomaterialność technologii komunikacyjnych w codziennych praktykach społecznych [Sociomateriality of Communication Technologies in Everyday Social Practices]." *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* 21 (1): 6–31. <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8069.21.1.01>.
- Elias, Norbert. 1992. *Time: An Essay*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Blackwell.
- Han, Byung-Chul. 2015. *The Burnout Society*. Translated by Erik Butler. Stanford University Press.
- Kurzępa, Jacek, and Paweł Kopeć. 2023a. "Wybrane wyniki badań 13–14-latków i 15–25-latków w projekcie Młodzież 4.0 (kwestie obywatelskie, postawy wobec Ojczyzny, problemy społeczne) [Selected Results of Research on 13–14-Year-Olds and 15–25-Year-Olds in the Youth 4.0 Project (Civic Issues, Attitudes toward the Homeland, and Social Problems)]." In *Portret współczesnej polskiej młodzieży w świetle projektu Młodzież 4.0 [A Portrait of Contemporary Polish Youth in Light of the Youth 4.0 Project]*, vol. 2, edited by Waldemar Urbanik, 208–244. Pedagogium Wydawnictwo OR TWP.
- Kurzępa, Jacek, and Paweł Kopeć. 2023b. "Wyniki wybranych aspektów z badań w projekcie Młodzież 4.0 (postawy wobec: ekologii i środowiska naturalnego, czasu wolnego, rekreacji, seniorów, zachowań ryzykownych) [Selected Results from Research in the Youth 4.0 Project (Attitudes toward Ecology and the Natural Environment, Leisure, Recreation, Seniors, and Risk Behaviours)]." In *Portret współczesnej polskiej młodzieży w świetle projektu Młodzież 4.0 [A Portrait of Contemporary Polish Youth in Light of the Youth 4.0 Project]*, vol. 2, edited by Waldemar Urbanik, 3–53. Pedagogium Wydawnictwo OR TWP.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 2004. *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. Translated by Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore. Continuum.
- Mead, George H. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Edited by Charles W. Morris. University of Chicago Press.
- Rosa, Hartmut. 2013. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. Translated by Jonathan Trejo-Mathys. Columbia University Press.
- Urbanik, Waldemar. 2022. *Raport z badań pilotażowych projektu badawczo-rozwojowego. Młodzież 4.0*, Akademia Nauk Stosowanych TWP w Szczecinie.
- Urbanik, Waldemar, ed. 2023. *Portret współczesnej polskiej młodzieży w świetle projektu Młodzież 4.0 [A Portrait of Contemporary Polish Youth in Light of the Youth 4.0 Project]*. Vol. 2. Pedagogium Wydawnictwo OR TWP. https://mlodziez4zero.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Portret_wspolczesnej_mlodziezy_tomII_.pdf.

- Woś, Marek. 2022. "Działalność wolontariacka młodzieży w perspektywie podmiotu refleksyjnego [Youth Volunteering from the Perspective of the Reflexive Subject]." In *Młodzież 4.0 — konteksty rozwoju społecznego i ekologicznego [Youth 4.0: Contexts of Social and Ecological Development]*, edited by Jacek Kurzępa, 55–85. Pedagogium Wydawnictwo OR TWP.
- Woś, Marek. 2023a. *Aksjonormatywne wymiary wychowania do podmiotowości społecznej: Perspektywa pedagogiczna [Axionormative Dimensions of Education for Social Subjectivity: A Pedagogical Perspective]*. Akademia Nauk Stosowanych TWP.
- Woś, Marek. 2023b. "Młody człowiek jako podmiot realizujący w życiu określone wartości [The Young Person as a Subject Realising Specific Values in Life]." In *Portret współczesnej polskiej młodzieży w świetle projektu Młodzież 4.0 [A Portrait of Contemporary Polish Youth in Light of the Youth 4.0 Project]*, vol. 2, edited by Waldemar Urbanik, 114–189. Pedagogium Wydawnictwo OR TWP.
- Woś, Marek. 2024a. "Poczucie sensu życia w postindustrialnym kryzysie cywilizacyjnym [The Sense of Meaning in Life in the Postindustrial Civilisational Crisis]." *Polish Journal of Critical Realism* 5 (2): 111–126.
- Woś, Marek. 2024b. "Refleksyjność ucznia w wychowaniu aksjonormatywnym i w budowaniu jego podmiotowości w celu zapewnienia mu dobrostanu [Student Reflexivity in Axionormative Education and in Building Subjectivity to Ensure Well-Being]." In *Oblicza dobrobytu [Dimensions of Well-Being]*, vol. 6, edited by Katarzyna Strzała-Osuch, 187–202. Powiślańska Szkoła Wyższa.
- Woś, Marek. 2024c. "Struktura, sprawczość i zmiana społeczna: Znaczenie realizmu krytycznego [Structure, Agency, and Social Change: The Significance of Critical Realism]." *Polish Journal of Critical Realism* 6 (3): 113–138.
- Zajadacz, Alina, Przemysław Szmaj, Nina Suszczańska, and Tomasz Grudziński. 2010. "Programy multimedialne SITex i SITur jako udogodnienia w przekazywaniu informacji niesłyszącym kulturowo turystom [The SITex and SITur Multimedia Programs as Tools for Providing Information to Culturally Deaf Tourists]." In *Uwarunkowania i plany rozwoju turystyki, t. 7: Aspekty społeczne [Tourism Development: Determinants and Plans, Vol. 7: Social Aspects]*, edited by Zygmunt Młynarczyk and Alina Zajadacz, 107–123. Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar. 1985. *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*. University of Chicago Press.

Re-Acculturation, Reverse Culture Shock, and Peer Relationships among Young Return Migrants to Poland: Three Case Studies

Powrotna akulturacja, powrotny szok kulturowy i relacje rówieśnicze młodych reemigrantów powracających do Polski: trzy studia przypadków

Kinga Lisowska

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8404-4363>

kinga.lisowska@uwm.edu.pl

Received: 10 Mar 2026

Revised: 9 Apr 2026

Accepted: 7 Jun 2026

Published Online First:

30 Jun 2026

Abstract: Young return migrants may experience re-acculturation and reverse culture shock when re-entering peer and school environments in their country of origin. This qualitative study examines how young re-emigrants returning to Poland interpret peer relationships, cultural in-betweenness, and their sense of belonging. Three purposively selected participants aged 15–18, who had returned from the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States, took part in semi-structured, problem-focused interviews. Their narratives were analysed using predefined analytical categories and analytical induction. The cases show that peer environments may either support integration or reinforce social exclusion. Participants described social distance, labelling, language and communication difficulties, limited opportunities to use competencies acquired abroad, and problems rebuilding social belonging and cultural identity. One case indicated partial adaptation supported by family resources and a change of school environment, whereas two cases revealed persistent marginalisation and withdrawal from peer relationships. The findings suggest that re-acculturation trajectories are shaped by the quality of peer relationships, school practices, and access to social support. Although the small sample size precludes generalisation, the study identifies mechanisms to support young return migrants in educational and social settings.

Keywords: return migration, young re-emigrants, re-acculturation, reverse culture shock, peer relationships, cultural in-betweenness, school adjustment

Abstrakt: Młodzi migranci powrotni mogą doświadczać powrotnej akulturacji i powrotnego szoku kulturowego, ponownie wchodząc w środowisko rówieśnicze i szkolne w kraju pochodzenia. Celem jakościowego badania jest ukazanie, w jaki sposób młodzi reemigranci powracający do Polski interpretują relacje rówieśnicze, kulturowe bycie pomiędzy oraz własne poczucie przynależności. W częściowo kierowanych wywiadach skoncentrowanych na problemie uczestniczyły trzy celowo dobrane osoby w wieku 15–18 lat, które powróciły z Wielkiej Brytanii, Niemiec i Stanów Zjednoczonych. Narracje przeanalizowano z wykorzystaniem przyjętych kategorii analitycznych oraz indukcji analitycznej. Studia przypadków pokazują, że środowisko rówieśnicze może zarówno wspierać integrację, jak i pogłębiać wykluczenie społeczne. Badani opisywali dystans społeczny, etykietowanie, trudności językowe i komunikacyjne, ograniczone możliwości wykorzystania kompetencji zdobytych za granicą oraz problemy z odbudowaniem przynależności



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

społecznej i tożsamości kulturowej. Jeden przypadek wskazuje na częściową adaptację wspieraną przez zasoby rodzinne i zmianę środowiska szkolnego, natomiast dwa pozostałe ujawniają trwałą marginalizację i wycofanie z relacji rówieśniczych. Wyniki sugerują, że przebieg powrotnej akulturacji kształtują jakość relacji rówieśniczych, praktyki szkolne oraz dostępność wsparcia społecznego. Choć niewielka liczba przypadków wyklucza uogólnienia, badanie identyfikuje mechanizmy istotne dla wspierania młodych reemigrantów w środowisku edukacyjnym i społecznym.

Słowa kluczowe: migracja powrotna, młodzi reemigranci, powrotna akulturacja, powrotny szok kulturowy, relacje rówieśnicze, kulturowe bycie pomiędzy, readaptacja szkolna

INTRODUCTION

Young people with migration experience who return to their country of origin must find their place within existing socio-cultural structures and, above all, within their peer environment. During adolescence, peer groups are among the main points of reference, shaping one's identity, sense of belonging, and self-esteem. For re-emigrants, however, this environment may become a space marked by tensions, uncertainty and ambivalent experiences (Lisowska 2025, 182).

Re-emigrants often experience reverse culture shock, re-acculturation and a sense of suspension (floating), which manifest in difficulties adapting to social and institutional realities (Żaliński 2022, 129). Upon return, they re-enter relationships that may have evolved during their absence, while they themselves have also undergone changes as a result of living abroad. Encounters with peers frequently reveal differences in communication styles, value systems, leisure practices and interpretations of social norms. Processes of re-acculturation and reverse culture shock are especially visible in everyday peer interactions, which may act as either sources of support or mechanisms of exclusion (Ward et al. 2001, 7–8).

In light of these considerations, it appears important to perceive the return of young re-emigrants not merely as a process of geographical relocation, but as a social and relational experience unfolding through interactions with peers.

1. RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

Being qualitative in nature, the study was embedded in an interpretative paradigm whose aim was to reconstruct the ways in which the participants understood and interpreted their social experiences (Janusz-Lorkowska 2018, 26). The research strategy approved for this study enabled the researchers to conduct an in-depth analysis of individual experiences reported by young re-emigrants upon their return to Poland. The analysis was carried out in the context of the following aspects: re-acculturation, reverse culture shock, and the state of cultural in-betweenness understood as functioning between two cultural realities.

The research questions were formulated as follows: how do young re-emigrants experience and interpret their functioning within a peer environment? In what

ways do re-acculturation, reverse culture shock and the state of in-betweenness influence their social relationships and sense of belonging?

The following analytical categories were adopted:

- expectations of peer relationships after re-emigration,
- real experiences of contacts with peers,
- the course of re-acculturation,
- experience of reverse culture shock,
- ways of coping with the state of in-betweenness.

The study was based on individual semi-structured, problem-focused interviews. The interviews had a narrative character and were conducted according to a previously developed interview scenario. The interview protocol included questions concerning the participants' return to Poland, their functioning within school and peer environments, their sense of social belonging, experiences of cultural differences, and strategies for coping with adaptation difficulties. The study was carried out in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, from January to March 2026. The selection of the interviewees was purposive, with the experience of re-emigration as a selection criterion (Rubacha 2016, 220). Participants were eligible for inclusion in the study if they were adolescents or young adults, had lived abroad for at least two years, and had returned to Poland within five years preceding the study. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and was conducted in an environment intended to ensure that participants felt safe and were able to express themselves freely. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Parental consent for participation in the study was also obtained. To ensure compliance with ethical principles, participants' anonymity was protected through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of any identifying data.

The collected material was processed in cycles, each including such stages as data reduction, ordering and verification. The analysis consisted of two steps: determination of significant elements of the source material according to the adopted analytical categories, and verification of the distinguished elements with the use of analytical induction (Rubacha 2016, 258). The analysis led to the identification of recurring semantic categories referring to experiences of re-acculturation, peer relationships, the feeling of alienation, adaptation strategies and the state of cultural in-betweenness. The interpretation of the material focused on the reconstruction of individual trajectories of experiences related by the research participants.

Characteristics of the research participants

Three young people with experience of re-emigration were included in the study:

- Julia (15 years old) – returned to Poland from Great Britain, where she had lived for a few years; she grew up in a Polish family and has a communicative command of Polish. Julia's parents are working educators, who had been preparing their daughter for her return to Poland since the earliest days of her life in the UK;
- Nicola (18 years old) – returned from Germany; she grew up in a bilingual environment and her competence in Polish was relatively limited, particularly with

regard to reading comprehension and fluent communication. Nicola's father is of German nationality and her mother is Polish. Nicola returned to Poland with her mother after her parents' divorce. Her family had not planned to move to Poland before that.

– Maks (18 years old) – returned from the United States of America; he spent most of his childhood and early adolescence in Poland, and his emigration to the USA was an intense, although relatively short experience. He relocated to the USA with his stepfather and mother but returned to Poland following their divorce. In Poland, he was exposed to alcohol-related abuse perpetrated by his biological father.

2. RE-ACCULTURATION

Acculturation is a process where a person encounters a new cultural context, renegotiating existing patterns of values, norms and meanings. During acculturation, it is possible to maintain elements of one's culture of origin, to modify them or to abandon them in favour of patterns typical of the host society. An outcome of acculturation is the emergence of new cultural configurations, which are reflected in ways of thinking, acting or interpreting social reality. Acculturation leads to adaptation understood as the ability to function in a culturally different environment while retaining relative identity coherence (Jurek 2015, 27).

Acculturation is a dynamic and relational process rather than a one-time act, involving both migrant persons and representatives of the host society. The conditions for their co-existence are constantly being negotiated, and the course of acculturation depends on the social context, the intensity of intercultural contact and individual experiences of a person engaged in the process. Acculturation occurs when one relocates to a new place of residence and enters a new cultural space, although it can also be initiated through participation in intercultural educational environments. Its intensity varies, from deep immersion in a new culture to fragmentary and selective processes.

Entering a new cultural context entails transformations in the psychological and social spheres, which in the long term lead to relatively lasting adaptation effects. On a psychological level, adaptation may include gradual shedding of some elements of the previous cultural models and learning competences essential to function in a new social environment. The course of these processes depends on one's personality traits as well as the presence of stereotypes and biases in the cultures that remain in contact (Berry 1997).

The literature on the subject draws attention to the acculturation strategies described by J.W. Berry. They include integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation. Integration consists of maintaining one's cultural identity while participating in the social life of the host society. Assimilation involves abandoning one's culture of origin in favour of full adaptation to the dominant culture. Separation manifests itself by restrictions imposed on social contacts while preserving one's own cultural models. Marginalisation is associated with rejection

of both the culture of origin and the host culture, which tends to be triggered by experiences of exclusion or discrimination (Adamski 2020, 50). J.W. Berry's model enables us to interpret experiences of young re-emigrants as a process of constant negotiation of one's cultural identity and a search for balance between various systems of values and social norms.

Acculturation is associated with the sense of acculturative stress and culture shock. Contact with different social norms, values, models of behaviour and linguistic codes may lower one's subjective sense of well-being and cause psychological tensions. The response to challenges depends on individual coping strategies, personal resources and community support (Demes and Geeraert 2015). Marx (2000) distinguished three strategies for coping with acculturative stress: anticipation, focus on emotions, focus on problems. Based on these strategies, a concept of styles of breaking through culture shock was developed, which has become the foundation for qualitative and quantitative studies carried out in international organisations (Łużniak and Witkowski 2006, 480).

Re-acculturation, a specific type of acculturation, is the process of re-adaptation to the culture of the country of origin after a period of emigration. It differs from classical acculturation in that the individual returns to a culture which is formally their own, but which can be perceived as partially foreign after the migration experience. Returning to one's country of origin forces one to renegotiate their identity, social relationships and ways of interpreting reality (Ward and Geeraert 2016).

Young re-emigrants function between two cultural realities – the culture of the country of migration, to which they have already adapted themselves, and the culture of the country of origin, the bond with which in many cases has weakened. Their position becomes particularly significant during adolescence, when one's identity and the need to belong to a peer group are formed. Re-emigration to Poland can give rise to the sense of "being in between", when one perceives oneself as "own" and "foreign" at the same time. In the school environment, young re-emigrants can experience difficulties regarding education as well as peer relationships, communication, and a sense of being socially accepted (Schutz 1945).

Research on the functioning of children and adolescents returning to Poland after emigration has already been conducted, for example among participants of the cyclical "In the Circle of Islam" sessions organised by the Polish Committee for UNESCO, as well as among teachers of Polish diaspora schools participating in the Summer School of Intercultural Communication organised by the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Jagiellonian University. The results were presented in the report titled "(Un)easy returns home?" (Grzymała-Moszczyńska et al. 2015). The project's authors, with the use of a qualitative strategy, analysed experiences of children, teenagers, parents and teachers, seeking to identify challenges that re-emigrant children face when entering the Polish education system. Difficulties in the educational, socio-cultural and emotional spheres, which strongly affect the process of school and social re-adaptation, were highlighted (Szydłowska et al. 2019, 171).

Returning to one's country of origin can be an experience as difficult as emigration itself. Re-emigrants often assume that living again in a previously known environment will proceed without any major difficulties. Meanwhile, the social environment has changed and so has the re-emigrant themselves, having acquired new experiences, competences and ways of interpreting the world while living abroad. The discrepancy between expectations and reality can lead to frustration, alienation and adaptation difficulties. This is referred to as a reverse culture shock. It may be particularly strong in a situation of intensive adaptation to life abroad, when the previous environment begins to be perceived as partially foreign (Zakrzewska 2010).

Expectations related to one's return to the country of origin can be an important factor influencing the course of re-adaptation. The more realistic the ideas about the life after re-emigration one has, the more likely it is that they will cope well with the adaptation tensions. Conversely, if one is unprepared for the relocation and has idealised the country of origin, the risk of disappointment and emotional disorganisation is greater. The literature emphasises that the preparation for re-emigration should involve not only formal and educational issues but also psychological preparation for re-entering social and cultural relations (Grzymała-Moszczyńska 2014, 61).

A significant role in interpreting the experiences of re-emigrants is also played by the model of cultural identity of Sussman (2000), which asserts that a stay abroad can lead to changes in how one's own cultural identity is perceived (Szkudlarek 2010). The author distinguished four types of identity changes: subtraction, addition, affirmative and intercultural (global) change. The research by Tambyah and Chng (2006) conducted among people returning after a long-term stay abroad confirmed that changes in cultural identity affect the way an individual functions after return and the course of the social readaptation process.

Coping strategies also play an important role in the process of re-acculturation. Re-emigrants may focus on actively solving problems, seeking social support, or reinterpreting their own migration experiences. Of particular importance is the ability to anticipate potential difficulties and prepare for new conditions of social functioning. Such measures help reduce the sense of insecurity and strengthen the sense of agency (Titzmann and Lee 2018, 72).

The process of re-acculturation can be associated with the notion of "floating". This experience is initiated by the decision to migrate and includes such experiences as uncertainty, loss of sense of security and the need to redefine one's identity and develop a strategy for action. In the case of re-emigration, the sense of floating reappears. A returnee possesses the competences acquired during emigration, but they cannot always apply them in the new-old social environment, because their way of functioning has changed, and the environment does not always accept the diversity of migration experiences (Bron 2000).

Because of the complexity and multidimensionality of re-acculturation, experiences of young re-emigrants should be analysed in conjunction with such

phenomena as reverse culture shock, cultural identity negotiation and the state of “floating”. These phenomena interpenetrate one another and affect the way young people function in the school, peer and family environment (McGovern and Devine 2016).

3. EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG RE-EMIGRANTS – CASE STUDIES

The analysis of the respondents’ narratives enabled us to distinguish different ways of experiencing a return to a peer environment. In the case of one of the subjects, partial adaptation was possible, based on pragmatic adaptation to the prevailing group norms, while maintaining an emotional bond with the country of migration. The other cases show a persistent sense of alienation, marginalisation and withdrawal from peer relationships, leading to social isolation. The analysed narratives indicate that the peer environment can have both an integrative and an exclusionary function, depending on the degree of openness of the group and the ability of re-emigrants to use their cultural and social competences.

3.1. Julia (15 years old)

After her return to Poland, Julia focused on freely entering the peer environment. It was important for her to establish friendly relationships without necessarily explaining her migrant’s biography, and to avoid situations in which she would be perceived as being different. As she emphasised: “All I wanted was to be normal. So that no-one would ask me where I came from, and why my Polish was somewhat different. I had the impression that as soon as someone found out I had been living abroad, they looked at me differently” (Julia). The adaptation strategy she adopted was to blend into the peer environment and not to stand out from other school pupils. Julia mentioned that “it was better not to stand out. If you don’t, no-one is interested in you. I did my best to speak like others and not to talk too much about England” (Julia).

Julia’s everyday experiences, however, proved that her expectations were difficult to fulfil. Because of her new place of residence, she attended a small village school. The local school’s small community promoted high recognition of every pupil, which made it almost impossible to remain anonymous in a peer group. Julia concluded that “everyone knows everything about everyone else. It is impossible to be anonymous. A few days after I had started that school, everyone knew that I had returned from England and that I took additional Polish lessons” (Julia). She was formally enrolled in a class corresponding to her age, but it was considered necessary for Julia to attend extra lessons in Polish language. This fact became common knowledge, resulting in Julia being permanently assigned the role of a “weaker” person in peer relationships, someone who needed to catch up on schoolwork – “I felt they were looking at me as someone who was not coping at school. Sometimes I had the impression they thought I was worse or less

intelligent only because my Polish was poorer” (Julia). Julia experienced labelling and stigmatisation, which limited the possibilities of making friends, despite her expectations. Moving from primary to secondary schools improved her situation. Julia became more anonymous and was not perceived through the prism of her migration past. The new peer environment enabled her to reduce tensions and make acquaintances that were not burdened by her life story.

Julia’s re-acculturation proceeded mainly in the area of instrumental adaptation to the requirements of her peer and educational environment. Owing to her high motivation and the support of her family, she learned to function in the Polish reality, but this process did not lead to full identification with the new social environment. Julia maintains a strong sense of belonging to the British culture, which is an important point of identity for her, and by living in between she has been able to build high self-awareness and reflectivity.

For Julia, the reverse culture shock manifested itself mainly in the difficulties she had adjusting to the norms and expectations of the peer environment. The critical assessment of the dominant patterns of social relations made by Julia testifies to the persistent distance from the reality she encountered. Julia concluded that “In England, people were more open. Everything is somewhat rigid here. I had the impression that everyone was very quick to judge others and you had to be careful about how you behave” (Julia). The peer group remained a partially alien space for her, demanding constant control of her behaviour.

Julia experienced periods of insecurity and disorientation, typical for the state of floating, but over time she developed strategies that enabled a relatively stable existence in a peer environment and partial adaptation. Julia still thinks about her life and education in Poland as a transitional stage, subordinated to the pursuit of a future abroad.

3.2. Nicola (18 years old)

Nicola’s return to Poland was sudden and unprepared, which significantly affected her expectations of a peer environment. She highlighted that “it all happened overnight. Nobody asked me if I wanted to go back to Poland. In Germany I had my life, friends, school, and all this ended suddenly” (Nicola). Her parents’ divorce forced her to face the process of re-emigration. Before her return, she had paid little attention to Polish culture or the Polish language. Nicola worried that she would have difficulties making friends with peers, and that they would not accept her. She did not feel any bond with Poland – “Poland was a foreign country for me. I did not feel that it was my home country. I had the impression that everyone knew something that I did not know, and I could not find my way around it” (Nicola).

Because of a relative language barrier, Nicola was placed two years below her age-appropriate education level, which reinforced the feeling of stigmatisation and social exclusion from the peer group. Nicola explained: “I felt as if my life had reversed. All my classmates were younger than me and I had the feeling that

I was somehow inferior. I felt terribly ashamed attending that class” (Nicola). Her relationships with peers were mostly characterised by Nicola’s keeping distance and feeling isolated, and her school experiences contributed to an increasingly intense sense of non-belonging. Over time, anxiety, rebellious behaviours and symptoms of depression appeared – “I did not feel like getting up in the morning to go to school. I feared to go there. I had the impression that every day looked the same and that I was constantly being judged or ridiculed” (Nicola). The transition to homeschooling enabled Nicola to complete her education; however, it also resulted in a near-complete disruption of her peer relationships. Nicola’s re-acculturation process in the social dimension appears to have been unsuccessful. Nicola was unable to establish new peer relationships, and remained lonely and confused, without a clearly defined group to relate to. Consequently, her sense of identity seems to have become increasingly disintegrated.

The reverse culture shock manifested itself as a more intense feeling of alienation and conflicts with the social environment. The discrepancy between her expectations and the actual relational experiences deepened her withdrawal from peer contacts. Nicola noted: “I felt that everything was against me. I didn’t understand the people, they didn’t understand me, and I felt as if I didn’t fit in anywhere anymore” (Nicola). Nicola remained in a state of floating, not undertaking effective strategies for social reintegration. In her functioning, the sense of loss of security and control over her educational and relational situation became significant.

3.3. Maks (18 years old)

Maks’s fears related to his return to Poland were mostly about the risk of losing his position within the peer environment. The experiences gained in the United States of America provided him with a sense of acceptance, agency and success in social relationships. He said: “Back there I was someone. I had friends, a team, my own place. For the first time in my life, I could feel that people accepted me and did not look at me through the prism of my troubles at home” (Maks). Returning to Poland entailed the risk of re-entering relationships based on stigmatisation and hierarchisation. Before leaving Poland for the USA, Maks had been perceived as inaccessible and as experiencing difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships with others. Peers saw him as a short-tempered person, easily getting into trouble. Maks was unable to establish himself socially among his peers. Essentially, as he admitted, Maks did not create strong bonds with any of the groups he could relate to and had no opportunities to satisfy the need for belonging and acceptance. He felt excluded and misunderstood. Maks mentioned that “Everyone said I was difficult. I was trouble. Even if I didn’t do anything, they still used to look at me as a problem child” (Maks).

In the USA, Maks adapted well to a multicultural peer environment, comprising pupils originating from diverse social and family backgrounds, with varied life experiences. For the first time, he could develop a sense of belonging.

This environment enabled him to feel at home, establish stable social relationships and develop a strong sense of identity.

After returning to Poland, Maks soon experienced a disruption in the continuity of his peer relationships. Being identified as a pupil requiring additional support appeared to initiate a process of social marginalisation, contributing to his increasing isolation and withdrawal from peer interactions. His growing frustration and sense of diminished self-worth were subsequently expressed through engagement in risky behaviours and the emergence of emotional difficulties. During the interview, Maks underlined that "Once again I was the one who couldn't cope. I had the impression that it did not matter what I did because everyone already had a firm opinion about me. I felt that I had returned to the starting point" (Maks).

Homeschooling enabled Maks to complete his education; however, it also resulted in a near-complete disruption of his peer relationships. In the social domain, Maks's process of re-acculturation appeared unsuccessful. He did not re-establish peer connections or regain a sense of belonging and gradually appeared to internalise a marginalised social role. The effects of reverse culture shock manifested in difficulties accepting the social norms operating within the Polish peer environment and in resistance to the expectations placed upon him. Maks appeared to remain in a state of psychological floating, without progressing to more active forms of coping with his difficulties. His functioning became increasingly characterised by a sense of insecurity, perceived failure, and the loss of continuity in peer relationships.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of experiences of young re-emigrants indicates that a return to the country of origin is not a simple process of social reintegration, but initiates a complex mechanism of re-acculturation, in which the individual reconstructs their own identity, social position and a network of peer relationships. The research results confirm that a peer environment is one of the key areas in which the consequences of reverse culture shock and functioning in-between cultural systems first emerge.

The current study results are consistent with the classical and contemporary findings of research on return adaptation published in international literature. In particular, they correspond well with the concept of reverse culture shock developed under the framework of intercultural psychology (Ward et al. 2001), in which it is emphasised that a return to the culture of origin often generates cognitive-emotional dissonance comparable or even stronger than that caused by the experience of emigration. The analysed empirical material reveals the discrepancy between re-emigrants' expectations and social reality, leading to disorientation, an undermined sense of belonging and destabilisation of peer relationships.

The research findings are also consistent with transnational models of cultural adaptation, and especially with the approach proposed by Kim (1988), who conceptualises acculturation as a dynamic, cyclical process, involving both

periods of adaptation and identity destabilisation. This study shows that a return to one's country of origin does not mean a regress of the adaptation process; rather, it involves a process of reorganisation in new social circumstances, in which previously acquired cultural competences may lose their functionality.

Particularly important are the references to the research by Ward et al. (2001), who conclude that a key determinant of successful re-adaptation is the quality of social relationships as well as structural conditions of the inclusion of a re-emigrant rather than his or her mental resilience. The results of our study confirm this mechanism because a peer environment acts as both an area of integration and of exclusion, with the dominant model of the group's reaction determining the adaptation trajectory of an individual.

This case study shows clear variation in the course of re-acculturation. Julia's case can be interpreted as a partial integration strategy, similar to the model of "adaptive biculturalism", described in the literature as one of the most stable variants of functioning after migration (Sussman 2000). At the same time, the persistent emotional distance from the country of origin indicates that this integration is functional rather than identity-related.

On the other hand, the cases of Nicola and Maks mirror the model of marginalisation and social exclusion, described both in the classical concepts of J.W. Berry and in the research on young re-emigrants in the educational context (including research on returning students in the European and Anglo-Saxon systems). In both cases, language barriers, labelling mechanisms and institutional differentiation practices (e.g. placement in a lower grade than warranted by age) played an important role, being identified in the literature as factors reinforcing educational and social exclusion.

The results of our study are consistent with the findings concerning adolescence as a period of vulnerability to migration experiences. The literature emphasises that this stage in life is associated with an intensive construction of social identity and dependence on peer acceptance, which means that young re-emigrants are particularly sensitive to rejection mechanisms (Ward et al. 2001; Sussman 2000). In the analysed cases, limited acceptance within the peer environment seemed to contribute to the persistence of the state of floating, and to reduce the participants' capacity to reconstruct a stable social identity.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the three cases presented above:

- re-acculturation has a relational and structural character and cannot be explained solely by the individual's resources;
- the peer environment acts as a key mediator of the process of adaptation, which is consistent with the results of international research on re-adaptation;
- reverse culture shock is a systemic phenomenon, mostly manifesting itself in social and institutional interactions;
- the state of cultural in-betweenness may become chronic when a re-emigrant lacks social support and is unable to reconstruct his or her group affiliations;

– adolescence is a time in life when the risk of identity disorganisation induced by re-emigration is elevated, which is confirmed by the results of transcultural studies.

In the light of the results of our analysis, it is justified to depart from linear models of re-adaptation in favour of dynamic approaches, which take into account the multi-level conditions underlying the process of re-acculturation. The global literature on this subject emphasises that an experience of migration can be either a resource in one's development or a source of psychosocial risk (depending on the quality of institutional and peer support). The results of the research correspond well with this dual model and demonstrate that this duality is a factor differentiating the degree of social inclusion in the educational environment.

A limitation of the study is its qualitative nature and a small number of cases, which prevents the formulation of broad statistical generalisations. At the same time, the results constitute valuable exploratory material and can be a starting point for further comparative studies, including larger samples and different cultural contexts.

It would be reasonable to take into account in future studies the perspective of teachers, parents and peers, and to expand the research by including an intercultural approach, as this will enable us to compare re-acculturation mechanisms in different educational systems. This would also allow us to better capture both universal and culture-specific mechanisms of adaptation of young re-emigrants.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board / Ethics Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data are not publicly available due to ethical, legal, copyright, or privacy restrictions, but may be available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to applicable permissions.

AI Tools Declaration: *Not applicable. The author declares that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.*

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Adamski, Jakub Krzysztof. 2020. *Adaptacja i postrzeganie imigrantów w państwach europejskich: Studium porównawcze [Adaptation and Perceptions of Immigrants in European Countries: A Comparative Study]*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego. <https://doi.org/10.18778/8220-253-3>.
- Berry, John W. 1997. "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation." *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 46 (1): 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>.

- Bron, Agnieszka. 2000. "Floating as an Analytical Category in the Narratives of Polish Immigrants to Sweden." In *Allvarlig debatt och rolig lek: En festskrift tillägnad Andrzej Nils Ugglä* [*Serious Debate and Playful Fun: A Festschrift Dedicated to Andrzej Nils Ugglä*], edited by Elżbieta Szwejkowska-Olsson and Michał Bron Jr., 119–132. Uppsala University, Centre for Multiethnic Research.
- Demes, Kali A., and Nicolas Geeraert. 2015. "The Highs and Lows of a Cultural Transition: A Longitudinal Analysis of Sojourner Stress and Adaptation across 50 Countries." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 109 (2): 316–337. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000046>.
- Grzymała-Moszczyńska, Halina, Joanna Grzymała-Moszczyńska, Joanna Durlik-Marcinowska, and Paulina Szydłowska-Klakla. 2015. *(Nie)łatwe powroty do domu? Funkcjonowanie dzieci i młodzieży powracających z emigracji* [(Un)easy Returns Home? The Functioning of Children and Young People Returning from Emigration]. Fundacja Centrum im. prof. Bronisława Geremka. http://geremek.pl/assets/files/Powroty/niełatwe_powroty_raport_koncowy.pdf.
- Grzymała-Moszczyńska, Joanna. 2014. "Psychologiczne aspekty powrotów z emigracji – przegląd teoretyczny [Psychological Aspects of Returns from Emigration: A Theoretical Review]." *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny* 40 (4 [154]): 51–74.
- Janusz-Lorkowska, Monika. 2018. "Badania czytelnictwa w Polsce w kontekście wybranych paradygmatów nauk społecznych [Reading Research in Poland in the Context of Selected Paradigms in the Social Sciences]." *Folia Bibliologica* 60: 15–36. <https://doi.org/10.17951/fb.2018.60.15-36>.
- Jurek, Anna. 2015. "Psychologiczne aspekty doświadczeń migracyjnych u dzieci i młodzieży [Psychological Aspects of Migration Experiences in Children and Adolescents]." In *Migracja, tożsamość, dojrzewanie: Adaptacja kulturowa dzieci i młodzieży z doświadczeniem migracyjnym* [Migration, Identity, and Growing Up: Cultural Adaptation of Children and Young People with Migration Experience], edited by Natalia Klorek and Katarzyna Kubin, 27–64. Fundacja na rzecz Różnorodności Społecznej.
- Kim, Young Yun. 1988. *Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation: An Integrative Theory*. Multilingual Matters.
- Lisowska, Kinga. 2025. "'Z ziemi włoskiej do polskiej' – powrotna akulturacja reemigranta w wieku późnej dorosłości ['From Italian Soil to Polish Soil': The Return Acculturation of a Re-emigrant in Late Adulthood]." *Kultura i Edukacja* 1 (147): 181–194. <https://doi.org/10.15804/kie.2025.01.09>.
- Łuźniak, Magdalena, and Stanisław A. Witkowski. 2006. "Badania stylów radzenia sobie z szokiem kulturowym w organizacjach – problemy metodologiczne [Research on Styles of Coping with Culture Shock in Organizations: Methodological Problems]." *Prace Naukowe Akademii Ekonomicznej we Wrocławiu* 1130: 477–490.
- Marx, Elisabeth. 2000. *Przełamywanie szoku kulturowego: Czego potrzebujesz, aby odnieść sukces w międzynarodowym biznesie: Emocje, myślenie, tożsamość i umiejętności socjalne* [Breaking Through Culture Shock: What You Need to Succeed in International Business]. Agencja Wydawnicza PLACET.
- McGovern, Frieda, and Dymrna Devine. 2016. "The Care Worlds of Migrant Children: Exploring Intergenerational Dynamics of Love, Care and Solidarity across Home and School." *Childhood* 23 (1): 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568215579734>.

- Rubacha, Krzysztof. 2016. *Metodologia badań nad edukacją [Research Methodology in Education]*. Editions Spotkania.
- Schutz, Alfred. 1945. "The Homecomer." *American Journal of Sociology* 50 (5): 369–376. <https://doi.org/10.1086/219654>.
- Sussman, Nan M. 2000. "The Dynamic Nature of Cultural Identity throughout Cultural Transitions: Why Home Is Not So Sweet." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 4 (4): 355–373. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0404_5.
- Szkudlarek, Betina. 2010. "Reentry: A Review of the Literature." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 34 (1): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.06.006>.
- Szydłowska, Paulina, Joanna Durlík, and Joanna Grzymała-Moszczyńska. 2019. "Returning Children Migrants: Main Challenges in School Environment." *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny* 45 (1 [171]): 171–192. <https://doi.org/10.4467/25444972SMPP.19.008.10258>.
- Tambyah, Siok Kuan, and Raymond Chng. 2006. "Revisiting the Cultural Identity Model: Sojourners' Negotiations of Identity and Consumption Experiences." *Advances in Consumer Research* 33 (1): 464–465.
- Titzmann, Peter F., and Richard M. Lee. 2018. "Adaptation of Young Immigrants: A Developmental Perspective on Acculturation Research." *European Psychologist* 23 (1): 72–82. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000313>.
- Ward, Colleen, and Nicolas Geeraert. 2016. "Advancing Acculturation Theory and Research: The Acculturation Process in Its Ecological Context." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 8: 98–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2015.09.021>.
- Ward, Colleen, Stephen Bochner, and Adrian Furnham. 2001. *The Psychology of Culture Shock*. 2nd ed. Routledge.
- Zakrzewska, Kornelia. 2010. "Trudny powrót do domu – co przeżywają osoby doświadczające szoku powrotnego? [A Difficult Return Home: What Do People Experiencing Re-entry Shock Go Through?]" *Psychiatria i Psychoterapia* 6 (2): 44–50.
- Żaliński, Adam. 2022. "Akulturacja [Acculturation]." In *Słowniki społeczne: Studia kulturowe [Social Dictionaries: Cultural Studies]*, edited by Leszek Korporowicz, Agnieszka Knap-Stefaniuk, and Łukasz Burkiewicz, 129–145. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum w Krakowie. <https://doi.org/10.35765/slovníki.245>.

Entering Adulthood after Forced Migration: A Focus Group Study of Ukrainian Refugee Youth in Olsztyn and Kraków

Wchodzenie w dorosłość po przymusowej migracji – badanie fokusowe młodych uchodźców z Ukrainy w Olsztynie i Krakowie

Elżbieta Subocz

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4869-1966>

elzbieta.subocz@uwm.edu.pl

Magdalena Sternicka-Kowalska

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4962-4653>

magdalena.sternicka@uwm.edu.pl

Received: 12 Dec 2025

Revised: 11 Feb 2026

Accepted: 25 May 2026

Published Online First:

6 Jun 2026

Abstract: This pilot qualitative study examines how Ukrainian refugee youth navigate the transition to adulthood in Poland after forced displacement caused by the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. It focuses on education, employment, housing, and interpersonal relationships and explores differences between the experiences reported in Olsztyn and Kraków. Data were collected in 2024 through two focus group interviews with 22 purposively selected participants aged 16–19, including 12 participants in Olsztyn and 10 in Kraków. Polish-language proficiency emerged as the principal barrier to educational participation and social integration in both groups. Participants in Olsztyn more often described survival-oriented strategies and early labour market participation, whereas participants in Kraków placed greater emphasis on education, personal development, and extracurricular activities. Across both groups, participants reported employers' reluctance to hire minors, a mismatch between their qualifications and available jobs, high housing costs, and barriers in the rental market. Most maintained relationships with other Ukrainians, and many also had Polish friends; however, perceived differences in attitudes towards adulthood constrained closer peer relationships. Nationality-based discrimination was reported only sporadically. Given the pilot design and the inclusion of one focus group in each city, the observed differences should be treated as exploratory rather than representative. The findings highlight the need for language support, accessible educational opportunities, housing assistance, and age-sensitive labour market measures for Ukrainian refugee youth in Poland.

Keywords: Ukrainian refugee youth, forced migration, transition to adulthood, educational integration, labour market integration, housing insecurity, social integration



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstrakt: W pilotażowym badaniu jakościowym przeanalizowano, w jaki sposób młodzi uchodźcy z Ukrainy wchodzą w dorosłość w Polsce po przymusowym przesiedleniu spowodowanym pełnoskalową rosyjską inwazją na Ukrainę. Badanie obejmowało edukację, aktywność zawodową, warunki mieszkaniowe i relacje interpersonalne oraz miało na celu zidentyfikowanie różnic w doświadczeniach zgłaszanych w Olsztynie i Krakowie. Materiał empiryczny zebrano w 2024 roku podczas dwóch wywiadów fokusowych z 22 celowo dobranymi uczestnikami w wieku 16–19 lat: 12 osobami w Olsztynie i 10 w Krakowie. W obu grupach niedostateczna znajomość języka polskiego okazała się główną barierą uczestnictwa w edukacji i integracji społecznej. Uczestnicy z Olsztyna częściej opisywali strategie ukierunkowane na przetrwanie i wczesne

rozpoczęcie pracy, natomiast uczestnicy z Krakowa większe znaczenie przypisywali edukacji, rozwojowi osobistemu i zajęciom dodatkowym. W obu grupach wskazywano na niechęć pracodawców do zatrudniania osób niepełnoletnich, niedopasowanie dostępnych ofert pracy do kwalifikacji, wysokie koszty utrzymania oraz bariery na rynku najmu mieszkań. Większość badanych utrzymywała relacje z innymi Ukraińcami, a wielu miało również polskich przyjaciół; jednak dostrzegane różnice w podejściu do dorosłości utrudniały budowanie bliższych relacji rówieśniczych. Przypadki dyskryminacji ze względu na narodowość zgłaszano sporadycznie. Ze względu na pilotażowy charakter badania i przeprowadzenie jednego wywiadu fokusowego w każdym mieście, zaobserwowane różnice należy traktować jako eksploracyjne, a nie reprezentatywne. Wyniki wskazują na potrzebę wsparcia językowego, zwiększenia dostępności edukacji, pomocy mieszkaniowej oraz rozwiązań na rynku pracy, które uwzględniają wiek młodych uchodźców z Ukrainy.

Słowa kluczowe: młodzi uchodźcy z Ukrainy, migracja przymusowa, wchodzenie w dorosłość, integracja edukacyjna, integracja na rynku pracy, niepewność mieszkaniowa, integracja społeczna

INTRODUCTION

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine triggered a major migration crisis in Europe, on a scale not seen since World War II. Approximately 3.4 million Ukrainian refugees arrived in Poland within the first two and a half months of the outbreak of the war, with minors younger than 17 accounting for 43.3% of this population (UNHCR 2022, 1; Krawczak 2022, 355). For many youngsters, the decision to leave their homes, schools, and communities was not a choice but a necessity dictated by the horrors of war. Upon their arrival in Poland, Ukrainian youth not only carried traumatic personal experiences but also a determination to rebuild their lives (Popyk et al. 2024, 6).

Individuals living through war typically experience uncertainty, imbalance, emotional turmoil, cognitive disarray, and instability in their system of values (Khoruzha 2024, 104). Young people who remained in Ukraine have reported various forms of loss since the beginning of the war. Most of them have experienced a reduction or loss of income (30% in 2024 relative to 36% in 2023), death of friends or family members (this figure doubled from 14% in 2023 to 28% in 2024, reaching 49% in eastern Ukraine), and deterioration of mental health (28% in both 2023 and 2024). A considerable proportion of Ukrainian respondents reported that their relations with friends (18%) or family members (13%) had been broken, or that they had been separated from their loved ones (14%), indicating a significant weakening of social ties. Among the respondents, 13% mostly from eastern (32%) and southern (19%) Ukraine were forced to relocate, whereas 6% decided to leave the country. According to most Ukrainian youth living abroad (73%), displacement was the main loss sustained as a result of the war. An increase was also observed in the percentage of young people who were wounded during military operations (from 6% in 2023 to 9% in 2024), lost their homes (from 5% to 8%, respectively), or whose homes were destroyed (from 6% to 8%, respectively). The number of young Ukrainians who were conscripted into the Armed Forces also increased significantly (from 9% in 2023 to 21% in 2024) (Kostiuchenko et al. 2024, 36).

Poland provided Ukrainian refugees not only with immediate shelter and assistance but also with long-term support and opportunities for social adaptation. Pursuant to the provisions of the *Act of 12 March 2022 on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine* (Poland 2022, Journal of Laws 2022, item 583), Ukrainian migrants were granted the right to legal residence, legal employment and business activity, as well as access to healthcare, education, and social benefits (including family benefits under the 800+ program, welfare assistance), free psychological support, and Polish language instruction. As of August 2025, approximately 987,000 of Ukrainian citizens in Poland were receiving temporary protection, including just over 400,000 adolescents aged 14-17 and nearly 76,000 persons aged 18-34 (Eurostat 2025).

The need to provide tens of thousands of Ukrainian children and adolescents with adequate care and schooling presented an immense challenge to Poland's educational system. Various measures were implemented to address this need. Alternative educational and care facilities were established; Ukrainian students were provided with free transportation to schools; inter-school departments were created to facilitate the transition process and adapt school curricula, and additional initiatives were introduced to recruit more educators and teacher assistants (Ministry of Education and Science 2022b). As of late October 2024, 203,000 Ukrainian students (of whom 152,000 were refugees and 51,000 were prewar migrants) were enrolled in Polish schools. These figures indicate that four out of every 100 students in Polish schools were of Ukrainian origin (Świdrowska and Stano 2025, 3, 12). However, approximately 150,000-200,000 Ukrainian children and adolescents remained outside the educational system, which represents a considerable problem (Amnesty International 2023a, 4). To address this issue, as of 1 June 2025, the eligibility for benefits under the 800+ program was limited to migrant families whose children were enrolled in Polish schools.

In 2022, new measures were also introduced in the tertiary education system to enable Ukrainian students to enroll in Polish universities. These included assistance in organizing preparatory university entrance exams for high school seniors, expanding the number of places in university dormitories, free enrolment in full-time Polish-language university programs, scholarship opportunities, and the launch of the "Solidarity with Ukraine" program (Ministry of Education and Science 2022a, 68). In the 2023/2024 academic year, 46,200 Ukrainian students attended Polish universities, accounting for 43.1% of all foreign students (Statistics Poland 2024b, 2).

Learning Polish was the greatest challenge for Ukrainian children and adolescents enrolled in Polish schools.¹ This was the main reason their academic performance lagged behind what it had been in the home country. Ukrainian students had to adapt to different school curricula and a new grading system,

¹ Based on the results of a focus group study conducted in 2023 in Warsaw, Kraków, and Wrocław. A total of 104 children and adolescents aged 8-17 (90 from Ukraine and 14 from Poland) participated in the study.

and they had to integrate with teachers and peers in a new social environment. The problems experienced by young migrants were further exacerbated by psychosocial distress and deteriorating mental health (Centrone et al. 2023, 44). These findings have been confirmed by researchers, including Tyler-Rubinstein et al. (2022, 3).² Most of the surveyed students (57%) reported feeling less happy after leaving Ukraine, with older adolescents (aged 16 and more) being most affected. The vast majority of them experienced increased anxiety, which is linked to escaping the war, living in a foreign country, feelings of alienation, academic overload, difficulties in overcoming the language barrier, cultural differences, and experiences of xenophobia (Tędziągolska et al. 2023, 6).

Despite the fact that Ukrainians were warmly welcomed in Poland, some young Ukrainians experience discrimination and hostility from Polish students and their parents (Amnesty International 2023b, 4). Xenophobic behaviors were reported not only in schools but also in places of residence and public transportation, especially if students conversed in their native language (Centrone et al. 2023, 6). An empirical study³ commissioned by the Children's Rights Ombudsman (2023, 27) revealed that 8% of Ukrainian students had experienced negative attitudes or behaviors from Polish classmates. However, positive attitudes were more frequent, and 39% of the respondents reported that their classmates were very friendly, whereas 34% claimed that they were being "tolerated" by their peers.

While the situation of adult Ukrainian migrants has been relatively well researched (see, e.g. Chmielewska-Kalińska et al. 2022; Długosz et al. 2022; Chmielewska-Kalińska et al. 2023; Duszczek et al. 2023; Dudek et al. 2024; Subocz et al. 2024), the experiences of young Ukrainians have received far less scholarly attention. The present study was undertaken to fill this gap in the literature.

1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Youth is an ambiguous sociological category that is difficult to define. According to demographic criteria, the category of youth includes individuals aged 15 and above (Nieżgoda 2014, 46). This criterion was adopted in this research project. Two focus group interviews involving Ukrainian youth living in Olsztyn and Kraków were conducted in August 2024. These regional capitals were selected for the study because they host foundations established by Ukrainian migrants,⁴ which facilitated the organization of the research process. In both interviews,

² More than one thousand children and their parents from Finland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, and Sweden participated in surveys and focus group interviews. The study was conducted in July and August 2022.

³ A total of 3100 primary school and secondary school students were surveyed. The study was conducted in June 2023 using the CAPI method.

⁴ Ukrainian migrants founded the "Dwa Skrzydła UA" (Two Wings UA) Foundation in Olsztyn and "Jedność" (Unity) Foundation in Kraków. These organizations launch projects and initiatives aimed at supporting Ukrainians, promoting their social adaptation, and providing them with psychological assistance and educational support. They organize cultural events and promote the development of Ukrainian culture and national identity.

a purposive sampling method was applied to select respondents based on the age criterion (Babbie 2003, 204). A total of 22 individuals aged 16-19, including 12 in Olsztyn and 10 in Kraków, participated in the focus group interviews.

The study was conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Good Practice in Research Involving Children (Maciejewska-Mroczek et al. 2016, 1). Before the study, the participants' parents or legal guardians were informed about the purpose of the research project and asked to provide written consent for their children's participation in the focus group. The young migrants were informed about the purpose of the study, the intended use of the results, their rights, the applied research methods, the researcher's affiliations, as well as the fact that the interview would be recorded.

The study focused on the following key aspects of Ukrainian migrants' participation in social life in Poland:

- Education – what types of problems do the respondents experience in the Polish educational system? Which academic subjects present the greatest difficulty? Do they participate in extracurricular activities?
- Professional activity – are the respondents employed? If so, why did they choose work over study? In which sectors of the economy are they employed?
- Housing – are the respondents' living conditions conducive to studying? What problems are experienced by young migrants on the housing market?
- Interpersonal relationships – do the respondents maintain contact with their friends in Ukraine? Do they have Polish friends? Have they ever experienced discrimination from Poles?

This study was a pilot project, conducted with the objective to perform a preliminary assessment of the living conditions and challenges faced by young Ukrainian refugees. The present findings can be used to design a larger-scale study in other Polish towns and cities beyond Olsztyn and Kraków.

2. SELECTED RESULTS

2.1. Education

The interviewed migrants pursued different educational paths. Some of them continued their education in the Ukrainian system only (online), some were enrolled in Polish schools and universities, whereas others combined both systems. Some respondents decided not to pursue further education. Learning Polish proved challenging for Ukrainian youth interviewed in both cities.

"You understand the language, but speaking is far more difficult" (FO).⁵

"(...) It takes so much more time, which is really frustrating, because first you have to learn something in your own language, and then you have to learn it in another language and be able to understand it and write about it" (FK).

⁵ F – female, M – male, O – Olsztyn, K – Kraków.

The respondents also noted that their limited language proficiency prevented them from meeting the disproportionate expectations of teachers, who required Ukrainian students to be fluent in Polish. These demands adversely impacted the respondents' academic performance and were a source of frustration.

"(...) My grade point average is 4.5 because I get good grades in the subjects I like, but my average grade in Polish is 3 (...) since my teachers have unrealistic expectations" (FK).

Proficiency in the host country's language undoubtedly contributes to successful social adaptation. Poor command of Polish is the main reason why some young migrants are excluded from the educational system.

"I don't go to a Polish school, I'm enrolled in a Ukrainian online school (...) because my Polish is not very good, and reasonably priced Polish language tutors are very difficult to find" (FK).

The differences between the Polish and Ukrainian educational systems pose yet another challenge. As a result, the educational stages of students in the same age group are not always aligned. In Poland, Ukrainian students are often placed in grades below those corresponding to their age. As a result, their period of schooling is extended by one or even two years (Sternicka-Kowalska and Subocz 2025, 109-110). In Ukraine, the school-leaving examination is typically taken at the age of 17 or 18, which is due to the earlier start of schooling (at 6 years of age) and a shorter secondary school program. Polish and Ukrainian school curricula also differ considerably. The respondents commented on these discrepancies using mathematics as an example. In mathematics classes, Ukrainian students repeated the material they had already covered in their home country.

"Math was the easiest subject (...) When I started going to a Polish school, I already knew everything that was being taught" (FO).

Owing to their relatively low wages, many Ukrainian mothers have to make an extra effort to educate their children, for example, by taking on additional jobs. The respondents were aware of this fact:

"(...) My mother works very hard in Poland so that I can live and study here (...) At one point, she worked three jobs at the same time (...)" (FK).

The interviews conducted in the two cities also revealed differences in the young migrants' participation in extracurricular activities. Young people living in Olsztyn did not have private tutors, did not take part in extracurricular activities, and were not interested in them. In contrast, respondents from Kraków not only participated in these activities but also expressed an interest in additional lessons, in particular language classes. Financial constraints were the key barrier to attending after-school activities. Extracurricular activities are expensive, and free options are limited.

"Generally, I'd really like to take part in some kind of extracurricular activities (...) but unfortunately, I can't find free classes or at least cheaper tutors" (FK).

"I'd like to take language classes, but they're too expensive. The main problem is the price because I'm really motivated to learn" (FK).

The participants were aware that by studying in Poland, they would obtain a diploma that is recognized throughout the European Union, which would improve their career prospects. If young migrants were to return to Ukraine at some point, their academic achievements would also undoubtedly contribute to the country's human resource development.

"(...) If you get a Polish diploma, you have greater opportunities in Europe. Education is important in the European Union and in Ukraine (...)" (FK).

2.2 Professional activity

Employment was one of the main spheres of activity for young Ukrainians residing in Olsztyn and Kraków. Many participants worked part-time jobs, mainly in the service sector. The respondents worked in retail, as English tutors, leaflet distributors, baristas, security guards, beauty salon consultants, and couriers. However, finding a job is not always easy because many employers are reluctant to hire minors, and the supply of jobs matching their qualifications is limited. These issues cause frustration.

"I did look for work, but I couldn't find anything because Poles are reluctant to hire 16-year-olds. They can legally do it, but they don't want to" (FK).

"I have professional qualifications to work in commerce, but I cannot work in my field although I'd like to; they will only hire me as a maid, a kitchen assistant or a cleaner" (FO).

Motivation for work is also an important issue in this context. For some young migrants, working is a conscious choice that is made to gain independence or pursue own dreams.

"I have been working for a long time. I want to pursue my dreams" (FO).

"I work for a living (...), to earn extra money" (FK).

In turn, other respondents had to find employment to provide financial support for their families, especially at the beginning of their stay in Poland.

"I worked as a leaflet distributor in the summer of 2022. I had to do it to help out financially at home (...)" (FK).

Although most of the surveyed subjects received financial assistance from their parents, some lived in Poland alone, without their immediate family, and had to support themselves.

"(...) I support myself, and I have to work. Rent is very expensive. I live alone, so I have to pay the full amount" (MO).

Therefore, employment plays a pivotal role in fostering independence and social integration among Ukrainian youth in Poland. However, it also exposes the structural barriers that hinder the full realization of their professional potential.

2.3 Housing

When asked about conditions for studying at home, the respondents living in Olsztyn and Kraków highlighted problems such as not having their own room or a desk.

“My mom and I live in a two-room apartment—one bedroom and a living room with a kitchenette. I use the dining table as my desk” (MO).

Some respondents from Kraków sought better study conditions outside their homes, for instance in libraries or community spaces ran by Ukrainian foundations.

“I have moved many times since I came to Poland (...). I didn’t always have the adequate conditions for studying, but in the worst cases, if the apartment simply didn’t have a desk, I would study at the foundation (...) In other cases, when the foundation was closed, I would go to a public library instead” (FK).

In this regard, the difference between the two cities could be attributed to the greater availability of academic infrastructure in Kraków, which is one of the largest Polish cities. In turn, young Ukrainians residing in Olsztyn—a medium-sized regional capital—pointed out the low availability of spaces near their homes that were conducive to studying. In both cities, high real estate prices and rental costs posed the greatest challenge, particularly in comparison with the Ukrainian market. Housing costs constituted a significant burden for the respondents and their families. However, these problems are equally daunting for young Poles who are planning to buy or rent an apartment.

“Apartments are very expensive, and if your parents work in Ukraine, they can’t afford to buy you a place or even pay your rent. Real estate is a business, and the wages are different in Ukraine (...) This is why we can’t study, and we have to work to make a living in Poland” (MO).

In addition to high rents and large security deposits, the respondents also pointed out formal barriers, mostly landlords’ reluctance to rent apartments to Ukrainians, particularly young people. In their opinion, landlords often expect Ukrainian tenants to pay double security deposits, present a certificate of their parents’ incomes, or sign an occasional lease agreement (a special type of a residential lease agreement), which makes renting an apartment a very difficult and costly process. Such experiences can lead to feelings of unfair treatment and increase the risk of housing exclusion.

“(...) I can’t rent an apartment because landlords think that young people can’t pay for it. (...) It makes no difference if we tell them that we are students, that our mothers help us, provide us with financial support, no one responds to that, even though the landlords’ interests are fully secured by an occasional lease agreement because they get a down payment and a security deposit. The deposit (...) is also double” (FO).

The present findings indicate that the housing problems faced by the young refugees are multifaceted, encompassing both material constraints and institutional barriers. These difficulties may have a direct impact on the social adaptation and educational opportunities of young Ukrainians in Poland.

2.4. Interpersonal relationships

The study also explored the interpersonal relationships maintained by young Ukrainian migrants. The results indicate that the respondents' social experiences were diverse, ranging from isolation and lack of acceptance to close friendships, mutual support, and openness. The quality of social relations was influenced by the context (school, work, neighborhood) as well as the respondents' personality traits and attitudes. Many of them declared that they had many Polish friends and found it generally easy to build relationships in Polish schools. However, not all of the participants had positive experiences in this area.

"(...) Communication was the main problem when I started school. It wasn't just the language; I think we have a different mentality" (FO).

Differences in mentality and attitudes toward adulthood were identified as one of the main difficulties in establishing contacts with Polish peers. In Ukraine, adolescents become independent fairly early, usually immediately after finishing school. Their parents also expect them to embrace adulthood sooner than is typical in Poland.

"Ukrainian mothers kick their children out once they finish school – it's time to earn a living" (MO).

In Poland, the jump into adulthood is delayed by several or even more than ten years. According to Statistics Poland data (2024a), there were 1.7 million "boomerang kids" in Poland in 2022, implying that every third (33%) individual aged 25–34 lived with their parents and had not started their own family. According to the respondents, indicators of adulthood in Ukraine include a certain level of material status: owning an apartment and a car and having a paid job. Conversely, in Poland, young people aged 18–29 years are moving away from traditional indicators of adulthood, such as material possessions or economic status. These are being replaced by a definition of adulthood that includes possessing certain competencies, such as the ability to make independent decisions, life wisdom, self-sufficiency, and providing for one's family (Wiszejko-Wierzbicka and Kwiatkowska 2018, 157–158).

"In Ukraine, you're expected to work, have your own place, and buy a car once you turn 18, but in Poland, these expectations seem to be delayed until you're 30–40 (...). In Ukraine, if you don't even have a car by the time you're 18, people think you're kind of a loser (...). Most of us leave school at 16 or 17, and 17-year-olds are expected to cope on their own, even if they go to university (...). The mentality is clearly different" (FO).

Some respondents have maintained online contact with friends in Ukraine, whereas others claimed that many of their relationships faded over time and were eventually lost.

"I stayed in touch with my friend, but our relationship ended two weeks ago because both of us have changed. We only met once after I had left for Poland" (FO).

However, most of the participants residing in both Olsztyn and Kraków maintained contact with other Ukrainians living in Poland. Most respondents

noted that they had more Ukrainian than Polish friends in Poland. In general, their relations with Poles were described as friendly or ambivalent. Experiences of unfair treatment or discrimination based on nationality were reported only sporadically. Instances of harassing behavior and anti-Ukrainian ridicule and provoking conduct in the workplace were more frequently reported by young people residing in Olsztyn.

“Older girls would sit near the door to my office, mock me, and wait for my reaction (...) I would get up and say, ‘Come on, girls, I’m trying to work here; I’m not disturbing you (...)’. They would say, ‘You think you’re so smart? (...) Then go back to your Ukraine and work there’” (FO).

Instances of verbal and physical harassment in public spaces were also reported. “My friends and I went to an Orlik sports complex to watch a football game (...) I speak Russian or Ukrainian with my friend, but I live in a housing district in Zatorze (...) They don’t like Ukrainians there (...) During the game, this dude walks up to me and says–pardon my language–‘Get the fuck out of here’ (...)” (MO).

Such incidences were reported infrequently, yet they remained vivid in the respondents’ memories, contributing to a sense of insecurity and hindering complete social integration. Shortly after the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine, Poles were open and highly committed to helping refugees, as reflected by the results of a public opinion survey conducted by the Center for Public Opinion Research – CBOS (Kubiciel-Lodzińska and Kownacka 2023, 231). However, the willingness to help Ukrainians declined over time (Baszczak et al. 2023, 24–25). Poles’ attitudes toward Ukrainians have also changed, which did not escape the respondents’ attention.

“Some Poles are against any foreigners living in Poland. It’s the same everywhere–people don’t want foreigners taking their jobs. Polish taxpayers want their money to be spent on Poles, not Ukrainians. There are people like that in every country” (MO).

It should be noted, however, that instances of verbal discrimination against Ukrainians were not reported repeatedly. One of the respondents observed that “most Poles have a positive attitude toward Ukrainians” (FO). In their opinion, young Poles are more tolerant and open to foreigners than members of the older generation.

CONCLUSIONS

In the educational context, the language barrier represented the greatest challenge for the surveyed Ukrainian youth. This observation was shared by respondents from both cities where the focus group interviews were conducted. The participants from the two focus groups differed mainly in their educational aspirations. The strategies adopted by respondents from Olsztyn were primarily based on survival and pragmatism (no after-school tutors, the need to enter the labor market quickly). In turn, despite financial problems, Ukrainian youth residing in Kraków

were more oriented toward personal development (plans to pursue university education, learn languages, willingness to participate in extracurricular activities). The respondents also noted that their limited language proficiency prevented them from meeting the disproportionate expectations of teachers, who required Ukrainian students to be fluent in Polish. These demands adversely impacted the respondents' academic performance and were a source of frustration.

In the areas of employment and housing, the surveyed Ukrainians reported challenges that are commonly experienced by young people during the transition to adulthood and independent living. The main problems included employers' reluctance to hire minors, lack of job opportunities matching the candidates' qualifications, high housing prices and rental costs. These factors were an additional source of dissatisfaction among the surveyed youth. For some respondents, employment was a personal choice that enabled them to achieve financial independence and pursue their dreams. Some young people had to work to provide financial support for their families, whereas others lived alone in Poland and had to support themselves.

As regards interpersonal relationships, many respondents reported having Polish friends. Differences in mentality were identified as one of the obstacles to establishing contacts. Young Ukrainians tend to become independent relatively early, whereas among Poles, the transition to adulthood is delayed by more than ten years. Respondents residing in both Olsztyn and Kraków maintained contact with other Ukrainians living in Poland. Existing friendships and relationships with peers in Ukraine tended to fade over time. Experiences of unfair treatment or discrimination based on nationality were reported only sporadically. Such incidents, including mocking, ridicule, and provoking conduct in the workplace as well as verbal and physical harassment in public spaces, were more frequently indicated by young people from Olsztyn.

The authors are aware of the limitations of this pilot study, resulting from its relatively small sample size. Nevertheless, the present findings can serve as a basis for planning a similar, larger-scale study in other Polish towns and cities, with the aim of further exploring the discussed issues and drawing comparisons.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation: E.S.; Methodology: E.S., M.S.-K.; Formal Analysis: E.S., M.S.-K.; Writing – Original draft: E.S., M.S.-K.; Project Administration: E.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board / Ethics Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

AI Tools Declaration: Not applicable. The authors declare that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Amnesty International. 2023a. *Jesteśmy tutaj razem. Uczniowie i uczennice z Ukrainy w polskich szkołach. Wyniki 4-miesięcznego monitoringu* [We Are Here Together: Students from Ukraine in Polish Schools. Results of a Four-Month Monitoring]. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Jestesmy-tutaj-razem.-Uczniowie-i-uczennice-z-Ukrainy-w-polskich-szkolach-2.pdf>
- Amnesty International. 2023b. *Podsumowanie rocznego projektu badawczego "Uchodźcy z Ukrainy w Polsce"* [Summary of the Year-Long Research Project "Refugees from Ukraine in Poland"]. Amnesty International.
- Babbie, Earl. 2003. *Badania społeczne w praktyce* [The Practice of Social Research]. Translated by Witold Betkiewicz, Marta Bucholc, Przemysław Gadowski, Jacek Haman, Agnieszka Jasiewicz-Betkiewicz, Agnieszka Kłoskowska-Dudzińska, Michał Kowalski, Maja Mozga. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Baszczak, Łukasz, Agnieszka Wincewicz, and Radosław Żyzik. 2023. *Polacy i Ukraińcy – wyzwania integracji uchodźców* [Poles and Ukrainians: Challenges of Integrating Refugees]. Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny.
- Centrone, Maria R., Anna Gromada, and Ivan Posylnyi. 2023. „Bez wątpienia jest tu fajnie; ale prawdziwy dom, to własny dom”. *Badanie subiektywnego dobrostanu dzieci i młodzieży mieszkających w Polsce w obliczu wojny w Ukrainie* [“Undoubtedly, It’s Nice Here, but a Real Home Is One’s Own Home”: A Study of the Subjective Well-Being of Children and Adolescents Living in Poland in the Face of the War in Ukraine]. UNICEF, Plan International, and Save the Children.
- Children’s Rights Ombudsman. 2023. *Sytuacja dzieci i młodzieży z Ukrainy w polskich szkołach* [The Situation of Children and Adolescents from Ukraine in Polish Schools]. Children’s Rights Ombudsman.
- Chmielewska-Kalińska, Iza, Beata Dudek, and Paweł Strzelecki. 2022. *Sytuacja życiowa i ekonomiczna uchodźców z Ukrainy w Polsce. Raport z badania ankietowego zrealizowanego przez Oddziały Okręgowe NBP* [The Living and Economic Situation of Refugees from Ukraine in Poland: Report from a Survey Conducted by NBP Regional Branches]. Narodowy Bank Polski.
- Chmielewska-Kalińska, Iza, Beata Dudek, and Paweł Strzelecki. 2023. *Sytuacja życiowa i ekonomiczna migrantów z Ukrainy w Polsce – wpływ pandemii i wojny na charakter migracji w Polsce. Raport z badania ankietowego* [The Living and Economic Situation of Migrants from Ukraine in Poland: The Impact of the Pandemic and the War on the Nature of Migration in Poland: Report from a Survey]. Narodowy Bank Polski. https://nbp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Raport_Imigranci_2023_1-24.pdf
- Długosz, Piotr, Liudmyła Kryvachuk, and Dominika Izdebska-Długosz. 2022. *Uchodźcy wojenni z Ukrainy – życie w Polsce i plany na przyszłość* [War Refugees from Ukraine: Life in Poland and Plans for the Future]. Wydawnictwo Academicon.
- Dudek, Beata, Adam Panuciak, and Paweł Strzelecki. 2024. *Sytuacja życiowa i ekonomiczna migrantów z Ukrainy w Polsce w 2024 r. Raport z badania ankietowego* [The Living and Economic Situation of Migrants from Ukraine in Poland in 2024: Report from a Survey]. Narodowy Bank Polski. <https://nbp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Sytuacja-uchodzcow-z-Ukrainy-2024-PL-DS-WWW.pdf>

- Duszczyk, Maciej, Agata Górny, Paweł Kaczmarczyk, and Andrzej Kubisiak. 2023. "War Refugees from Ukraine in Poland – One Year After the Russian Aggression. Socioeconomic Consequences and Challenges." *Regional Science Policy & Practice* 15 (1): 181–199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsp3.12642>
- Eurostat. 2025. "Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection at the End of the Month by Citizenship, Age and Sex." Eurostat Data Browser. Accessed September 16, 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asytpsm__custom_18069519/default/table
- Khoruzha, Liudmyla. 2024. "Personal Values and Life Meanings of Ukrainian Youth in the Conditions of Instability." *Edukacja Międzykulturowa* 27 (4): 103–113. <https://doi.org/10.15804/em.2024.04.07>
- Kostiuchenko, Tetyana, Inna Volosevych, and Info Sapiens. 2024. *Impact of War on Youth in Ukraine—2024*. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Accessed September 17, 2025. <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/impact-war-youth-ukraine-2024>
- Krawczak, Anna. 2022. "Sytuacja dzieci ukraińskich w Polsce [The Situation of Ukrainian Children in Poland]." In *Dzieci się liczą 2022. Raport o zagrożeniach bezpieczeństwa i rozwoju dzieci w Polsce [Children Matter 2022: Report on Threats to Children's Safety and Development in Poland]*, edited by Monika Sajkowska and Renata Szredzińska, 354–375. Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę.
- Kubiciel-Lodzińska, Sabina, and Katarzyna Kownacka. 2023. "Migranci wojenni z Ukrainy. Opinie Polaków na temat ich pobytu oraz zakresu udzielanej im pomocy [War Migrants from Ukraine: Poles' Opinions about Their Stay and the Scope of Assistance Provided to Them]." *Studia Politologiczne* 68: 231–250. <https://doi.org/10.33896/SPolit.2023.68.13>
- Maciejewska-Mroczek, Ewa, Magdalena Radkowska-Walkowicz, Maria Reimann, and Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk, with Zofia Boni and Anna Krawczak. 2016. *Kodeks dobrych praktyk w badaniach z dziećmi prowadzonych z perspektywy nauk społecznych [Code of Good Practice in Research Involving Children from a Social Science Perspective]*. Accessed August 25, 2024. http://childhoods.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2016/04/kodeks_dobrych_praktyk_IzBnD.pdf
- Ministry of Education and Science (MEiN). 2022a. *Cudzoziemcy na uczelniach w Polsce [Foreigners at Polish Universities]*. <https://radon.nauka.gov.pl/analizy/cudzoziemcy-na-uczelniach-w-Polsce-2022>
- Ministry of Education and Science (MEiN). 2022b. *Przyjmowanie do polskich szkół dzieci i młodzieży z Ukrainy – list Ministra Edukacji i Nauki do kuratorów, samorządowców i dyrektorów szkół [Admission of Children and Adolescents from Ukraine to Polish Schools: Letter from the Minister of Education and Science to Education Superintendents, Local Government Officials, and School Principals]*. Accessed August 1, 2025. <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/przyjmowanie-do-polskich-szkol-dzieci-i-mlodziezy-z-ukrainy--list-ministra-edukacji-i-nauki-do-kuratorow-samorzadowcow-i-dyrektorow-szkol>
- Niezgoda, Marian. 2014. "Młodzież jako przedmiot zainteresowania socjologii [Youth as an Object of Sociological Interest]." *Rocznik Lubuski* 40 (2a): 43–56.
- Poland. 2022. *Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa [Act of 12 March 2022 on*

- Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine*]. *Journal of Laws* 2022, item 583.
- Popyk, Anzhela, Sofia Horova, Anastasiia Mykhailova, et al. 2024. *Displaced Ukrainian Youth in Poland: Lived Experiences Two Years On*. Youth Working Papers 1/2024. SWPS University, Youth Research Center. <https://doi.org/10.58142/swps-ins-ap-01.11.24>
- Statistics Poland (GUS). 2024a. *Pokolenie gniazdowników w Polsce [The Generation of Young Adults Living with Their Parents in Poland]*. <https://stat.gov.pl/statystyki-eksperymentalne/jakosc-zycia/pokolenie-gniazdownikow-w-polsce%2C6%2C2.html>
- Statistics Poland (GUS). 2024b. *Szkolnictwo wyższe w roku akademickim 2023/2024 [Higher Education in the 2023/2024 Academic Year]*. <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/edukacja/szkolnictwo-wyzsze-w-roku-akademickim-20232024%2C8%2C10.html>
- Sternicka-Kowalska, Magdalena, and Elżbieta Subocz. 2025. *Uchodźcy wojenni z Ukrainy w województwie warmińsko-mazurskim. Problemy, system i źródła wsparcia [War Refugees from Ukraine in the Warmia–Mazury Voivodeship: Problems, System, and Sources of Support]*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego.
- Subocz, Elżbieta, Magdalena Sternicka-Kowalska, and Bartłomiej Głuszak. 2024. “Sytuacja życiowa uchodźców wojennych z Ukrainy. Badania w województwie warmińsko-mazurskim [The Living Situation of War Refugees from Ukraine: Research in the Warmia–Mazury Voivodeship].” *Polityka Społeczna* 5–6: 28–36. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0054.6496>
- Świdrowska, Elżbieta, and Klaudia Stano. 2025. *Uczniowie z Ukrainy z doświadczeniem uchodźstwa w polskich szkołach. Co zmieniło się w roku szkolnym 2024/2025? [Students from Ukraine with Refugee Experience in Polish Schools: What Has Changed in the 2024/2025 School Year?]*. Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej, in collaboration with UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/39121/file/Enrollment-report_10.2024_CEO_UNICEF_PL.pdf
- Tędziągolska, Magdalena, Bartłomiej Walczak, and Kamil M. Wielecki. 2023. *Uczniowie uchodźczy w polskich szkołach. Gdzie jesteśmy u progu kolejnego roku szkolnego? [Refugee Students in Polish Schools: Where Are We at the Threshold of Another School Year?]*. Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej.
- Tyler-Rubinstein, Ilana, Daniel Gorevan, and Laura Kivela. 2022. “This Is My Life, and I Don’t Want to Waste a Year of It”: The Experiences and Wellbeing of Children Fleeing Ukraine.” Save the Children International.
- UNHCR. 2022. *Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation: Protection Analysis*. Accessed August 6, 2025. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/ukraine-situation-regional-refugee-response-plan-summary>
- Wiszejko-Wierzbička, Dorota, and Agnieszka Kwiatkowska. 2018. “Wchodzenie w dorosłość. Ogólnopolskie badanie młodych Polaków w wieku 18–29 lat [Entering Adulthood: A Nationwide Study of Young Poles Aged 18–29].” *Studia Socjologiczne* 2: 147–176. <https://doi.org/10.24425/122467>

The War in Ukraine and Perceived Quality of Life among Pedagogy Students in Poland: Repeated Cross-Sectional Surveys in 2022 and 2024

Wojna na Ukrainie a postrzegana jakość życia studentów pedagogiki w Polsce: powtarzane badania przekrojowe z lat 2022 i 2024

Jadwiga Daszykowska-Tobiasz

University of Rzeszów,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6182-1855>

jdaszykowska@ur.edu.pl

Zbigniew Babicki

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński
University in Warsaw,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0857-3132>

z.babicki@uksw.edu.pl

Received: 24 Jan 2026

Revised: 1 Mar 2026

Accepted: 8 Apr 2026

Published Online First:

30 Jun 2026

Abstract: This study examines whether pedagogy students' perceived quality of life in relation to the war in Ukraine differed between 2022 and 2024. Two independent CAWI surveys were conducted among students at the University of Rzeszów and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, involving 351 participants in 2022 and 330 participants in 2024. Respondents assessed twelve life domains and overall life satisfaction using five-point Likert scales and answered questions concerning personal and national security and attitudes towards the war. The data were analysed using chi-square tests, the Mann–Whitney U test, and measures of association. In both surveys, most current and prospective quality-of-life assessments ranged from neutral to moderately positive. Economic circumstances and personal security received the lowest ratings, whereas relationships with family and friends received the highest. Most assessments did not differ significantly between the survey years. Compared with the 2022 sample, respondents in 2024 rated their current leisure satisfaction and overall life satisfaction, as well as their prospective economic circumstances, health, and fitness, slightly more positively. The perceived impact of Russia–Ukraine relations on respondents' lives remained rather negative, while assessments of Poland's security remained neutral. The findings suggest relative stability in students' perceived quality of life during the first two years of the full-scale war, despite continuing security concerns. Because the surveys involved independent, predominantly female samples, the results should be interpreted as repeated cross-sectional comparisons rather than as individual change over time. The findings support the need for psychological and crisis-preparedness training in teacher education.

Keywords: perceived quality of life, pedagogy students, war in Ukraine; repeated cross-sectional survey, life satisfaction, sense of security, teacher education



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstrakt: Celem badania było ustalenie, czy postrzegana jakość życia studentów pedagogiki w związku z wojną na Ukrainie różniła się między 2022 a 2024 rokiem. Przeprowadzono dwa niezależne badania CAWI wśród studentów Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego i Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie, obejmujące 351 osób w 2022 roku oraz 330 osób w 2024 roku. Respondenci oceniali dwanaście obszarów życia oraz ogólną satysfakcję z życia na pięciostopniowych skalach Likerta, a także odpowiadali na pytania dotyczące bezpieczeństwa osobistego i państwowego, a także stosunku do wojny. Dane przeanalizowano z wykorzystaniem testów chi-kwadrat, testu U Manna-Whitneya

oraz miar siły związku. W obu badaniach większość aktualnych i przewidywanych ocen jakości życia mieściła się między poziomem neutralnym a umiarkowanie pozytywnym. Najniżej oceniano sytuację ekonomiczną i bezpieczeństwo osobiste, a najwyżej relacje z rodziną i przyjaciółmi. Większość ocen nie różniła się istotnie między latami badania. W porównaniu z próbą z 2022 roku respondenci badani w 2024 roku nieco wyżej oceniali aktualne możliwości spędzania czasu wolnego i ogólną satysfakcję z życia, a także przewidywaną sytuację ekonomiczną, zdrowie i sprawność fizyczną. Postrzegany wpływ relacji rosyjsko-ukraińskich na życie badanych był raczej negatywny, natomiast bezpieczeństwo Polski oceniano jako neutralne. Wyniki wskazują na względną stabilność postrzeganej jakości życia studentów w pierwszych dwóch latach pełnoskalowej wojny, mimo utrzymujących się obaw o bezpieczeństwo. Ponieważ w badaniach uczestniczyły niezależne i zdominowane przez kobiety próby, wyniki należy interpretować jako porównanie powtarzanych badań przekrojowych, a nie jako zmianę zachodzącą u tych samych osób. Ustalenia wskazują na potrzebę uwzględnienia przygotowania psychologicznego i reagowania kryzysowego w kształceniu przyszłych nauczycieli.

Słowa kluczowe: postrzegana jakość życia, studenci pedagogiki, wojna na Ukrainie, powtarzane badanie przekrojowe, satysfakcja z życia, poczucie bezpieczeństwa, kształcenie nauczycieli

INTRODUCTION

Every person experiences a certain degree of life satisfaction based on individual experiences throughout their lives. The degree to which a certain conventional normality in everyday life is met depends on the degree to which a wide range of needs and individual and social expectations are met (Kolman 2000, 2). However, quality of life also depends on many indicators (life circumstances, events, etc.) that should be considered when assessing it. This approach is presented in the definition of “quality of life” formulated by the World Health Organization (WHO). This term means “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns” (WHO n.d.).

War, being an extreme situation (Borys 2004, 97), undoubtedly impacts individual and social life, especially if it lasts for a long time. It is worth emphasizing that war (as distinct from other synonymous terms such as “armed conflict,” “armed attack,” “state of war,” “armed aggression,” etc.) denotes the occurrence of a sharp conflict between states, leading to the severing of peaceful relations. A characteristic feature of war is armed combat, i.e., actual military operations (Kołodziejczak 2015, 70–72; cf. Babicki and Daszykowska-Tobiasz 2024). The aforementioned concepts were conceptualized in an article presenting the results of research from 2022 (Daszykowska-Tobiasz and Babicki 2022a).

The war in Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, continues, and its end is unknown. Its effects are felt not only by Ukrainian society, which is directly affected by it, but also by the citizens of other countries, as the mere threat of the war spreading to other countries may be one of the factors reducing the quality of life of their citizens. Furthermore, it also impacts Russian society, even though Russia is the aggressor in the war.

Today, young people, standing at the threshold of life, experience numerous civilizational, social, cultural, economic, and political challenges, including wars.

The awareness of the ongoing war at Poland's borders can generate significant anxiety and fear for their health, life, and future, and can also impact their definition of values and life goals. The results of our own study conducted in 2022 (Daszykowska-Tobiasz and Babicki 2022a, 187–205), which included students from two universities: the University of Rzeszów and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, demonstrated that the outbreak of war in Ukraine primarily undermined their sense of security.

Research on quality of life is particularly important in longitudinal research, as their results provide valuable data for social policy, including family, educational, cultural, and health policy (Parachomiuk and Byra 2006, 26; cf. Daszykowska-Tobiasz 2022b, 164). Currently, such studies are lacking, which is why the authors, after a period of two years, decided to repeat the research to determine whether young people's opinions on their quality of life in the context of the war had changed. In this article, they present a comparative analysis of selected results from both studies.

It is worth emphasizing that the tradition of studying quality of life is long-standing, dating back to philosophical inquiries into questions such as: Who is man? Where is he headed? At that time, the concept was understood more as "favorable fate," "prosperity," and "happiness." The issue of a happy life originally appears in the philosophical views of Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, and Epicurus of Samos. In ancient Christian and medieval philosophy, it was addressed by St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine, and in modern philosophy by, among others, Arthur Schopenhauer and Baruch Spinoza. In the twentieth century, happiness drew the attention of Bertrand Russell, Max Scheler, and Sigmund Freud. In Poland, it was discussed by Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Tadeusz Kotarbiński, and Karol Wojtyła.

Quality of life – viewed from various theoretical and research perspectives – appears in the works of authors such as Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, David J. Schneider, Frank M. Andrews, Stephen B. Withey, William I. Rodgers, John Goodlad, David T. Hall, Robert J. Bury, David Felce and Jonathan Perry, Erik Allardt, Michael Bach and Marcia H. Rioux, Henk J. Schipper, John Clinch, Valerie Powell, Ed Diener, John M. Reaburn, Irving Rootman, Martin Seligman, Michael Argyle, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Janusz Czapiński, and others (Daszykowska-Tobiasz 2007, 24–98).

In the social sciences and humanities, emphasis is placed on the subjective approach to quality of life, which is based on the belief that an individual is best positioned to assess their own life situation. In this understanding, psychological well-being, reduced to satisfaction, contentment, and happiness, plays a significant role in determining quality of life. The subjective approach to the concept is presented, among others, by the World Health Organization (WHO). From a subjective perspective, important indicators include individual life evaluations, primarily: physical fitness, physical well-being, psychological well-being, and social functioning (cf. Daszykowska-Tobiasz 2022b, 159–160).

It is worth noting that the authors in this re-examination adopted the same theoretical perspective as in the first study, namely the concept of Janusz

Czapiński. The author posits the importance of the will to live in the context of a person's return to balance after crises, as well as so-called partial satisfactions and well-being, largely determined by one's approach to life (types of emotions, judgments, satisfaction with life and its individual areas) in various situations (Czapiński 2001, 266–306). The authors of this article acknowledge this approach, but combine life satisfaction with a sense of meaning and human potential, which, as Tatiana Kanasz (2015, 51) argues, directs the researcher to perceive quality of life in eudaimonistic, not exclusively hedonistic, terms. This approach takes into account the implementation of valuable tasks, taking up existential challenges (such as war) and the possibility of human development (Ilska and Kołodziej-Zaleska 2018, 156–161; Daszykowska-Tobiasz and Babicki 2022, 187–189). It is worth emphasizing that quality of life research involves two dimensions: evaluative (high versus low levels of quality of life) and descriptive (different quality of life, different qualities of life) (Kryk and Włodarczyk-Śpiwak 2006, 96). The authors of this article focused primarily on the former approach. Furthermore, they situate the presented issues within the framework of social pedagogy, which examines the relationship between society and individuals and determines the impact of the sociocultural environment on their upbringing and development. Importantly, it explores, among other things, effective educational strategies for supporting human development in challenging life situations.

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first study was conducted using a diagnostic survey method from April 12 to May 17, 2022, and the second study from January 16 to March 19, 2024. The aim was to determine the opinions of students of pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów (UR) and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (UKSW) regarding their quality of life in relation to the war in Ukraine. The authors adopted two main research problems: What are the opinions of pedagogy students at the University of Rzeszów and the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw regarding the quality of their lives in connection with the war in Ukraine? Have students' opinions about their quality of life in relation to the ongoing war in Ukraine changed in 2024 compared to their opinions in 2022? Both the first and the repeated surveys were conducted using the CAWI technique, based on an electronic survey form on the Google Forms platform. Respondents received a link to the tool via email. The survey questionnaire contained single-choice, closed-ended, and semi-open-ended questions, and utilized a five-point Likert scale.

In 2022, 351 people participated in the study, while in 2024, this number reached 330. The vast majority of these were women aged 19 to 24, pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and living in rural areas (UR) or cities with a population exceeding 100,000 (UKSW). The high level of participation in the study resulted from the fact that it was conducted among students of education-related fields, which are predominantly studied by women. It is worth emphasizing

that this overrepresentation of women constitutes a significant limitation; it narrows the interpretation of the data and does not allow for the generalization of the results to the entire student population.

Statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS 29.0 with the Exact Tests module – exact tests. All relationships, correlations, and differences are statistically significant when $p \leq 0.05$. The test used for statistical analysis (primarily for questions constructed on nominal scales) was the Chi-square test for the independence of variables. Coefficients based on the aforementioned test, namely Phi and Cramer's V, were used to determine the strength of the relationship, with the Phi coefficient also indicating the direction of the relationship. Phi and Cramer's V coefficients range from 0 to 1; higher coefficient values indicate a stronger relationship. Each Chi-square test analysis (in the case of small samples) was followed by additional tests: the exact method (preferred for small data sets to ensure sufficient computational power) or the Monte Carlo method (for larger samples and tables with larger categories of indications). When the conditions for using parametric tests were not met, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test for differences (for 2 samples) was used (see Pavkov and Pierce 2005; Szymczak 2008; Mehta and Patel 2013; Nawojczyk 2002; Bedyńska and Brzezicka 2007). Due to the limited scope of the article, only selected data are presented.

2. STUDENTS ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN RELATION TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDY RESULTS

The timing of the survey does not statistically significantly differentiate the gender of the respondents. This applies to students from UR, UKSW, and the overall sample ($p > 0.05$). Considering UR students, UKSW students, and the entire sample, no statistically significant correlations were found between the timing of the survey and the age of the respondents ($p > 0.05$). Similarly, place of residence does not statistically significantly correlate with the timing of the survey, considering respondents from UR and UKSW separately and all students overall ($p > 0.05$).

With respect to the structure of the respondents in terms of type of study, statistically significant relationships were found. It can be observed that students of supplementary master's degree programs participated in the survey more often in 2022 than in 2024. This applies to the overall results ($p < 0.001$) and to the group of UR students ($p < 0.001$). The strength of the relationship is more pronounced among respondents from UR (Cramer's $V = 0.370$).

Students described Russia's current actions towards Ukraine. The majority of them considered them an "invasion/armed attack" – UR students: 173 responses in 2022 and 303 responses in 2024; UKSW students: 119 responses in 2022 and 196 in 2024. The answer "interstate conflict" was received from UR students: 16 responses in 2022 and 49 in 2024; UKSW students: 8 responses in 2022 and 35 in 2024. The next most common answer was "World War III" – UR students: 18 responses in 2022 and 24 in 2024; UKSW students: 10 responses in 2022 and 15 in

2024. Other indications included: “unjustified and barbaric attack on a sovereign state,” “war between three powers (USA, Russia, China).” The definition of Russia’s actions towards Ukraine is not statistically significantly dependent on the time of the survey, taking into account respondents from UR and UKSW separately and all respondents in total ($p>0.05$).

The main reason for Russia’s claims against Ukraine was given by respondents as: “Russia’s desire to rebuild and expand (with other countries) the Russian empire” – UR students: 133 responses in 2022 and 232 in 2024; UKSW students: 85 responses in 2022 and 157 in 2024. A similarly semantically and frequently chosen response was: “Russia’s renewed desire to recreate the USSR” – UR students: 54 responses in 2022 and 91 in 2024; UKSW students: 39 responses in 2022 and 51 in 2024. Less frequently cited reasons included: “the desire to have power and control over Ukraine,” “a military threat to Russia from Ukraine,” and “a planned incitement of a global conflict.” The time of the survey did not statistically significantly differentiate opinions on the main reason for Russia’s claims against Ukraine. This applies to students of UR, UKSW, as well as all students together ($p>0.05$).

Most students had no opinion (“hard to say”) or expressed a negative opinion (“definitely not”) about the justification for Russia to use force against Ukraine (in 2022, the average was $M=1.55$ ($Mdn=1.00$; $SD=1.17$), and in 2024 – $M=1.61$, ($Mdn=1.00$; $SD=1.17$).

Respondents assessed Poland’s security in the current Russia–Ukraine situation on a scale of 1–5 (where 1 means “definitely negative,” 2 means “negative,” 3 means “neither positive nor negative,” 4 means “positive,” and 5 means “definitely positive”). In 2022, these responses were at an average level of $M=2.80$ ($Mdn=3.00$, $SD=0.83$); in 2024, they were at a comparable level of $M=2.79$ ($Mdn=3.00$, $SD=0.83$). These responses oscillated around the “neither positive nor negative” option.

If NATO took military action against Russia, according to the respondents, Poland should “probably” support it: in 2022 – average $M=3.57$ ($Mdn=4.00$, $SD=1.10$), and in 2024 – $M=3.38$ ($Mdn=4.00$, $SD=1.10$).

Respondents also assessed the impact of the current Russia – Ukraine relationship on their lives (on a scale of 1–5, where 1 means “definitely negative,” 2 means “negative,” 3 means “neither positive nor negative,” 4 means “positive,” and 5 means “definitely positive”). The average in 2022 was 2.02 ($Mdn=2.0$; $SD=0.79$), while in 2024 it was $M=2.11$ ($Mdn=2.0$, $SD=0.80$), indicating an impact assessment of “rather negative.”

Analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test for all students revealed that only opinions regarding Poland’s potential involvement in a NATO armed attack against Russia differed statistically significantly depending on the time of the survey ($p=0.013$). Slightly greater support for such an initiative is evident in 2022 than in 2024. However, among students from the University of Rzeszów and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, no statistically significant differences were found with respect to the remaining survey results (presented above).

Respondents defined the role of Polish soldiers in the current Russia – Ukraine situation as mainly “securing the Polish border” – UR students: 103 responses in 2022

and 198 in 2024; UKSW students: 71 responses in 2022 and 139 in 2024. A popular answer was "intensifying preparatory activities for a possible war" – UR students: 40 responses in 2022 and 71 in 2024; UKSW students: 24 responses in 2022 and 41 in 2024. "Humanitarian aid to Ukrainian citizens who remained in the country" was chosen by UR students: 29 people in 2022 and 53 in 2024; UKSW students – 18 respondents in 2022 and 27 in 2024. "Humanitarian aid to refugees from Ukraine in Poland" was the role of Polish soldiers for – UR students: 32 respondents in 2022 and 41 in 2024; UKSW students: 16 respondents surveyed in 2022 and 18 in 2024. Respondents also offered responses such as "there should be no role," "defend Poland from Ukraine and Russia itself," and "throwing Ukrainians who break the law across the border, not putting them in prison where we have to pay for criminals" (original spelling). However, these were isolated responses. Considering the UR students, UKSW students, and everyone in total, no statistically significant relationship ($p>0.05$) was found between the time of the survey and the assessment of the role of Polish soldiers in the current Russia – Ukraine situation.

In the survey, respondents were asked to provide a possible scenario for the future of Russia – Ukraine relations. Among the responses from UR and UKSW students, the most frequent responses included: "Russia will take over the territories of Ukraine (in the east and south) occupied in 2014"; "Russia will lead to Ukraine's capitulation"; and there was a suggestion of the outbreak of World War III. However, most respondents did not specify a future scenario, claiming they could not predict it. When defining a scenario for Europe and the world in the near future in the context of Russia – Ukraine relations, students mostly indicated that "Europe and the world will remain safe" – UR students: 138 responses in 2022 and 242 in 2024; UKSW students: 79 responses in 2022 and 41 in 2024. A large group of respondents did not know what the fate of Europe and the world would be like in connection with the war in Ukraine, but there were many people (although they were in the minority) who had pessimistic, sometimes even catastrophic visions, for example: "Europe and the world will be destroyed."

An important part of the study was to determine respondents' opinions on the quality of their lives in relation to the war in Ukraine. They first assessed (on a scale of 1–5, where 1 means "definitely negative," 2 means "negative," 3 means "neither positive nor negative," 4 means "positive," and 5 means "definitely positive") their quality of life before February 24, 2022, in the following areas: "family/friends and acquaintances," "economic situation," "personal security," "personal development/education," "professional work," "free time and entertainment," "health and fitness," "housing conditions," "personal rights and freedoms/independence," "state of the natural environment," "spirituality," and "overall life satisfaction" (Table 1).

The average quality of life scores for the 2022 and 2024 surveys in the sample mostly ranged between "neither positive nor negative" and "positive." The average scores ranged from 3.55 (for "economic situation") to 4.27 (for "family/friends and acquaintances") in 2022, and from 3.58 (for "economic situation") to 4.32 (for "family/friends and acquaintances") in 2024. The average quality of life scores for the remaining life areas fell within these ranges.

Table 1. Students' assessment of quality of life before February 24, 2022, across different areas of life.

The table presents students' assessments of their quality of life before 24 February 2022 across twelve life domains and overall life satisfaction, comparing survey results from 2022 and 2024. The columns represent individual areas of life, while the rows provide mean values, medians, and standard deviations. In both survey years, relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances received the highest ratings, whereas economic situation received the lowest ratings.

Assess the quality of your life before February 24, 2022, in the following areas		Family/friends and acquaintances	Economic situation	Personal security	Personal Development/Education	Professional work	Free time and entertainment	Health and fitness	Housing conditions	Personal rights and freedoms/independence	The state of the natural environment	Spirituality	Overall life satisfaction
2022	Mean	4,27	3,55	4,00	4,02	3,70	3,88	3,81	4,12	3,90	3,64	3,77	3,81
	Median	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00
	Standard deviation	0,76	0,98	0,86	0,81	0,91	0,90	0,86	0,79	0,93	0,92	0,97	0,90
2024	Mean	4,32	3,58	3,97	4,07	3,76	3,99	3,89	4,10	3,90	3,67	3,85	3,87
	Median	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00
	Standard deviation	0,75	0,98	0,90	0,78	0,91	0,90	0,88	0,84	0,93	0,96	0,95	0,90

Source: Own calculations.

In the group of respondents from UR, the results are not statistically significantly different depending on the year of the study, as evidenced by p-values > 0.05 for the Mann-Whitney U test. In the group of students from UKSW, only the results for one area of life before February 24, 2022, are statistically significantly different depending on the year of the study, as evidenced by p-value=0.029 for the above test. Compared to those surveyed in 2022, students at UKSW in 2024 assessed "free time and entertainment" slightly more positively. For this area, the mean in 2022 was 3.88 (Mdn=4.00, SD=0.90), while in 2024 it was 3.99 (Mdn=4.00, SD=0.90).

Respondents also rated the quality of their current life in relation to the following areas on a scale of 1–5 (where 1 means "definitely negative," 2 means "negative," 3 means "neither positive nor negative," 4 means "positive," and 5 means "definitely positive") (Table 2).

Table 2. Students' assessment of their current quality of life (after February 24, 2022) in relation to the aforementioned areas.

The table presents students' assessments of their current quality of life (after 24 February 2022) across twelve life domains and overall life satisfaction. For each domain, the table reports mean values, medians, and standard deviations obtained in the 2022 and 2024 surveys. In both survey years, relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances received the highest mean ratings, whereas the lowest ratings were for the economic situation in 2022 and personal security in 2024.

Assess the quality of your current life (after February 24, 2022) in the following areas of life		Family/friends and acquaintances	Economic situation	Personal security	Personal Development/Education	Professional work	Free time and entertainment	Health and fitness	Housing conditions	Personal rights and freedoms/independence	The state of the natural environment	Spirituality	Overall life satisfaction
2022	Mean	4,03	2,77	2,82	3,62	3,39	3,43	3,37	3,86	3,48	3,22	3,66	3,33
	Median	4,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	3,00	4,00	3,00	4,00	4,00	3,00	4,00	3,00
	Standard deviation	0,85	1,09	0,97	0,88	0,92	0,93	0,89	0,93	0,93	0,98	0,99	0,98
2024	Mean	4,09	2,88	2,86	3,72	3,47	3,60	3,45	3,73	3,45	3,21	3,68	3,46
	Median	4,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	3,00	4,00	4,00
	Standard deviation	0,83	1,09	1,01	0,87	0,94	0,94	0,97	1,03	0,98	1,04	0,99	0,99

Source: Own calculations.

The sample was dominated by ratings between “neither positive nor negative” and “positive.” The averages ranged from 2.77 (for “economic situation”) to 4.03 (for “family/friends and acquaintances”) in 2022, and from 2.86 (for “personal security”) to 4.09 (for “family/friends and acquaintances”) in 2024. Average quality of life ratings, taking into account other areas of life, fell within the above-mentioned ranges.

Students participating in the 2024 survey, compared to respondents participating in the 2022 survey, rated “free time and entertainment” and “overall life satisfaction” slightly more positively. The differences in the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), at $p = 0.004$ and $p = 0.033$, respectively, using the Mann-Whitney U test.

Respondents also predicted their quality of life in the near future (from 1 to 2 years) in relation to the current Russia–Ukraine relationship, taking into account the aforementioned areas of life. As with the previous questions, students provided their responses using a five-point Likert scale (where 1 indicates “definitely negative,” 2 “negative,” 3 “neither positive nor negative,” 4 “positive,” and 5 “definitely positive”) (Table 3)

Table 3. Students' projected assessment of quality of life in the near future (up to 2 years) in relation to the current Russia–Ukraine relationship.

The table presents students' projected assessments of their quality of life in the near future (up to two years) in relation to the current Russia–Ukraine relationship, across twelve life domains and overall life satisfaction. For each domain, the table reports mean values, medians, and standard deviations obtained in the 2022 and 2024 surveys. In both survey years, the highest mean scores were recorded for family, friends, and acquaintances, whereas the lowest scores were recorded for the economic situation in 2022 and personal security in 2024.

Assess your expected quality of life in the near future (up to 2 years) in relation to the current Russia–Ukraine relationship		Family/friends and acquaintances	Economic situation	Personal security	Personal Development/Education	Professional work	Free time and entertainment	Health and fitness	Housing conditions	Personal rights and freedoms/independence	The state of the natural environment	Spirituality	Overall life satisfaction
2022	Mean	3,96	2,53	2,79	3,42	3,21	3,41	3,30	3,43	3,13	2,97	3,52	3,18
	Median	4,00	2,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	3,00
	Standard deviation	0,90	1,07	1,01	0,92	0,98	0,93	0,93	1,05	1,02	1,03	1,01	1,05
2024	Mean	4,03	2,72	2,83	3,50	3,31	3,52	3,42	3,39	3,15	3,01	3,57	3,32
	Median	4,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	3,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	3,00
	Standard deviation	0,88	1,12	1,03	0,94	1,00	0,95	0,97	1,08	1,04	1,09	1,03	1,05

Source: Own calculations.

The sample was dominated by ratings ranging from “neither positive nor negative” to “positive.” The averages ranged from 2.53 (for “economic situation”) to 3.96 (for “family/friends and acquaintances”) in 2022, and from 2.83 (for “personal security”) to 4.03 (for “family/friends and acquaintances”) in 2024. The average quality of life ratings, taking into account other areas of life, fell within these ranges.

Analysis using the aforementioned test across all participants showed that the assessment of quality of life in the near future differed statistically significantly in only three aspects depending on the year of the study ($p < 0.05$). Respondents in 2024, compared to respondents in 2022, rated the “economic situation” ($p = 0.011$), “health and fitness” ($p = 0.038$), as well as “overall life satisfaction” ($p = 0.037$) slightly higher.

CONCLUSIONS

The authors believe that the findings from the survey of students from the University of Rzeszów and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (conducted in 2022 and 2024) regarding their quality of life (including selected areas) in the

context of the war in Ukraine cannot be considered definitive. The results obtained allowed for addressing the research questions, fulfilling the established research objectives, and capturing the respondents' opinions in this regard; however, they did not account for the complex factors that may have influenced their statements.

The authors acknowledge that the significant overrepresentation of women in the study must be taken into account, as it limits the generalizability of the findings to the male population. Women tend to communicate emotional states and subjective perceptions (including health concerns and perceived stress) more frequently, and they demonstrate a higher degree of empathy in crisis situations. Furthermore, women prioritize quality-of-life factors differently (e.g., well-being, security, etc.), which may slightly shift the focus of the study toward a female perspective (cf. Daszykowska-Tobiasz 2022b, 184–198). Consequently, the results cannot be considered universal for the entire academic community of the University of Rzeszów and the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Bearing these limitations in mind, the authors have identified the most significant conclusions.

The study showed that in both 2022 and 2024, the declared assessments did not achieve extremely positive or extremely negative values. They are clearly positioned (relative to assessments before the war, during it, and those projected for the near future) mainly at the level of “neither positive nor negative.” However, statistical analysis did not confirm significant differences in the responses of respondents from both groups due to the timing of the survey. It is worth noting that the 2024 survey results, compared to the 2022 survey results, showed only a slight increase in current life quality assessments in the areas of “leisure and entertainment” and “overall life satisfaction.” Similarly, the respondents' projected assessments of their quality of life in the near future in the areas of “economic situation,” “health and fitness,” and “overall life satisfaction” recorded a slight increase. It can be assumed that the average values of quality of life assessments in the event of a war abroad will be low. However, in both the 2022 and 2024 surveys, they were not very low. This may be due to the students assigning the highest ratings to “family/friends and acquaintances” in the first and repeated surveys (for the three time periods), as evidenced by the mean values. The authors of numerous studies demonstrate that having close friends enhances happiness and acts as a protective shield even in extreme life circumstances. This applies primarily to women (see Doroszewicz 2008, 5–18; cf. Suwalska-Barancewicz 2018, 49–65), and they predominated in the sample.

Additionally, the fact that the war did not directly affect the respondents could have led some students to fail to perceive the threat posed by Russia to themselves and Poland, which in turn could have impacted their quality of life assessments. Another reason could be the replication of public opinion, a lack of interest in the issue, and passivity regarding following the course of the war, as evidenced by the significant percentage of respondents who “had no opinion or were unable to answer some of the questions in the questionnaire.”

The long duration of the war may have led to a kind of “fatigue” among the respondents (see Bokovets 2024), a consequence of the prolonged crisis.

Additionally, the prolonged occurrence of threatening situations, inconsistent information about the war, the safety dilemma, and other factors may have increased fear tolerance, led to impatience, to a lack of interest in the problem, or even to its denial. This also raises the question of the objectivity of the respondents in estimating risk and their own agency, as the greater the risk and the lower the agency, the more strongly an avoidance attitude develops. In crisis situations, women tend to react more emotionally and experience higher levels of stress than men (Pawińska and Zyzik 2021, 11–13; Daszykowska-Tobiasz 2022b, 27–35, 184–198; Shvay 2025, 20–30).

Of course, substantiating these issues would require a broader approach to the research problem than the authors assumed. Nevertheless, they obtained a picture of quality of life assessments made by students from two universities (mainly women): from central and southeastern Poland, at the beginning and two years after its outbreak. These assessments are not polarized, and the analysis did not reveal many statistically significant differences in their opinions between the outbreak of the war and two years after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

War undoubtedly poses a challenge to the modern world, as it disrupts its order and destroys the foundations of a stable and happy life. It poses a challenge to social pedagogy, as it causes suffering and trauma on an individual level, but also negatively impacts society. The practical goal of social pedagogy in the context of war is primarily to restore the ability of people living in drastic environmental conditions to meet their basic needs, including a sense of security. It also involves realizing socially accepted values and supporting them in achieving greater life satisfaction in all areas (individual perspective), as well as strengthening the potential of the environment, which translates into improved quality of life (societal perspective).

Although the results of our own survey from 2022 and 2024 did not reveal very low quality of life scores in relation to the war in Ukraine according to the students' opinions, they should not be ignored, as they did not indicate the highest values in its assessment either. In this context, education plays an important role, its importance being strategic (Shvay 2025, 37). Its task is to protect young people from the psychological effects of war and reduced well-being, as well as from the associated disinformation and chaos in the media. It also creates opportunities for development, adaptation, and preparation for life in crisis situations. Education should open young people to new perspectives while respecting the complexity of the world, but also instill in them hope for a future life in a community of people in peace and with a sense of individual self-fulfillment and satisfaction.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization: J. D-T. 50%, Z.B. 50%; Formal Analysis: J. D-T. 50%, Z.B. 50%; Methodology: J. D-T. 50%, Z.B. 50%; Writing – Original Draft: J. D-T. 50%, Z.B. 50%. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board / Ethics Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

AI Tools Declaration: *Not applicable. The authors declare that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.*

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Babicki, Zbigniew, and Jadwiga Daszykowska-Tobiasz. 2024. *Położenie życiowe uchodźców z Ukrainy w pierwszych miesiącach uchodźstwa w Polsce [The Living Situation of Refugees from Ukraine in the First Months of Refuge in Poland]*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
- Bedyńska, Sylwia, and Anna Brzezicka. 2007. *Statystyczny drogowskaz [A Statistical Guidepost]*. SWPS.
- Bokovets, Olha. 2024. "Psychological Features of the Experience of War Fatigue Syndrome." *Bulletin of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Social Work* 1 (10): 50–55.
- Borys, Bogusław. 2004. "Sytuacje ekstremalne i ich wpływ na stan psychiczny człowieka [Extreme Situations and Their Impact on a Person's Mental State]." *Psychiatria* 1 (2): 97–105.
- Czapiński, Janusz. 2001. "Szczęście – złudzenie czy konieczność? Cebulowa teoria szczęścia w świetle nowych danych empirycznych [Happiness—Illusion or Necessity? The Onion Theory of Happiness in Light of New Empirical Data]." In *Złudzenia, które pozwalają żyć [Illusions That Make It Possible to Live]*, edited by Mirosława Kofta and Teresa Szustrowa, 266–306. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Daszykowska-Tobiasz, Jadwiga, and Zbigniew Babicki. 2022a. "Jakość życia studentów w związku z wojną w Ukrainie w ich opiniach [Students' Quality of Life in Relation to the War in Ukraine in Their Opinions]." *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych* 14 (50): 187–205.
- Daszykowska-Tobiasz, Jadwiga. 2022b. *Spółeczeństwo w dobie pandemii COVID-19 – ujęcie interdyscyplinarne [Society in the COVID-19 Pandemic—An Interdisciplinary Approach]*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego.
- Daszykowska-Tobiasz, Jadwiga. 2007. *Jakość życia w perspektywie pedagogicznej [Quality of Life from a Pedagogical Perspective]*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
- Doroszewicz, Krystyna. 2008. "Bliskie związki a jakość życia [Close Relationships and Quality of Life]." *Psychologia Jakości Życia* 8: 5–18.
- Ilska, Michalina, and Anna Kołodziej-Zaleska. 2018. "Dobrostan hedonistyczny i eudajmonistyczny w sytuacjach kryzysów normatywnych i nienormatywnych [Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being in Situations of Normative and Non-Normative Crises]." *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej. Seria: Organizacja i Zarządzanie* 123: 156–161.

- Kanasz, Tatiana. 2015. *Uwarunkowania szczęścia. Socjologiczna analiza wyobrażeń młodzieży akademickiej o udanym i szczęśliwym życiu [Determinants of Happiness: A Sociological Analysis of Academic Youths' Conceptions of a Successful and Happy Life]*. Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej.
- Kolman, Roman. 2000. "Zespoły badawcze jakości życia [Quality-of-Life Research Teams]." *Problemy Jakości* 32: 2–5.
- Kołodziejczak, Malwina. 2015. "Analiza pojęcia wojny, agresji i napaści zbrojnej oraz przykłady ich użycia w aktach prawnych obowiązujących w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej [Analysis of the Concepts of War, Aggression, and Armed Attack and Examples of Their Use in Polish Legal Acts]." *Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Zarządzania i Dowodzenia Akademii Obrony Narodowej* 29 (14): 70–79.
- Kryk, Barbara, and Katarzyna Włodarczyk-Śpiewak. 2006. "Wybrane aspekty jakości życia na przykładzie województwa zachodniopomorskiego [Selected Aspects of Quality of Life: The Example of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship]." In *Zachowania rynkowe gospodarstw domowych i przedsiębiorstw w okresie transformacji systemowej w Polsce [Market Behaviors of Households and Enterprises during Systemic Transformation in Poland]*, edited by Danuta Kopycińska, 95–110. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego.
- Mehta, Cyrus R., and Nitin R. Patel. 2013. *IBM SPSS Exact Tests*. IBM Corporation.
- Nawojczyk, Michał. 2002. *Przewodnik po statystyce dla socjologów, SPSS [A Guide to Statistics for Sociologists: SPSS]*. Wydawnictwo SPSS.
- Parachomiuk, Monika, and Stanisław Byra. 2006. "Rodzaj niepełnosprawności a poczucie jakości życia [Type of Disability and Sense of Quality of Life]." In *Jakość życia a niepełnosprawność. Konteksty psychopedagogiczne [Quality of Life and Disability: Psychopedagogical Contexts]*, edited by Zofia Palak, Agnieszka Lewicka, and Anna Bujnowska, 25–34. Wydawnictwo UMCS.
- Pavkov, Thomas W., and Karen A. Pierce. 2005. *Wprowadzenie do SPSS dla Windows [Introduction to SPSS for Windows]*. Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Pawińska, Maria, and Radosław Zyzik. 2021. *Pandemia jako wyzwanie behawioralne [The Pandemic as a Behavioral Challenge]*. Policy Paper 1. Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny. Accessed September 13, 2025. https://pie.net.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/PIE-PP_Pandemia-jako-wyzwanie-behawioralne.pdf.
- Shvay, Roksolyana. 2025. "Strach w czasach wojny a lęk w edukacji [Fear in Wartime and Anxiety in Education]." *Przegląd Pedagogiczny* 1: 25–40.
- Suwalska-Barancewicz, Dorota. 2018. "Jakość związku partnerskiego a satysfakcja z życia młodych matek – mediacyjna rola samooceny [Partner Relationship Quality and Young Mothers' Life Satisfaction—The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem]." *Psychologia Rozwojowa* 23: 49–65.
- Szymczak, Wojciech. 2008. *Podstawy statystyki dla psychologów [Foundations of Statistics for Psychologists]*. Difin.
- World Health Organization. 1998. *WHOQOL User Manual*. World Health Organization.

Preschool Children's Concepts of Peace after Peace Education Activities: A Participatory Analysis of Drawings and Verbal Narratives

Rozumienie pokoju przez dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym po zajęciach z edukacji dla pokoju: partycypacyjna analiza rysunków i narracji werbalnych

Agnieszka Leszcz-Krysiak

Jan Długosz University,
Częstochowa, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1129-4361>

a.leszcz-krysiak@ujd.edu.pl

Andrea Wardal

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński
University in Warsaw,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4460-161X>

a.wardal@uksw.edu.pl

Received: 10 Jan 2026

Revised: 17 Mar 2026

Accepted: 6 Jun 2026

Published Online First:

30 Jun 2026

Abstract: Understanding how preschool children conceptualise peace is important for designing peace education grounded in their experiences and developmental capacities. This qualitative participatory study examined how 84 children aged 5–6 from three preschools in the Silesian Province of Poland represented peace through drawings and accompanying verbal narratives. Six months before data collection, the participants had taken part in educational activities concerning peace, conflict resolution, and non-violent relationships; the findings should therefore be interpreted within this educational context. In 2025, children worked in small groups and responded to the prompts: “Draw peace. What is peace? What is it like when there is peace?” After completing their drawings, they discussed them with the researchers. Recurrent themes in the visual and verbal material were identified and organised into seven qualitative categories: peace as the absence of war, a relationship, safety, an activity, an emotion, a value, and a dream. Approximately 25% of the children explicitly associated peace with the absence of war, whereas others emphasised friendship and family, cooperation, home and safety, joy and love, universal harmony, or an ideal world. The findings show that the participants represented peace as a multidimensional social, emotional, and moral concept rather than only as the absence of armed conflict. They support the use of participatory drawing-and-conversation approaches in preschool peace education and demonstrate that prior educational exposure must be considered when interpreting children's concepts of peace.

Keywords: preschool children, children's concepts of peace, peace education, participatory research with children, children's drawings, verbal narratives, concept formation



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstrakt: Rozpoznanie sposobów, w jakie dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym rozumieją pokój, ma znaczenie dla projektowania edukacji dla pokoju uwzględniającej ich doświadczenia i możliwości rozwojowe. W jakościowym badaniu partycypacyjnym przeanalizowano, jak 84 dzieci w wieku 5–6 lat z trzech przedszkoli w województwie śląskim przedstawiało pokój za pomocą rysunków i towarzyszących im narracji werbalnych. Sześć miesięcy przed zebraniem materiału uczestnicy brali udział w zajęciach dotyczących pokoju, rozwiązywania konfliktów i relacji bez przemocy; wyniki należy zatem interpretować w tym kontekście edukacyjnym. W 2025 roku dzieci pracowały w małych grupach i odpowiadały na polecenia: „Narysuj pokój. Czym jest pokój? Jak jest, kiedy panuje pokój?”. Po wykonaniu rysunków rozmawiały o nich z badaczkami. Powtarzające się motywy obecne w materiale wizualnym i werbalnym uporządkowano w 7 kategoriach jakościowych: pokój jako brak wojny, relacja, bezpieczeństwo, działanie,

emocja, wartość oraz marzenie. Około 25% dzieci bezpośrednio utożsamiało pokój z brakiem wojny, natomiast pozostałe podkreślały znaczenie przyjaźni i rodziny, współpracy, domu i bezpieczeństwa, radości i miłości, powszechnej harmonii lub idealnego świata. Wyniki pokazują, że uczestnicy przedstawiali pokój jako wielowymiarowe pojęcie społeczne, emocjonalne i moralne, a nie wyłącznie jako brak konfliktu zbrojnego. Ustalenia przemawiają za wykorzystywaniem rysunku połączonego z rozmową w partycypacyjnej edukacji dla pokoju, wskazując jednocześnie, że przy interpretacji dziecięcych pojęć pokoju należy uwzględnić wcześniejsze doświadczenia edukacyjne.

Słowa kluczowe: dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym, dziecięce rozumienie pokoju, edukacja dla pokoju, badania partycypacyjne z dziećmi, rysunki dziecięce, narracje werbalne, konstruowanie pojęć

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the last century, Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor, educator and pedagogue, appealed: "I ask you, my dear children, who are capable of anything, to join me in building peace in the world" (Mazzarini 2022). Another significant statement of hers was also recorded: "Peace is a task that must be worked on every day, starting with children" (Metodo Montessori 2025). These words have lost none of their original relevance.

During the OMEP World Assembly and Conference (2025) in Bologna, attended by over 700 people from around the world, some significant words were spoken: „No child is resilient to war. Resilience is not the silence after the bombing. Children are not strong because they stay quiet. Resilience is not what a child can endure alone. A child's resilience means having a loving adult by their side. It means having the right to play, to feel safe, to be seen and heard" (OMEP Italia n.d.).

In order to guarantee children the right to peace, it is necessary to take joint, decisive action to protect peace and human dignity. Upbringing and education are key factors in this process—what we shape in children today through values, attitudes, and educational experiences will be reflected tomorrow in the quality of social life (United Nations 1989, art. 29).

In the context of the political situation, the effects of which are increasingly evident in the everyday lives of young children, education for peace is a key challenge for contemporary pedagogy. In kindergartens, children's themed games often refer to motifs of war, fighting, escape, and attack, especially among children from Ukraine. It is becoming commonplace to build objects resembling weapons from blocks: pistols, rifles, drones, grenades, and flamethrowers. This phenomenon requires teachers to intervene consciously and skillfully so that spontaneous play can become a starting point for constructive peace education. In the Polish context, however, the double meaning of the word 'peace,' which in colloquial language refers to both physical space (equivalent of the English word 'room') and the social value associated with the absence of violence and interpersonal harmony, makes it difficult to implement such measures.

As A. Piejka (2019) writes, education provides opportunities and possibilities for building peace, but requires a reflective and scientifically based approach. Planning for peace education involves consciously shaping an educational environment in which the values of peace, empathy, and dialogue are an integral part of everyday activities

in kindergarten. Planning understood in this way combines theory with practice—it is the foundation for building a culture of peace from the earliest stages of education.

In this article, we present the results of research based on a participatory approach, where we give children a voice and accept their autonomous narratives; moreover, conducting research with children creates space for them to learn and reflect.

1. THE TERM “PEACE” FROM AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Understanding how children form concepts determines how they participate in everyday life, engage in play, resolve conflicts, and cooperate. Peace is an ambiguous concept that is difficult to explain, and adopting a specific definition of it has implications for pedagogical practice.

In educational psychology and pedagogy, the concept of “peace” refers to the emotional, axiological, and social spheres. The classic, simple understanding of peace is the absence of violence and war. In pedagogy, ‘peace’ has become part of intercultural and moral education (Lewowicki 2000, 2013), which includes: values, relationships, and the educational process. Education for peace aims to prepare individuals to live responsibly in a culturally diverse world by fostering dialogue, cooperation, tolerance, and empathy.

Today, more than ever, peace is a political category, although, as Wojnar (2000a) writes, it is primarily a spiritual and moral value, rooted in culture, art, and human experience. Therefore, education for peace should include the development of moral sensitivity as well as the ability to experience beauty and to understand other people.

A similar line of thinking is presented by Piejka (2015 2023), who writes that peace is a long-term and dynamic process, rooted in everyday life, culture, art, and ethics. He repeatedly emphasizes in his publications that the modern world requires education to create a culture of peace, i.e., a way of thinking and living in which individuals are able to build relationships based on respect and solidarity. The goal of education should be to teach coexistence, not just to convey the knowledge that violence is wrong (Piejka 2019).

From the point of view of pedagogy, it is extremely important to refer to the psychological understanding of the concept of ‘peace,’ as it is the foundation for shaping pedagogical reflection on education for peace, enabling understanding of the internal mechanisms that determine pro-social, empathetic, and constructive attitudes in interpersonal relationships (Kozielecki 2000). In this sense, peace education, in order to effectively achieve its educational goals, must be based on the findings of developmental and social psychology, which allow us to understand the dynamics of human behavior in the context of violence, conflict, and reconciliation. The interdisciplinary connection between the two fields therefore not only provides a theoretical foundation for the idea of peace, but also enables the practical development of educational strategies conducive to its realization. Without the support of psychology, pedagogy loses its ability to fully explain and design educational activities, because it is psychology that reveals the internal

determinants of human behavior, motivation, and interpersonal relationships (Łobocki 2009, 278–279).

As Leszcz-Krysiak and Wardal (2024) point out, from the perspective of research on children's understanding of the concept of 'peace' it is important to note that in Polish we are dealing with homonymy—the word '*pokój*' has two completely different meanings that are not logically related to each other. On the one hand, 'peace' refers to physical space, i.e., a room in a building where people sleep, rest, work, or spend time. On the other hand, it means a state of non-conflict, harmony, and agreement between people, i.e., a situation where there is no war, dispute, or violence. This linguistic duality of meaning significantly hinders our understanding of how children understand the concept of 'peace' in a social and moral sense. This makes it all the more important to talk to children about 'peace' in the sense of a value—as a state of coexistence based on respect, empathy, and mutual understanding—so that they can gradually construct in their minds the concept of peace in its true, humanistic dimension.

2. ASSUMPTIONS, OBJECTIVES, AND RESEARCH METHODS

The study used a participatory method, which assumes that children are active participants and co-creators of knowledge. The aim was to give children a voice and enable them to express their own perspectives, experiences, and meanings in a way that was natural for them. This form of research allowed us to establish a good relationship with the children, where they could co-decide on the course of the study. The researcher acts as a partner rather than an expert 'questioner.' This provided an opportunity to better understand the world from the child's perspective and strengthened their subjectivity (Zalewska-Królak 2025). Drawing accompanied by conversation was adopted as the technique.

It is also worth noting that conducting participatory research with children has great educational potential, because when, for example, we ask a child questions about peace, its significance, and how they understand it, we observe the child becoming engaged and curious. This awakens the child's inquisitive nature, encouraging them to ask questions, which in turn leads to an understanding of things, phenomena and processes occurring in the world (Bruner 1965). Thus, it fulfills a dual role—this approach not only allows us to capture children's authentic way of thinking, but also promotes their engagement and reflection. Thanks to this, the participatory method becomes a tool not only for research, but also for education and empowerment, enabling children to actively co-create meanings of socially relevant concepts – such as 'peace,' 'justice,' or 'cooperation.'

As many researchers emphasize, the convergence of two perspectives of the mosaic strategy—methodological, referring to the way research is conducted, and methodical, understood as a way of teaching—reveals significant cognitive and didactic potential and opens up multifaceted possibilities for application (Nowak-Łojewska 2021).

It should be emphasised that, due to their often limited vocabulary, children express their experiences and thoughts through drawing. This is why psychologists

and educational researchers are keen to make use of this tool. The multifaceted nature of this research method is outlined below.

I. Justification for choosing drawing as a research method

The decision to use projective drawing in research involving children is based on several key methodological and psychological considerations:

- Overcoming verbal and cognitive barriers – children, particularly those of pre-school and early school age, often lack the necessary vocabulary or insight into their own emotional states to talk about their fears, desires or conflicts. Drawing provides them with an alternative, non-verbal means of communication.
- Naturalness and a lack of anxiety – drawing is a spontaneous and natural form of play for children. An assessment using this method reduces levels of stress and anxiety (which are common in standard interviews or questionnaire-based tests), thereby increasing the accuracy of the assessment.
- The multidimensional nature of the data – the analysis covers not only the content of the drawing itself (who or what is depicted), but also formal aspects: pencil pressure, spatial arrangement (topography), the size of elements, the colours used, and the child's behaviour whilst drawing (hesitations, erasures, verbal comments).

II. Reference to projective testing theory

Drawing research is deeply rooted in two main schools of thought in psychology:

- The psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approach – as the foundation of projective techniques. It is based on the concept and defence mechanism known as projection. It is assumed that a drawing is a form of symbolic expression of unconscious conflicts. The researcher (diagnostician) acts as an interpreter of symbols. This approach gives rise to such classic assumptions as the idea that the figure drawn first or largest is the person most important to the child, and that omitting the hands of a figure may indicate a sense of helplessness.
- Developmental and cognitive psychology – before a drawing is analyzed from an emotional perspective, the methodology requires an assessment from a developmental perspective. Theories such as the stages of drawing development (e.g., G.H. Luquet, V. Lowenfeld) described by Gil-Ruiz, Martinez-Verez, Ospina Toro, and Castañeda Marulanda (2025) and theories of cognitive development elaborated by J. Piaget are key here (Wadsworth 1996). The researcher must determine whether the lack of proportion or distortion in the figures stems from emotional issues (regression) or is simply typical of a particular stage in the development of the child's nervous system and fine motor skills (e.g., the 'cephalopod' phase in drawings by 3- to 4-year-olds).

III. Reference to research and clinical practice

In psychological and educational practice, drawing is rarely used as the sole assessment tool. The most commonly used tools in practice:

- Family Drawing Test – used to assess intra-family relationships, a child's sense of belonging, and their place within the family system (Corman 1970; Braun-Gałkowska 1992).
- The Draw-A-Person (DAP) test, developed by Karen Machover in 1949, is used to assess a person's self-image, gender identity, and level of intellectual development (*Machover Draw-a-Person Test (DAP Test) 2018*).
- The Tree Test (by Charles Koch) – regarded as a projection of personality structure (the roots represent the subconscious, the trunk represents the strength of the ego, and the crown represents one's relationship with the world). Today, this test is viewed critically due to certain methodological shortcomings (Stemplewska-Żakowicz 2012).

Limitations: Contemporary research methodology takes a very critical view of drawing tests. Their reliability (the consistency of results) and validity (whether they measure what they are intended to measure) are considered low when used as stand-alone standardised tests. The meaning of a single symbol (e.g. the use of black) may stem from depression, but it may equally well result from the fact that the child simply liked that crayon.

For a study to be methodologically sound, drawings are primarily used today as:

- Ice-breaker – a tool for “breaking the ice”, used to establish rapport with the child before the actual assessment.
- The starting point for the interview – it is not the drawing itself that holds the greatest methodological value, but the interview with the child about that drawing. Questions such as: ‘*Who is that?*’, ‘*How does that person feel right now?*’, ‘*Where are they going?*’ allow the child to give a narrative to their projections.
- The drawing component of the test battery is regarded as a complementary (qualitative) method, used in conjunction with clinical observations, interviews with parents and standardised questionnaires (e.g. the CBCL – Child Behavior Checklist), to enable a multidimensional analysis within a single diagnostic process (Mansolf et al. 2022).

It is worth emphasising that drawing is regarded primarily as a qualitative method and a form of interview, rather than a rigorous psychometric test (Stemplewska-Żakowicz 2023; Paluchowski 2007; Hornowska 2025).

This study examined children's subjective conceptions of ‘peace’, as expressed through drawings and verbal statements. The research question was formulated as follows: “How do children conceptualise peace?” and therefore the aim of the study was to attempt to identify how children understand the concept of ‘peace’ and how they express this understanding through artistic expression (drawing) and oral narratives.

The research was conducted over two months in 2025 in three preschools in the Silesian Province, involving 84 children aged 5-6 years. The children drew in small groups of 5-6 children on the topic: "Draw peace. What is peace? What is it like when there is peace?" In the presence of their teacher, immediately after finishing their drawings, the children discussed their drawings with the researchers.

For research purposes, the research problem was formulated in the form of questions: (1) What visual elements related to peace appear in children's drawings? (2) How do children verbally justify their visualizations?

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

In the context of interpreting empirical data, it should be emphasized that six months before the actual research was conducted, the children participated in a series of educational classes on peace. The educational activities were varied, such as: creating mind maps on the topic of 'peace,' role-playing scenarios entitled "How someone can take peace away from us," and discussions about what it means to "resolve conflicts peacefully." One of the facilities also held a symbolic Peace March around the kindergarten, in which children participated with handmade symbols of peace and banners. These activities encouraged reflection on the meaning of the concept of 'peace' and drew attention to how we experience 'peace' in everyday social situations.

The aim of these activities was not only to introduce children to the topics of 'peace,' moral values, and interpersonal relationships, but also to broaden the semantic scope of the concept of 'peace.' As already mentioned, the word 'peace' has a double meaning in Polish, which makes it much more difficult for children to construct its mental equivalent and understand the axiological dimension of this value.

In an earlier pilot study conducted as part of other research on peace (Leszcz-Krysiak and Wardal 2024), extremely different results were obtained in two Catholic kindergartens (33 respondents) and a public kindergarten (18 respondents). Children from the public kindergarten understood the concept of peace only at a concrete-visual level as a room, a bedroom, or a playroom. In contrast, 70% of children from Catholic preschools demonstrated an understanding of the concepts of 'peace' and 'world peace' in two semantic spheres: as calmness and as a state of peace, non-violence, and good relations between people.

In preschools where no classes on 'peace' were conducted, 100% of children identified it with physical space (e.g., 'child's room,' 'where one sleeps'). The situation was different in Catholic preschools, where children often prayed for peace and associated it with social and emotional values such as harmony, friendship, the absence of war, and love (expressed in phrases such as 'something like friendship,' 'so that they don't fight,' 'so that there is harmony').

Therefore, the study focused on children who had participated in classes on peace. From a pedagogical perspective, this type of research has great cognitive value for children, as they construct the meaning of the concept of 'peace' through joint activities such as drawing and conversation. The researcher does not so much

‘teach’ peace directly as create conditions for experiencing and naming it (Tomasello 2003). Therefore, the role of the researcher in this process is to accompany the children, not to ‘steer’ or ‘direct’ them.

In order to organize the qualitative data based on the analysis of the illustrations and conversations with children about what they had drawn, a table of qualitative codes was developed. In order to interpret the research results, recurring themes and meanings were identified and the basis for formulating thematic categories was created (Fleck-Bangert 2001; Chermet-Carroy 2005; Wallon et al. 1993; Kalbarczyk 2010). As Fleck-Bangert (2001) notes, children’s drawings are a form of expression for emotions and experiences that they are not yet able to put into words. Through colour, shape, and composition, children communicate their experiences, needs and perception of the world. As Wallon, Cambier, and Engelhart (1993) emphasize, drawing reflects a child’s emotional and cognitive development, and its analysis allows us to recognize internal states and relationships with the environment. In this context, as Kalbarczyk (2010) also notes, the artistic creativity of young children is an important tool for understanding their world of feelings and experiences. Table 1 presents grouped semantic codes for the concept of ‘peace.’

Table 1. Quality codes in the analysis of children’s drawing and verbal narratives concerning the concept of ‘peace’

The table presents the qualitative coding framework used to analyse children’s drawings and verbal narratives about peace. It lists seven main categories of peace concepts identified in the data, together with representative keywords and descriptions of their meanings. The categories show that children understood peace in multiple ways, including the absence of war, relationships, safety, activities, emotions, values, and dreams.

No.	Main code	Subcategories/keywords	Description of the meaning
1.	Peace as the absence of war	there are no bombs, no shooting, no war	Peace understood in the classical, adult sense – as the absence of armed conflict.
2.	Peace as a relationship	friendship, family, love, being together, helping, not arguing	Peace understood as good interpersonal relations and harmony in the social environment.
3.	Peace as safety	home, roof, shelter, no violence, feeling safe	Peace as a state in which there are no threats – physical or emotional
4.	Peace as an activity	give something, share, do not fight, care for others, cooperate, assist others	Peace as an everyday activity, resulting from choices and behaviours
	Peace as an emotion	heart, happiness, peace, joy, smile, it’s nice, love	Peace as an internal, emotional experience
	Peace as a value	Earth, world, planet, people, all together	Peace as a universal value involving all of humanity
	Peace as a dream	so that no one dies, so that everyone loves each other, a perfect world	Children’s visions of an ideal world

Source: own research

Approximately 25% of children associate 'peace' with the absence of war, which is a characteristic way in which preschool children understand social phenomena. The children drew people with Polish flags, depicted characters without weapons, a clear sky, and filled the space around them with hearts and flowers (Figures 1–2). Their verbal narratives include statements such as: "There are no bombs," "no one dies," "there are no guns" – seeing the world without threat, and thus in terms of so-called negative peace, understood as the absence of direct violence (Galtung 1975). This understanding of 'peace' is based on perceiving good and evil through external consequences rather than motives or values, which corresponds to the early stage of Kohlberg's moral development (*Psychologia rozwoju człowieka* 2014). Children are just beginning to form cognitive and emotional interpretations based on their observations of the adult world and media messages.



Figure 1. Drawing by 5-year-old Ola
(‘There is no war, the country is free’)



Figure 2. Drawing by 5-year-old Aniela
(‘Peace in the world, it’s safe to play’)

For children who took part in classes about peace, the closest understanding of 'peace' is that of a relationship based on harmony with other people, because peace and harmony in their surroundings give children a sense of security. That is why children's artworks depicted people engaged in shared activities, family members participating in activities together, and holding hands was also a common motif. It is also worth noting that the dominant colours in these drawings are yellow, red, green, and blue, and the analysed works radiate warmth. Children understand very well that peace does not exist in isolation, but rather in relation to other people, i.e. through closeness and bonds. The works depicted people in mutual relationships reflecting the fulfillment of mutual needs: sharing toys, helping each other, playing together (Figs. 2, 3, 4). In their descriptions of their illustrations, the children emphasised that the most important thing is "not to argue" and "to help each other." The children's works featured people with disabilities and children who were being helped by others. The children's artwork and their lively comments about it reveal, in a striking manner, the process of social learning of values (Erikson 2000) and the importance of fostering emotional sensitivity and empathy from an early age (Kozmińska and Ostaszewska 2007).



Figure 3. Illustration by 6-year-old Ernie
(‘Children play quietly while their dad works’).



Figure 4. Drawing by 6-year-old Jaś.
(‘You can fish, it’s safe.’)

The home occupied a very important place in the children’s drawings, as it was depicted as a place that protects them, where they are safe, free from violence and surrounded by love. The home appeared as a symbol of security and stability. The young participants in the study depicted the interior of a house where children played together and their father worked. When describing their drawings, they said that it was their home and that they had their own space there, with toys and books. Several children associated ‘room’ with peace and quiet. One girl said: “It’s my room because it’s peaceful there.”

In their drawings and statements, the children emphasised the importance of cooperation and play. While drawing children playing, they said that “children play, they don’t have conflicts, they share their toys.” Peace appeared in these narratives as a state associated with play, enjoyment, and spending time with family, including going for walks together. This more mature understanding of ‘peace’ as a process suggests that peace depends on individual actions, and it must be actively maintained, or, as the children explained, “you shouldn’t fight,” “you should share your toys,” “you need to cooperate.” This understanding has important implications for the children’s sense of agency in creating and maintaining peaceful relationships around them.

For many children, ‘peace’ is associated with emotions such as love, friendship, joy, and inner experiences, which they expressed by drawing one or more hearts. Hearts were often depicted next to people or trees. These works also frequently featured rainbows, which the children described as beautiful because they appear after a storm and are colourful and cheerful. These drawings contained characters who were smiling and happy. Among the most common elements in the drawings were the sun, the house, the heart, and the Earth – as symbols constituting a visual language in which peace is understood as goodness, tranquillity, and love.

Twenty children painted the globe, greenery, rainbows, and birds on their artwork – they interpreted this as a space where it is safe, where you can play, go for a walk, and where there are no aeroplanes flying. They also mentioned clean soil. Two of the drawings featured the words “peace for everyone,” which demonstrates the development of children’s abstract reasoning skills and their perception of peace as a value that is important to everyone.

In five cases, children described peace as a large fairy-tale, ideal world where no one gets sick or dies. In their drawings, they depicted a colourful world of dreams, where everything they like could be found.

There were also highly realistic drawings reflecting the children's needs, such as the drawing by a 6-year-old girl, who painted a colourful picture containing things and activities that can be done when there is peace. She spoke about this drawing in a very mature way, understanding what peace gives people: "The world is peaceful, there is no war. We can have food, fun and time together; we can go wherever we want and speak our own language" (Fig. 5).



Figure 5. Picture by 6-year-old Marysia ("a peace is a happy world")

Source: Own research

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS – IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION AND PEACE EDUCATION

To sum up, children's artistic and verbal narratives on the subject of peace show that 'peace' is understood in a multidimensional way – from relationships and emotions, through actions and security, to a universal value.

The results of the study lead to several reflections on education for 'peace.' The first is that education must be based on the everyday experiences of young children, because children construct concepts in relation to their environment. A social environment in which 'peace' is discussed helps children to create meanings and mental representations about it. Interaction with adults and peers who give meaning to this concept through language, emotion and everyday experiences helps children to create cognitive and emotional representations of the concept of 'peace' (Wygotski 1978; Bruner 1974, 1978). The analysed illustrations showed how the concept of 'peace' is formed gradually, has a socio-cultural character, and is linked to children's experiences.

Preschool children interpret the world primarily through emotional and visual experiences. Therefore, symbols and images that enable children to embody the concept of 'peace' are an important element in creating this concept. This is not primarily about symbols such as doves – like those promoted by the World Peace Council and created by the communist authorities of the Soviet Union in the 1950s (World Peace Council n.d.) – but about striving to deepen interpersonal relationships. Therefore, activities focusing on the value of cooperation, non-violent communication, expressing emotions in a way that is acceptable to others, and appropriately selected reading material about friendship and empathy can play an important role – all this makes 'peace' an element of everyday life rather than just an abstract idea, and teaches that 'peace' begins here and now in peer relationships. This approach reflects the thinking of Janusz Korczak, who emphasised that education must be based on love, understanding and trust in the child. In the spirit of Korczak's thinking, education for peace is a process of the child's internal maturation in an atmosphere of respect and dialogue, rather than a set of imposed moral norms (Korczak 1939).

Pedagogy is based on values, so it cannot be axiologically neutral, because it refers to a specific ideal of humanity. Preschool education, in which children learn cooperation, emotional self-regulation and conflict resolution, is therefore the first link in peace education. Emotional and motivational influences play an important role in this process, supporting the development of pro-social and peaceful attitudes.

Throughout its history, Poland has been particularly hard-hit by the suffering caused by successive uprisings and wars, extermination and persecution. It could be said that every Polish family has suffered and cherishes the memory of their ancestors who fell victim to the ravages of war. Although more than 80 years have passed since the formal end of the Second World War, armed conflicts and tragedies continue to unfold in various countries around the world.

The 21st century has already claimed many lives in armed conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, the Middle East, Lebanon, and Palestine. Perhaps, caught up in the rhythm of everyday life, we think that this does not concern us, because it is far away. However, we must remember that in modern times, armed conflicts tend to escalate; therefore, we should be guided by the conviction that peace is not a given once and for all but requires daily nurturing.

That is why peace education is becoming not so much a choice as a necessity. The quality of this education will determine the future of our world, social relations and the way conflicts are resolved in a few years' time.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that in the current core curriculum for preschool education, in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of National Education (2017), as well as in the preschool education programmes analysed by the authors (Kwaśniewska and Żaba-Żabińska 2017; Kordos 2018; Wasilewska 2021; Żaba-Żabińska et al. 2021; Żaba-Żabińska 2022, 2023a, 2023b), there are numerous references to peace education and content explicitly aimed at shaping peaceful attitudes. These issues are indirectly addressed in the content and

objectives relating to cooperation, empathy, conflict resolution, building social relationships, and the concepts of good and evil. It seems that this is the correct practice, as children 'soak up' the atmosphere of peace through daily interactions, the emotional climate and educational practices. However, the question may arise as to whether these practices are sufficient. Perhaps it is necessary to include peace education in the core curriculum in a more systematic and conscious way, so that it becomes an integral and visible part of the preschool education process. Educating for peace during ongoing armed conflicts is a great challenge for educators; they need methods and tools to talk about such difficult and sensitive topics.

Research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2012 as part of the Education for Peace (EFP) programme among teachers who had experienced the 1992–1995 war showed that they are not merely implementers of the programme but carry within themselves the trauma and identity of the conflict (Clarke-Habibi 2018). Their own emotional and moral development is essential for effective peace education. Currently, Polish teachers, like their Bosnian counterparts, are involved in the process of intercultural education and prejudice prevention. Kindergarten is becoming a meeting place for children of different nationalities, which requires empathy and dialogue pedagogy. As experience in Bosnia shows, a lack of reflection on the future perpetuates divisions, and the effects of peace education depend on the culture of the environment in which the child is raised and on the level of educational awareness of parents and siblings, as well as the personal role models of significant individuals.

Krystyna Kamińska (2019) highlights the problem of serious tensions in schools attended by children from different backgrounds, including migrant families. The differences dividing children and young people, and unresolved problems, can escalate into aggressive behaviour or lead to withdrawal and isolation. In both cases, this will contribute to the formation of separate groups, often antagonistic towards one another, which may result in socialisation problems later in adult life. The author advocates for the establishment of the role of a cultural assistant, whose task would be to support immigrant children in adapting to their new circumstances and environment, particularly with regard to language and cultural barriers, as well as to facilitate communication with teachers and parents. The expected outcome is the children's personal development and their long-term upbringing in a spirit of peace.

A study by Clarke-Habibi (2018, 281) found that lasting peace begins in nurseries and classrooms – in the relationships, language, and attitudes of teachers. It also shows that peace education is a process of healing society, not just teaching about peace.

Education for peace cannot be purely theoretical; it requires reflection on the suffering caused not only by war, but also by violence and all forms of social inequality and discrimination. Therefore, the words of Irena Wojnar (2000a) should be considered very accurate, as she emphasises that the culture of peace does not express a ready-made 'programme for the struggle for peace', but is a constructive category that generates the need for creation and creativity (Wojnar 2000b). At the same time, teachers, as mediators of values, are particularly responsible today

for creating a space of emotional security for children. According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, a lack of adequate emotional and cognitive support in the upbringing process significantly hinders children's ability to construct an abstract understanding of values and the axiological dimension of reality, which in turn limits their capacity for moral reflection and the conscious choice of good (*Psychologia rozwoju człowieka* 2014). The inclusion of drawing and verbal narratives in educational practice promotes the development of peaceful skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Teaching children about peace should be based on their everyday experiences, as children need a specific point of reference in order to grasp a given concept.

The influence of the peer environment is particularly important in consolidating the cognitive and emotional representation of the concept of 'peace,' which is why it is not possible to develop a ready-made 'template' for striving for peace, but rather it is a process that requires the constant creation and improvement of models of behaviour.

The findings clearly demonstrate that children's drawings reflect their understanding of peace. This understanding is expressed in the following ways:

- The heart is a symbol of joy, friendship and love.
- A home where the father works at his desk and the children play peacefully and harmoniously is a symbol of stability and security.
- A child who drew his room explained that it was peaceful.
- A rainbow after a storm – it was frightening and dangerous, but now it is colourful and joyful because the danger has passed.

Throughout their development, children need moral guidance and support from their parents, guardians, and teachers to strengthen their desire to intentionally pursue peace and goodness. The first school for children in this regard is the relationship between their parents and the way they respond to differences of opinion or resolve conflicts.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation, A.L.-K.; methodology, A.L.-K.; software, A.W.; validation, A.L.-K., A.W.; formal analysis, A.L.-K.; investigation, A.L.-K.; resources, A.L.-K., A.W.; data curation, A.W.; writing – original draft, A.L.-K., A.W.; writing – review & editing, A.L.-K., A.W.; visualisation, A.L.-K., A.W.; supervision, A.L.-K., A.W.; project administration, A.L.-K.; . All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: *This research received no external funding.*

Institutional Review Board / Ethics Statement: *Not applicable.*

Informed Consent Statement: *Not applicable.*

Data Availability Statement: *The data presented in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.*

AI Tools Declaration: *Not applicable. The authors declare that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.*

Conflicts of Interest: *The authors declare no conflict of interest.*

REFERENCES:

- Braun-Galkowska, Maria. 1992. *Rysunek rodziny jako metoda badania relacji w systemie rodzinnym* [The Family Drawing as a Method for Examining Relationships in the Family System]. Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL.
- Bruner, Jerome. 1965. *Proces kształcenia* [The Process of Education]. Translated by Józef Radzicki. PWN.
- Bruner, Jerome. 1974. *W poszukiwaniu teorii nauczania* [Toward a Theory of Instruction]. Translated by Ewa Köning-Kraśńska. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Bruner, Jerome. 1978. *Poza dostarczone informacje. Studia z psychologii poznania* [Beyond the Information Given: Studies in the Psychology of Knowing]. Translated by Barbara Mroziak. PWN.
- Chermet-Carroy, Sylvie. 2005. *Zrozum rysunki dziecka, czyli jak interpretować rysunki małych dzieci: kolory, kształty, postacie* [Understand Children's Drawings: How to Interpret Young Children's Drawings]. Translated by Joanna Kluza. Ravi.
- Clarke-Habibi, Sara. 2018. "Teachers' Perspectives on Educating for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Journal of Peace Education* 15 (2): 144–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2018.1463209>.
- Corman, Louis. 1970. *Le test du dessin de famille*. Presses Universitaires de France.
- Erikson, Erik H. 2000. *Dzieciństwo i społeczeństwo* [Childhood and Society]. Translated by Przemysław Hejmej. Rebis.
- Fleck-Bangert, Rose. 2001. *O czym mówią rysunki dzieci: Dostrzeganie i rozumienie zawartych w nich znaków. Poradnik dla rodziców i pedagogów* [What Children's Drawings Say: Recognizing and Understanding Their Signs]. Translated by Magdalena Jałowiec. Jedność.
- Galtung, Johan. 1975. *Peace: Research – Education – Action*. Chr. Ejlers Forlag.
- Gil-Ruiz, Paula, Victoria Martinez-Verez, William Ospina Toro, and Walter Castañeda Marulanda. 2025. "Children's Drawing and Graphic Development: An Empirical Study of the Developmental Stages According to Lowenfeld." *Education Sciences* 15 (6): 681. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15060681>.
- Hornowska, Elżbieta. 2025. *Testy psychologiczne. Teoria i praktyka* [Psychological Tests: Theory and Practice]. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Kalbarczyk, Anna. 2010. *Najważniejsze lata, czyli jak rozumieć rysunki małych dzieci: Rozwój osobowości dziecka w wieku od 2 do 6 lat na podstawie jego rysunków* [The Most Important Years: Understanding Young Children's Drawings]. Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
- Kamińska, Krystyna. 2019. "Edukacja dzieci z doświadczeniami migracyjnymi w polskiej szkole – problemy i wyzwania [Educating Children with Migration Experience in Polish Schools]." *Kwartalnik Naukowy Edukacja* 3 (150): 18–28. <https://doi.org/10.24131/3724.190302>.
- Korczak, Janusz. 1939. *Jak kochać dziecko* [How to Love a Child]. Nasza Księgarnia.
- Kordos, Elżbieta. 2018. *Program wychowania przedszkolnego* [Preschool Education Programme]. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. <https://klett.pl/uploads/repositorie-s/1/82363f0418828674e71a9da88ae0f9975d6607b7.pdf>.
- Kozielecki, Józef. 2000. *Koncepcje psychologiczne człowieka* [Psychological Conceptions of the Human Being]. Wydawnictwo Żak.

- Koźmińska, Irena, and Elżbieta Ostaszewska. 2007. *Z dzieckiem w świat wartości [Into the World of Values with a Child]*. Świat Książki.
- Kwaśniewska, Małgorzata, and Wiesława Żaba-Żabińska. 2017. *Nasze przedszkole. Program edukacji przedszkolnej wspomagający rozwój aktywności dzieci [Our Preschool: An Early Education Programme Supporting Children's Activity]*. Grupa MAC Edukacja.
- Leszcz-Krysiak, Agnieszka, and Andrea Wardal. 2024. "Polish Preschool Children's Understanding of the Meaning of 'Peace.'" *Forum Pedagogiczne* 14 (2.2): 125–143. <https://doi.org/10.21697/fp.2024.2.2.11>.
- Lewowicki, Tadeusz. 2000. "W poszukiwaniu modelu edukacji międzykulturowej [In Search of a Model of Intercultural Education]." In *Edukacja międzykulturowa w Polsce i na świecie [Intercultural Education in Poland and the World]*, edited by Tadeusz Lewowicki, Ewa Ogrodzka-Mazur, and Alina Szczurek-Boruta, 21–35. UŚ.
- Lewowicki, Tadeusz. 2013. "Edukacja wobec odwiecznych i współczesnych problemów świata – konteksty i wyzwania edukacji międzykulturowej [Education and the World's Enduring and Contemporary Problems]." *Edukacja Międzykulturowa* 2: 19–37.
- Łobocki, Mieczysław. 2009. *Teoria wychowania w zarysie [An Outline of the Theory of Education]*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
- Machover Draw-a-Person Test (DAP Test). 2018. "Machover Draw-a-Person Test (DAP Test)." *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, April 19. <https://dictionary.apa.org/machover-draw-a-person-test>.
- Mansolf, Maxwell, et al. 2022. "Linking the Child Behavior Checklist to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire." *Psychological Assessment* 34 (3): 233–246. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0001083>.
- Mazzarini, Mirella. 2022. "Maria Montessori: educazione e pace." Raffaello Scuola, May 4. <https://raffaelloscuola.it/news/primaria/maria-montessori-educazione-e-pace/>.
- Metodo Montessori. 2025. "Educare alla pace: la visione di Maria Montessori attuale più che mai." *metodomontessori.it*, October 1. <https://www.metodomontessori.it/attivita-montessori/principi-alleducazione/educare-alla-pace>.
- Ministry of National Education (Poland). 2017. "Regulation of the Minister of National Education of February 14, 2017 on the Core Curriculum for Preschool Education and General Education." *Dziennik Ustaw* 2017, item 356.
- Nowak-Łojewska, Agnieszka. 2021. "Podążając śladem dziecięcego rozumienia świata społecznego. Uwagi na marginesie badań mozaikowych [Following Children's Understanding of the Social World]." *Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji / Issues in Early Education* 1 (52): 63–76. <https://doi.org/10.26881/pwe.2021.52.05>.
- OMEP Italia. n.d. "OMEP World Assembly and Conference." Accessed May 29, 2026. <https://www.omep2025.org>.
- Paluchowski, Władysław Jacek. 2007. *Diagnoza psychologiczna. Podejście ilościowe i jakościowe [Psychological Diagnosis: A Quantitative and Qualitative Approach]*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Piejka, Agnieszka. 2015. "Kształtowanie kultury pokoju w ludziach – perspektywa globalna [Shaping a Culture of Peace in People: A Global Perspective]." *Pedagogika Społeczna* 1 (55): 115–128.
- Piejka, Agnieszka. 2019. "Edukacja jako źródło szans i możliwości budowania pokoju [Education as a Source of Opportunities for Building Peace]." In *Czy świat należy urządzić inaczej. Schyłek i początek [Should the World Be Arranged Differently? An*

- Ending and a Beginning*], edited by Bogdan Galwas, Paweł Kozłowski, and Konrad Prandecki, 188–196. Komitet Prognoz „Polska 2000 Plus” przy Prezydium PAN. <https://publikacje.pan.pl/Content/116680/PDF/13Piejka.pdf>.
- Piejka, Agnieszka. 2023. “Wolność w perspektywie edukacji dla pokoju [Freedom from the Perspective of Education for Peace].” *Ruch Pedagogiczny* 1–2: 159–174.
- Psychologia rozwoju człowieka, vol. 2: Charakterystyka okresów życia człowieka [The Psychology of Human Development, vol. 2: Characteristics of Life Stages]. 2014. Edited by Barbara Harwas-Napierała and Janusz Trempała. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Stemplewska-Żakowicz, Katarzyna. 2012. *Recenzja Testu drzewa [Review of the Tree Test]*. https://oldkomppsych.pan.pl/images/RecenzjaTestu_Drzewa_skr%C3%B3na.pdf.
- Stemplewska-Żakowicz, Katarzyna. 2023. *Diagnoza psychologiczna. Diagnostowanie jako kompetencja profesjonalna [Psychological Diagnosis: Diagnosis as a Professional Competence]*. Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Tomasello, Michael. 2003. *Constructing a Language: A Usage-Based Theory of Language Acquisition*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv26070v8>.
- United Nations. 1989. *Convention on the Rights of the Child. United Nations Treaty Series* 1577: 3–178. Adopted November 20, 1989. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.
- Wadsworth, Barry J. 1996. *Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development: Foundations of Constructivism*. 5th ed. Longman.
- Wallon, Philippe, Anne Cambier, and Dominique Engelhart. 1993. *Rysunek dziecka [The Child's Drawing]*. Translated by Rafał Gałkowski. Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne.
- Wasilewska, Jolanta. 2021. *Drużyna marzeń. Program wychowania przedszkolnego [Dream Team: Preschool Education Programme]*. Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne.
- Wojnar, Irena. 2000a. “Kultura pokoju – idea i zadania edukacyjne [Culture of Peace—Idea and Educational Tasks].” In *W kręgu humanistycznej edukacji [Within Humanistic Education]*, edited by Józefa Brągiel and Zenon Jasiński, 61–69. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.
- Wojnar, Irena. 2000b. *Humanistyczne intencje edukacji [Humanistic Intentions of Education]*. Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak.
- World Peace Council. n.d. “World Peace Council.” Accessed September 22, 2025. <https://www.wpc-in.org>
- Wygotski, Lew S. 1978. *Narzędzie i znak w rozwoju dziecka [Tool and Sign in the Development of the Child]*. Translated by Barbara Grell. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Żaba-Żabińska, Wiesława, Wioletta Majewska, and Renata Paździo. 2021. *Program wychowania przedszkolnego [Preschool Education Programme]*. MAC Edukacja.
- Żaba-Żabińska, Wiesława. 2022. *Kolorowe Karty. Program wychowania przedszkolnego dla dzieci w wieku od 3 do 6 lat [Colorful Cards: Preschool Education Programme for Children Aged 3–6]*. MAC Edukacja.
- Żaba-Żabińska, Wiesława. 2023a. *Kolorowy Start. Program wychowania przedszkolnego dla dzieci w wieku 3–6 lat [Colorful Start: Preschool Education Programme for Children Aged 3–6]*. MAC Edukacja.
- Żaba-Żabińska, Wiesława. 2023b. *Olek i Ada. Program wychowania przedszkolnego [Olek and Ada: Preschool Education Programme]*. MAC Edukacja.
- Zalewska-Królak, Aleksandra. 2025. *Metodologia badań otwarta na dzieci [Research Methodology Open to Children]*. PWN.

Sociotherapy as a Field of Support and Education for Adolescent Boys

Socjoterapia jako obszar wsparcia i edukacji dorastających chłopców

Olga Modzelewska

University of Warmia and
Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0047-077X>

olga.modzelewska@uwm.edu.pl

Received: 3 Feb 2026

Revised: 11 Apr 2026

Accepted: 6 Jun 2026

Published Online First:

30 Jun 2026

Abstract: Nowadays, sociotherapy as a form of psychological and pedagogical support, as well as a space for assistance and education, is gaining increasing importance. This type of support is based on flexible forms of work, adapts methods to actual needs, and systematically supports emotional, social, and moral development. This is particularly significant when working with young boys and adolescents who face numerous developmental challenges. In the context of cultural change and growing awareness of the diversity of social roles, it is necessary to create safe spaces where they can build their own identities without the pressure of rigid frameworks. Promoting healthy interpersonal relationships, developing coping skills to deal with difficulties, and creating positive models of masculinity and empathy are crucial. In this context, sociotherapy becomes a key element in a new paradigm of education and therapy for young men. The presented considerations include scholarly reflection and a review of the literature in the fields of sociotherapy, pedagogy, and masculinity/masculinities studies. Researchers indicate that boys rarely seek psychological and pedagogical support, which is linked to cultural norms of masculinity and difficulties in identifying and expressing emotions. In this context, it is important to design sociotherapeutic activities tailored to boys' developmental needs. This paper may serve as inspiration for educational initiatives that support young men in shaping constructive models of masculinity and in coping with gender stereotypes.

Keywords: sociotherapy, boys' development, masculinity, identity formation, correction of stereotypes, psychological help-seeking

Abstrakt: Współcześnie socjoterapia jako forma pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej oraz przestrzeń wsparcia i edukacji zyskuje na znaczeniu. Ten rodzaj pomocy wykorzystuje elastyczne formy pracy, dostosowanie metod do rzeczywistych potrzeb oraz systematyczne wspieranie rozwoju emocjonalnego, społecznego i moralnego. Jest to szczególnie istotne w pracy z młodymi chłopcami, adolescentami, którzy mierzą się z licznymi wyzwaniami rozwojowymi. W obliczu zmian kulturowych i rosnącej świadomości różnorodności ról społecznych konieczne jest tworzenie bezpiecznej przestrzeni, w której mogą budować własną tożsamość bez presji schematów. Kluczowe jest promowanie zdrowych relacji interpersonalnych, rozwijanie umiejętności radzenia sobie z trudnościami oraz kreowanie pozytywnych wzorców męskości i empatii. W tym kontekście socjoterapia staje się kluczowym elementem w nowym paradygmacie edukacji i terapii młodych mężczyzn. Prezentowane rozważania obejmują refleksję naukową oraz przegląd literatury z zakresu socjoterapii, pedagogiki i studiów nad męskością/ami. Badacze wskazują, że chłopcy rzadko szukają wsparcia psychologiczno-pedago-



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

gicznego, co wiąże się z normami kulturowymi męskości oraz trudnościami w identyfikowaniu i wyrażaniu emocji. W tym kontekście istotne jest tworzenie zajęć socjoterapeutycznych dopasowanych do potrzeb rozwojowych chłopców. Niniejsze opracowanie może służyć jako inspiracja do działań wychowawczych wspierających młodych mężczyzn w kształtowaniu konstruktywnych wzorców męskości i radzeniu sobie ze stereotypami płciowymi.

Słowa kluczowe: socjoterapia, rozwój chłopców, męskość, kształtowanie tożsamości, korektura stereotypów, poszukiwanie pomocy psychologicznej

INTRODUCTION

The changes and challenges experienced today in the cultural and social spheres affect individuals across many areas of their functioning. Those who often experience a particular sense of uncertainty, and sometimes even confusion, in the process of constructing themselves and their identity are young people. A particularly important group consists of adolescent boys who, as indicated in psychological studies, are individuals roughly between the ages of 10 and 20-25 (Ogden and Hagen 2018; Green 2016; Peret Drążewska 2021). This period involves exceptionally intense biological, cognitive, and social changes, as well as processes of identity formation and the development of increasing autonomy (Howells 2018; Ogden and Hagen 2018). This phase of life is especially significant when analysing difficulties related to maturation, including risky behaviours and phenomena that marginalise the developmental needs of young boys (Peret Drążewska 2021; Howells 2018). Moreover, during this time boys are constantly exposed to contradictory messages regarding who they should be, what is considered “appropriate” for their gender, and what requirements they must meet in order to be perceived as full members of society. The developmental challenges they face during adolescence are highly demanding, and they are not made easier by additional messages that define rigid boundaries within which their identity is expected to fit.

Society and the environments in which young boys mature are highly diverse. Consequently, each individual experiences different relationships with their family members, their surroundings, and themselves. Those boys who cannot rely on family support, who struggle to navigate social interactions, or who are unable to cope with pressure and instead release it in destructive ways require appropriate forms of support that take into account their individual needs as well as the dynamically changing social environment. In this context, sociotherapy as a form of psychological and pedagogical assistance gains increasing importance, offering not only intervention in difficult situations but also systematic support for the emotional, social, and moral development of young people.

As a form of support and education, sociotherapy enables the creation of safe and supportive spaces in which young boys can freely explore their identity, develop communication skills, empathy, and healthy interpersonal relationships, without the pressure imposed by rigid gender stereotypes. Additionally, throughout

the entire process, participants gain knowledge and experience related to healthy ways of forming and maintaining relationships and coping with various difficult situations. They also develop skills necessary for cooperation, conflict resolution, and conscious participation in different forms of social life.

In light of the growing social awareness of the diversity of gender roles and the needs of young people, sociotherapy emerges as an extremely important tool in the educational, upbringing, and psychological and pedagogical process. Its flexible methods and approach allow interventions to be adapted to the individual capacities and challenges of participants, thereby supporting effective coping with difficulties and the development of constructive behavioural patterns. In this context, particular importance is attached to supporting positive models of masculinity that promote openness, responsibility, and self-awareness, making sociotherapy a key element of the modern paradigm of education and therapy.

1. SOCIOTHERAPY

Sociotherapy, through participation and work in a group, constitutes an important form of intervention directed at individuals who require support and modification of their attitudes. Its aim is to modify beliefs, behaviours, and stereotypical patterns of action. As noted by Jacek Strzemieczny, “it consists in the deliberate creation of conditions (social experiences) for children that enable the sociotherapeutic process to take place (changes in judgments about reality, behavioural patterns, and emotional release)” (Strzemieczny 1993, 45).

One of the most frequently cited definitions of sociotherapy is presented by Barbara Jankowiak and Emilia Soroko, who define it as “a group-based form of psychological and pedagogical assistance directed at children and adolescents from risk groups and/or those exhibiting disturbances in psychosocial functioning, which consists in the intentional activation of helping factors using group processes and the relationship with the sociotherapist” (Jankowiak and Soroko 2019, 10–11). As a form of assistance, sociotherapy may therefore be treated as a means of support addressed to individuals in various life circumstances (Jankowiak and Soroko 2014, 226).

Katarzyna Sawicka defines sociotherapy as “a method of treating behavioural disorders and certain emotional disorders in children and adolescents in the course of group meetings. Sociotherapy may thus be regarded as a form of psychological assistance addressed to children and adolescents, situated between psychotherapy, psychoeducation, and interpersonal skills training” (Sawicka 1999, 10). This demonstrates the broad and versatile ways in which this form of support is perceived and applied, as well as the wide range of goals assigned to such activities.

Scientific literature focusing on the issue of sociotherapy, as stated by Beata Bocian-Waszkiewicz (2016, 148–149), highlights several of its key components, which include:

1. The group-based nature of the work – involving the mutual influence of individuals within the group and through the group.
2. Applicability across different age groups – with participants ranging from preschool-aged children to older individuals; the effectiveness of the sociotherapeutic process may depend on similarities in age and life experience among participants.
3. Identification of factors and symptoms of behavioural disorders as a primary objective, along with the construction of appropriate corrective situations.
4. Therapy, education, and development as core goals – the therapeutic dimension focuses on correcting stereotypical patterns of thinking and presenting new models and role patterns; the educational dimension centres on providing participants with knowledge and information, and the developmental dimension is concerned with shaping participants' competencies and skills.

Scientific publications indicate that sociotherapeutic activities encompass “a strand of affective education aimed at shaping proper personality development, and above all at correcting personality and emotional deficits” (Ostaszewski 2001, 13). Maria John-Borys (2005, 351) points out that the sociotherapeutic process is closely linked to broadly understood prevention, as it enables the presentation and promotion of alternative patterns, perspectives, and behaviours, for example in relation to substance use, lifestyle choices, or the development of health-promoting attitudes.

Currently, in Poland, sociotherapy is primarily defined as group work “with children and adolescents who present behavioural difficulties and are therefore at risk of social exclusion, which allows it to be described as a form of psychological and pedagogical assistance” (Wilk 2023, 49). In addition, sociotherapeutic work is often undertaken with individuals belonging to so-called risk groups, those exhibiting various disorders, or those experiencing difficulties in psychosocial functioning (Jankowiak and Soroko 2021, 56).

It can therefore be stated that sociotherapy constitutes a support-oriented field directed at individuals who experience difficulties in everyday functioning across various domains of life. As a result, it has attracted scholarly attention from representatives of numerous disciplines. M. John-Borys notes that those who popularised sociotherapy as a form of support include both educators and psychologists who engaged in “work on the development of interpersonal skills and self-realisation within the framework of humanistic psychology. The basis of training consisted of interpersonal skills training groups, therapeutic groups, personal development groups, and various forms of psychological workshops” (2005, 349–350).

The central focus of the sociotherapeutic process is the individual resources of participants, which are continually sought, strengthened, and highlighted. In sociotherapy, the primary aim is to identify internal characteristics, namely psychological resources, and to direct them towards the achievement of positive personal and

social goals. Equally important is supporting young people in finding meaning and satisfaction in interpersonal relationships and in developing responsibility for their decisions. Such outcomes can only be achieved within an appropriately structured sociotherapeutic environment, which constitutes one of the key factors influencing behavioural change. For transformation to occur, “an appropriately organised social structure is required, forming an educational and therapeutic context. This is referred to as the sociotherapeutic environment or sociotherapeutic community. An appropriately organised community (...) enables social influence to occur through processes of human communication” (John-Borys 2005, 351–352). This influence is realised both through the presentation of appropriate behavioural models and through attitudes characterised by kindness and acceptance, which facilitate the learning of socially approved behaviours and attitudes.

Providing young individuals with the opportunity to be part of a supportive environment and to experience positive aspects of relationships and social interaction constitutes an invaluable element of the entire corrective and sociotherapeutic process. In the case of boys, such an environment becomes a developmental space in which flexible models of masculinity can be shaped. By being grounded in relationships, building a sense of safety, and contributing to the creation of corrective emotional experiences, sociotherapy becomes a valuable area of support in work with boys who today may face numerous challenges related to fulfilling their gender role, particularly during the process of adolescence. In this context, sociotherapy can help boys address challenges related to social pressure and gender stereotypes in the formation of masculine identity.

2. THE FORMATION OF MASCULINITY

The formation of masculinity, similarly to femininity, begins in early childhood. Eugenia Mandal (2003, 38) emphasises that gender stereotypes belong to the earliest and most fundamental social categories that individuals acquire through socialisation already in early childhood. Adults transmit behavioural patterns, modes of conduct, and gender-related perceptual scripts to children. This process applies even to three-year-old children, as demonstrated by Linda Brannon (2002, 217), who observed behaviours exhibiting features of gender stereotyping at this age.

Adolescence is a period in which every individual, regardless of gender, confronts transformations in both the physical and psychological domains. For some, the process of growing up may evoke fear, uncertainty, or a sense of confusion. During this stage, young boys may encounter neglect, misunderstanding, or unrealistic expectations and rigid social frameworks. These issues were highlighted in research conducted by infuture.institute and Fundacja moonka, which resulted in the report *Dojrzewanie polskich chłopców* [Adolescence of Polish Boys] (2023). The report draws attention to numerous significant issues related to boys' development that have long been neglected in both public and academic discourse. One of the opening statements notes that “unfortunately, the frameworks into

which we continue to place boys, cultural norms and stereotypes build in them the belief that they **MUST** cope on their own” (infuture.institute and Fundacja moonka 2023, 4). This message may be interpreted as an ongoing attempt to construct a fictional ideal of the “real man” who does not require support or help and who, as an independent individual, is expected to confront adversity successfully.

The persistent pressure to fit boys into rigid frameworks often results in precisely such detachment and in limitations on experiencing the full range of natural human emotions and experiences. Moreover, “an individual experiencing social pressure that requires him to adapt to appropriate norms, most often adapts to the requirements of the role, not wanting to risk the collective stigma caused by violating these norms” (Dobosz 2022, 70–71). Strict adherence to externally imposed roles may not only disrupt an individual’s internal sense of self but also undermine both internal and social coherence. Stereotypes, as primary mechanisms shaping the social worldview, define rigid behavioural frameworks, particularly in relation to the male role, and lead to the simplification of attitudes considered typical for a given gender. As Magdalena Grabowska notes, they construct an image of the man as “relatively insensitive, rational, strong, and courageous” (2007, 20). The issue of stereotyping has been addressed in numerous studies, which emphasise that “gender stereotypes pose a threat to individuals’ life chances and developmental opportunities – both for women and for men” (Chmura-Rutkowska and Ostrouch 2007, 29). Consequently, it may be concluded that decisions and life choices become narrowed and limited to those that fit within stereotypically defined roles (see Bem 2000).

When applying these considerations to boys and their development, it is important to reflect on how the restriction of opportunities, the specific “profiling” of personality, and the reduction of developmental autonomy (see Bem 2000; Brannon 2002; Mandal 2000) affect young people during a period of intense internal change. As researchers indicate, “men are subject throughout their lives to strong social pressure stemming from beliefs about traits and behaviours culturally assigned to masculinity” (Chmura-Rutkowska and Ostrouch 2007, 44; see also Arcimowicz 2003; Pankowska 2005). Boys experience this pressure from early childhood, as society demands the demonstration of “typically masculine” traits from boys at a very young age. Common expressions such as “be a big boy” or “boys don’t cry” are directed at children who are only a few years old. This illustrates that from early childhood boys are expected to prove their masculinity (or, as noted by L. Brannon (2002, 214) and Elisabeth Badinter (1993, 120), to deny who they are not: a woman, a homosexual, or a child). Furthermore, boys are still frequently raised and socialised in contexts where stereotypes play a significant role. During adolescence, when they search for their identity and rely on social norms, and thus often on stereotypes, they may reproduce socially circulating patterns of so-called “toxic masculinity.” These patterns involve the glorification and affirmation of male “naturalness” expressed through violence, brutality, dominance over others, or emotional insensitivity.

For this reason, it is crucial that those involved in supporting individual development strive to help young people shape their personality and identity from an early age in ways that are free from prejudice and rigid frameworks. One possible form of support is sociotherapy, directed at individuals who have not had the opportunity to grow up in a supportive environment or who, for other reasons, experience difficulties in social functioning. Moreover, through its therapeutic, educational, preventive, and supportive functions, sociotherapy may constitute an important area of work with boys facing challenges related to the construction of gender identity, behavioural patterns, and social roles, supporting them in building an accepted position within society.

3. SOCIO THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT FOR BOYS

The support provided through sociotherapy may constitute a space in which young boys, living in today's highly demanding times, can find what they need most. By participating in the sociotherapeutic process, young individuals can acquire soft skills such as enhanced ability to cooperate within a group (contrary to the model of dominant and competitive masculinity), effective communication, and empathy. As noted by Maciej Wilk (2024, 50), the fact that sociotherapy is rooted in psychology, pedagogy, sociology, anthropology, and social work enables group work to be conducted within a socio-cultural context. Consequently, this context can be taken into account in the process of correcting inappropriate, stereotypical perceptions of the world, society, and the individual.

Sociotherapeutic activities are primarily directed at individuals who experience difficulties or are at risk of encountering them. Those who are less affected by demoralization or social marginalization may participate in such meetings in centres that, in a sense, become an alternative educational environment. This allows for corrective interventions, the release of anger and frustration, overcoming fears, and helps prevent social exclusion, the reinforcement of negative reaction patterns, and the resulting stigmatization (Wilk 2023, 48). In this way, a specific educational microenvironment is created, which helps prevent various undesirable behaviours, including self-destructive behaviours and the process of labelling (Wilk 2023, 48).

Sociotherapy can be characterized as "a specific type of group therapy for the behaviour of children and adolescents, the aim of which is to create conditions for the emergence of a process of correcting one's own behaviour" (Jagięła 2007, 9). It involves changing negative beliefs about oneself and others, experiencing emotionally corrective events that replace earlier traumas, and testing new, more effective patterns of behaviour. When such activities are directed toward young boys, they can be shown various ways of coping with difficult situations encountered in everyday life. Additionally, work during sessions focuses on self-esteem, which is not based solely on fulfilling stereotypical male roles but rather on a subjective sense of self, one's strengths, and personal resources.

The support that can be provided through sociotherapy aligns with the concept proposed by Helena Sęk and Roman Cieślak (2004, 11), who emphasize the importance of social relationships and helpful behaviours in difficult situations. The authors also point to the role of meeting needs in crisis situations, which is particularly significant when support comes from significant others and reference groups. This perspective is crucial in sociotherapy, where assistance is based on social relationships and building trust, allowing individuals to cope more effectively with difficulties (Jankowiak and Soroko 2014, 226).

The sociotherapeutic process constitutes a multidimensional area of support for the individual. Jankowiak and Soroko (2014, 227–228) indicate that this support may be understood as social support of both a structural and a functional nature. Structural support encompasses social networks whose availability makes assistance possible to individuals in difficult situations and constitutes an important source of support and personal resources. Its key component is availability, as well as characteristics such as prosociality and altruism (Jankowiak and Soroko 2014, 227). The authors identify these networks with the sociotherapeutic group, which strengthens participants and supports them in their everyday functioning. Functional support, in turn, refers to social interactions in which, in stressful situations, emotions are expressed, information is exchanged, and concrete forms of assistance are provided. In this context, the principle of adequacy is crucial, as support should be tailored to the actual needs of the individual.

Providing assistance to individuals experiencing difficult life situations constitutes one of the support strategies that can be directed toward young boys. The fact that they experience social pressure related to fulfilling the male role may lead to a sense of inconsistency or even an identity crisis. As indicated by numerous researchers (Brzezińska 2000; James and Gilliland 2008; Kubacka-Jasiecka 2010; Pilecka 2004), the phenomenon of crisis is highly complex and analysed from various perspectives. Dorota Kubacka-Jasiecka defines an emotional crisis as a set of “temporary, periodic disturbances of psychological balance caused by threat and related to life-meaning values in confrontation with an important life problem” (Kubacka-Jasiecka 2010, 26). Linking the confusion experienced by young boys in a world full of stereotypical conceptions of the male role with an emotional crisis seems justified, as imposed patterns often limit the freedom to express emotions, leading to internal frustration, a sense of loneliness, and difficulties in understanding and accepting one’s own identity. Such pressure may result in the repression of sensitivity and fear of showing weakness, which deepens emotional conflict and hinders the development of healthy relationships and self-esteem.

Sociotherapeutic meetings are conducted in such a way that the group serves as a medium through which influence on the individual is possible. Each participant learns healthy social roles, ways of functioning in society, and how to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships, while also gaining experiences that allow for the reconstruction of cognitive judgments (Wilk 2023,

51). Thus, engaging individuals in sociotherapeutic activities may become a source of acquiring new competencies and developing new ways of perceiving themselves.

With reference to boys, the sociotherapeutic process enables the correction of social attitudes and behaviours that have been disrupted or inadequately developed. During sociotherapy, boys learn how to respond to various social situations, how to establish relationships, and how to cope with emotions in a constructive manner, thereby breaking rigid stereotypes of masculinity. This is particularly important for individuals who experience difficulties in accepting or understanding social norms. Such difficulties often result from traumatic experiences, a challenging family environment, a lack of role models, or other external factors that hinder appropriate social development. Sociotherapy creates safe conditions for experimenting with new forms of behaviour and building positive habits. Additionally, the group provides opportunities for mutual support, acceptance, and understanding. Young participants may realise that they are not alone in facing difficulties and that others experience similar challenges, which can positively affect their self-esteem. Through sociotherapy, individuals gain a sense of belonging, which contributes to an improved quality of life, the development of a positive self-image, and the ability to find their place within the social structure.

Corrective and creative changes in the perception of one's self that occur as a result of sociotherapeutic work enable boys to become full members of society. By accumulating positive experiences and analysing relationships with others and with themselves, participants gain tools for better understanding themselves, their emotions, and the surrounding world. This approach allows for the development of healthy behaviour patterns, which is crucial for their future functioning as responsible and empathetic adults. In this way, the process of sociotherapy becomes a foundation not only for correcting disorders but also for creating lasting and positive changes in boys' personality development (Sawicka 2024, 18, 21).

An analysis of the literature indicates that effective engagement of boys in sociotherapeutic activities requires moving away from an exclusively deficit-oriented perspective on their functioning toward an approach grounded in resources, relationships, and experience. Such activities can become a space in which boys not only receive support in coping with emotional and social difficulties, but also learn alternative ways of self-expression, relationship-building, and constructing their own identity free from the pressure of stereotypical expectations. Sociotherapy, based on active methods of work, group experience, and dialogue, therefore emerges as a particularly promising area from both a supportive and an educational perspective for young boys.

CONCLUSION

Viewed from a socio-cultural perspective, sociotherapy supports the development of human potential by offering new, corrective experiences and providing education to individuals. In this way, it encourages the introduction of positive changes both in individuals' personal lives and in their relationships with the social environment (Wilk

2023, 52). In the context of the issues discussed in this article, it can be stated that sociotherapy may play a key role in supporting the development of boys, offering them not only tools for coping with emotions and stress, but also opportunities for building a healthy identity. This process creates space for shaping attitudes that challenge stereotypes associated with the traditional male role – dominant, aggressive, or emotionally distanced. Instead, it enables the development of qualities such as empathy, emotional openness, and the ability to build healthy interpersonal relationships.

Sociotherapy provides boys with opportunities to better understand themselves and receive support in building a healthy identity, coping with stress and emotional difficulties, and developing social skills. Recognising sociotherapy as one of the approaches that support development allows for a focus on the holistic process of shaping “healthy masculinity” and redefining one’s identity. Through a gradual evolution in self-perception, boys gain new corrective experiences that help them develop a positive self-image and greater self-acceptance. Participation in structured group situations offers opportunities to acquire new social skills and to develop attitudes based on cooperation, respect, and mutual understanding. Learning through experience in sociotherapy involves intrapsychic processes, including emotions and psychological states emerging during group meetings, as well as self-reflection in various contexts and self-evaluation. However, it should be emphasised that changes in self-perception and self-experience during the sociotherapeutic process occur gradually rather than suddenly. Rather, they constitute a gradual evolution based on the systematic acquisition of self-knowledge, its transformation, and the continuous testing and verification of new experiences (Sawicka 2024, 22). Young individuals gain new corrective experiences and analyse them in order to integrate what is currently occurring in their thoughts and emotions. All of this enables them to work through ongoing problems and challenges within a safe environment. Ultimately, sociotherapy not only helps boys overcome difficulties, but also fosters their capacity to develop healthy and meaningful social roles.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created.

AI Tools Declaration: Not applicable. The author declares that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.

REFERENCES:

- Arcimowicz, Krzysztof. 2003. *Obraz mężczyzny w polskich mediach. Prawda, fałsz, stereotyp* [The Image of Men in Polish Media: Truth, Falsehood, Stereotype]. Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Badinter, Elisabeth. 1993. *XY. Tożsamość mężczyzny* [XY: A Man’s Identity]. Translated by Grzegorz Przewłocki. W.A.B.

- Bem, Sandra L. 2000. *Męskość. Kobiecość. O różnicach wynikających z płci* [Masculinity. Femininity: On Gender Differences]. Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Bocian-Waszkiewicz, Beata. 2016. "Socjoterapia jako metoda pracy z uczniem ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi [Sociotherapy as a Method of Working with a Student with Special Educational Needs]." *Student Niepełnosprawny. Szkice i Rozprawy* 16 (9): 145–165.
- Brannon, Linda. 2002. *Psychologia rodzaju. Kobiety i mężczyźni: podobni czy różni* [The Psychology of Gender: Women and Men—Similar or Different]. Translated by Magdalena Kacmajor. Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Brzezińska, Anna. 2000. *Spółeczna psychologia rozwoju* [Social Psychology of Development]. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Chmura-Rutkowska, Iwona, and Joanna Ostrouch. 2007. *Mężczyźni na przełęczy życia. Studium socjopedagogiczne* [Men at the Turning Point of Life: A Sociopedagogical Study]. Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls".
- Dobosz, Dagmara. 2022. "Współczesna kobiecość i męskość w opiniach młodych dorosłych – analiza w kontekście stereotypów płci oraz własnych koncepcji tożsamości płciowych badanych [Contemporary Femininity and Masculinity in the Opinions of Young Adults: An Analysis in the Context of Gender Stereotypes and the Respondents' Own Conceptions of Gender Identities]." *Studia Edukacyjne* 67: 69–84. <https://doi.org/10.14746/se.2022.67.5infuture.institute>
- infuture.institute and Fundacja moonka. 2023. *Dojrzewanie polskich chłopców* [Adolescence of Polish Boys]. August 10, 2024. <https://infuture.institute/raporty/dojrzewanie-polskich-chlopcow/>
- Grabowska, Magdalena. 2007. *Stereotypy płci we wczesnej dorosłości. Wybrane uwarunkowania* [Gender Stereotypes in Early Adulthood: Selected Determinants]. Wydawnictwo UKW.
- Green, Lorraine. 2016. *Understanding the Life Course: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives*. 2nd ed. Polity.
- Howells, Lawrence. 2018. *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Adolescents and Young Adults: An Emotion Regulation Approach*. Routledge.
- Jagięła, Jarosław. 2007. *Socjoterapia w szkole. Krótki poradnik psychologiczny* [Sociotherapy at School: A Short Psychological Guide]. Wydawnictwo Rubikon.
- James, Richard K., and Burl E. Gilliland. 2008. *Strategie interwencji kryzysowej* [Crisis Intervention Strategies]. 2nd ed. Translated by Andrzej Bidziński and Krzysztof Mazurek. Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne Parpamedia.
- Jankowiak, Barbara, and Emilia Soroko. 2014. "Problematyka wsparcia w socjoterapii – wybrane zagadnienia [Support Issues in Sociotherapy: Selected Topics]." *Studia Edukacyjne* 32: 225–243.
- Jankowiak, Barbara, and Emilia Soroko. 2019. "Socjoterapia dziś i jutro. O potrzebie współpracy refleksyjnego praktyka i ciekawego praktyki naukowca [Sociotherapy Today and Tomorrow: On the Need for Collaboration between a Reflective Practitioner and a Researcher Curious about Practice]." *Biuletyn Polskiego Stowarzyszenia Socjoterapeutów i Trenerów*: 10–27. https://pssit.pl/download/B_Jankowiak_E_Soroko_Socjoterapia_dzis_i_jutro.pdf
- Jankowiak, Barbara, and Emilia Soroko. 2021. *Socjoterapia młodzieży. Studium psychologiczno-pedagogiczne* [Youth Sociotherapy: A Psychological and Pedagogical Study]. PWN.

- John-Borys, Maria. 2005. "Socjoterapia – jak zachodzi zmiana zachowania? [Sociotherapy: How Does Behavioral Change Occur?]" In *Diagnostyka, profilaktyka, socjoterapia w teorii i praktyce pedagogicznej [Diagnostics, Prevention, and Sociotherapy in Pedagogical Theory and Practice]*, edited by Maria Deptuła, 347–358. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.
- Kubacka-Jasiecka, Dorota. 2010. *Interwencja kryzysowa. Pomoc w kryzysach psychologicznych [Crisis Intervention: Help in Psychological Crises]*. Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne.
- Mandal, Eugenia. 2000. *Podmiotowe i interpersonalne konsekwencje stereotypów związanych z płcią [Subjective and Interpersonal Consequences of Gender Stereotypes]*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.
- Mandal, Eugenia. 2003. *Męskość i kobiecość. Popularne opinie a badania naukowe [Masculinity and Femininity: Popular Opinions and Scientific Research]*. Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak.
- Ogden, Terje, and Kristine Amlund Hagen. 2018. *Adolescent Mental Health: Prevention and Intervention*. 2nd ed. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315295374>
- Ostaszewski, Krzysztof. 2001. "Szkolno-środowiskowe programy profilaktyczne. Sukcesy i dylematy naukowego podejścia [School-Community Prevention Programs: Successes and Dilemmas of a Scientific Approach]." In *Ewaluacja profilaktyki problemów dzieci i młodzieży [Evaluation of the Prevention of Problems among Children and Adolescents]*, edited by Janusz Ł. Grzelak and Marcin J. Sochocki, 11–57. Pracownia Profilaktyki Problemowej.
- Pankowska, Dorota. 2005. *Wychowanie a role płciowe [Education and Gender Roles]*. Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Peret-Drażewska, Paulina. 2021. "Specyfika rozwojowa okresu adolescencji. Implikacje dla praktyki wychowawczej [Developmental Specificity of Adolescence: Implications for Educational Practice]." *Roczniki Pedagogiczne* 13 (49), no. 4: 73–90. <https://doi.org/10.18290/rped21134.7>
- Pilecka, Barbara. 2004. *Kryzys psychologiczny. Wybrane zagadnienia [Psychological Crisis: Selected Issues]*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Sawicka, Katarzyna, ed. 1999. *Socjoterapia [Sociotherapy]*. Centrum Metodyczne Pomocy Psychologiczno-Pedagogicznej Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej.
- Sawicka, Katarzyna. 2023. "Wokół pojęcia socjoterapii [Around the Concept of Sociotherapy]." *Biuletyn Socjoterapeutyczny* 1: 11–23. <https://doi.org/10.14746/bst.2023.1.1>
- Sęk, Helena, and Roman Cieślak. 2004. "Wsparcie społeczne – sposoby definiowania, rodzaje i źródła wsparcia, wybrane koncepcje teoretyczne [Social Support: Ways of Defining It, Types and Sources of Support, Selected Theoretical Concepts]." In *Wsparcie społeczne, stres i zdrowie [Social Support, Stress, and Health]*, edited by Hanna Sęk and Roman Cieślak, 11–28. PWN.
- Strzemieczny, Jacek. 1993. *Zajęcia socjoterapeutyczne dla dzieci i młodzieży [Sociotherapeutic Activities for Children and Adolescents]*. PTP.
- Wilk, Maciej. 2023. "Cztery oblicza socjoterapii [Four Faces of Sociotherapy]." *Biuletyn Socjoterapeutyczny* 1: 43–55. <https://doi.org/10.14746/bst.2023.1.3>

Crime, Domestic Violence, and Family Security in Poland: Trends in Police Data, 2020–2023

Przestępczość, przemoc domowa i bezpieczeństwo rodziny w Polsce: tendencje w danych policyjnych z lat 2020–2023

Zbigniew Kazimierz
Mikołajczyk

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński
University in Warsaw,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3917-7033>

z.mikolajczyk@uksw.edu.pl

Received: 30 Oct 2025

Revised: 12 Dec 2025

Accepted: 15 Jan 2026

Published Online First:

1 Feb 2026

Abstract: Crime affects family security through direct victimisation, fear of crime, and disruption of family functioning. This article examines the scale and trends of crime relevant to family security in Poland between 2020 and 2023. It applies descriptive analysis to aggregated data from the National Police Information System (KSIP), covering national crime statistics, data for the Warsaw metropolitan area, crime detection rates, selected common and serious offences, and domestic violence. The interpretation is supplemented by the author's twenty-five years of participant observation in investigative and preventive policing. Overall police-recorded crime peaked in 2022 and declined in 2023, while detection rates remained relatively stable at approximately 63–65%. The study identifies domestic violence as the most direct threat to family well-being: although the number of “Blue Card” forms decreased during the analysed period, the recorded number of minors affected by violence rose markedly in 2023. The findings support coordinated law-enforcement, preventive, educational, and social-support measures and further interdisciplinary research on family security.

Keywords: family security, crime trends, domestic violence, child victimisation, police crime statistics, crime detection, National Police Information System (KSIP), Poland

Abstrakt: Przestępczość wpływa na bezpieczeństwo rodziny poprzez bezpośrednią wiktymizację, lęk przed przestępczością oraz zakłócanie funkcjonowania rodziny. Celem artykułu jest analiza skali i tendencji przestępczości istotnych dla bezpieczeństwa rodzin w Polsce w latach 2020–2023. Zastosowano analizę opisową zagregowanych danych Krajowego Systemu Informacyjnego Policji (KSIP), obejmujących ogólne statystyki przestępczości w Polsce, dane dla obszaru stołecznego Warszawy, wskaźniki wykrywalności, wybrane przestępstwa pospolite i poważne oraz przemoc domową. Interpretację uzupełnia dwudziestopięcioletnia obserwacja uczestnicząca autora, wynikająca z pracy dochodzeniowej i prewencyjnej. Ogólne wskaźniki przestępczości odnotowanej przez Policję osiągnęły najwyższy poziom w 2022 r., a następnie spadły w 2023 r., podczas gdy wykrywalność utrzymywała się na względnie stabilnym poziomie, wynoszącym ok. 63–65%. W artykule przemoc domowa została wskazana jako najbardziej bezpośrednie zagrożenie dobrostanu rodziny: pomimo spadku liczby formularzy „Niebieska Karta” w analizowanym okresie liczba odnotowanych małoletnich dotkniętych przemocą wyraźnie wzrosła w 2023 r. Wyniki wskazują na potrzebę skoordynowanych działań organów ścigania, profilaktyki, edukacji i wsparcia społecznego, a także na potrzeby dalszych badań interdyscyplinarnych nad bezpieczeństwem rodziny.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo rodziny, tendencje przestępczości, przemoc domowa, wiktymizacja dzieci, policyjne statystyki przestępczości, wykrywalność przestępstw, Krajowy System Informacyjny Policji (KSIP), Polska



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

INTRODUCTION

The rapid pace of development in the modern world brings about numerous changes and transformations in social life, and thus in the functioning of the family as the basic unit of social influence. Innovative technologies and solutions improve the living conditions of individuals and families. Unfortunately, the development described above also creates new threats. Scientific studies present a full typology of security threats (Dawidowicz 2007; Kaczmarczyk 2013; Fehler 2007; Wiśniewski and Falecki 2006; Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek and Niczyporuk 2011), among which crime is included as a phenomenon that directly affects the family and the children and youth raised within it. This phenomenon exerts the greatest influence on the individual's sense of security and the functioning of the family. Consequently, this issue also remains within the interest of family studies—a relatively young academic discipline. Its interdisciplinary nature is closely connected to the social sciences, theological and humanities disciplines, medical and health sciences, as well as selected engineering and agricultural sciences.

This study was developed based on an analysis of crime in Poland from 2020–2023. The research method applied aimed to illustrate the scale and developmental trends of crime based on numerical data collected in the National Police Information System. The author's intention was to analyse police data due to the possibility of examining broader datasets (compared to other statistics), containing the scope of detected crime. Attention was also given to the datasets of confirmed and adjudicated crime. The presentation of numerical data includes general police statistics, as well as data on the effectiveness of criminal prosecution and the dynamics of selected categories of crimes. The selection of specific categories of crime was based on social perception and the degree of social harm associated with offenses connected to the family. The scope of dynamics illustrates the developmental trends within the individual areas analysed. The study also includes conclusions drawn from the author's participant observation conducted over twenty-five years of investigative and preventive work.

1. SCALE OF CRIME IN POLAND

The concept of crime is understood as the number of prohibited acts committed within a given area in a defined unit of time (Hołyst 2009, 95). This phenomenon has been explained in great detail by Brunon Hołyst, who identified all its characteristic features, including its geography, structure, and dynamics. From a scientific perspective, the issues of the emergence, development, detection, and prevention of crime fall within the scope of research in criminology, criminalistics, sociology, political science, and security studies (Bałandynowicz 1998; Hołyst 2007; Chrzanowski 2015, 33–46; Hołyst 2014; Hołyst 2013; Hołyst 2009; Koral 2009; Mikołajczyk 2015, 133–142; Mikołajczyk 2014a, 259–273; Mikołajczyk 2014b, 240–246; Zajac 2015, 175–185; Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek and Niczyporuk

2011). Nevertheless, this phenomenon also remains of interest to many other scientific disciplines, including family studies.

The National Police Information System is “a set of data sets in which information, including personal data, is processed in connection with the implementation of statutory tasks” (Ustawa z dnia 6 kwietnia 1990 r. o Policji 1990) by the Police. This database operates entirely as an ICT system. Its name officially appeared for the first time on September 5, 2007, in the regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration. «The Chief Commander of the Police ensures the operation of a set of central information sets called the “National Police Information System (KSIP)”» (Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji 2007). In fact, KSIP was created by the Chief Commander of the Police on July 25, 2017 (Decyzja nr 165 Komendanta Głównego Policji 2017) pursuant to the regulation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration (Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji 2015).

Ascertained crime is defined as “all acts whose nature as crimes was confirmed as a result of preparatory proceedings” (Hołyst 2009, 96), while disclosed crime is defined as the number of acts for which preparatory proceedings were initiated. The scope of statutory tasks for which the Police conducts the National Police Information Service (KSIP) covers four areas:

- a) “protecting the life and health of people and property against unlawful attacks violating these rights;
- b) protecting public safety and order, including ensuring peace in public places and on public transport, in road traffic, and on waters intended for general use;
- c) initiating and organising activities aimed at preventing the commission of crimes and offences and criminogenic phenomena, and cooperating in this regard with state and local government authorities and social organisations;
- d) detecting crimes and offences and prosecuting their perpetrators” (Ustawa z dnia 6 kwietnia 1990 r. o Policji 1990, art. 1).

“Currently, in criminological research on the social costs of crime, the primary focus is on the feeling of threat, fear, and living in fear of becoming a victim” (Hołyst 2015, 427). Therefore, an increase in a given category of crime can lead to heightened social anxiety and disruptions in the functioning and development of families and the individuals within them. Road safety threats, widely regarded as a key social problem in Poland, are a prime example. This type of crime is among the most widely recognised in society.

The table below presents figures on crimes reported and identified in Poland between 2020 and 2023. These figures cover all types of crimes reported to the Police and for which investigations were initiated, resulting in the crime being confirmed.

Table 1. Detected and Confirmed Crime in Poland in 2020–2023

This table presents the numbers of detected and confirmed crimes recorded in Poland between 2020 and 2023. Both indicators increased until 2022 and declined in 2023, although the overall volume of crime remained high throughout the analysed period. Detected crimes consistently exceeded confirmed crimes in every year.

Year	Detected	Confirmed
2023	466 241	308 153
2022	490 934	313 424
2021	489 052	315 807
2020	469 971	307 452

Source: Own study based on KSIP figures.

It should be noted that the scale of revealed crime differs significantly from the scale of identified crime. Therefore, not all crimes reported during preparatory proceedings were found to be criminal. The number of offences revealed in the first three years analysed increased, and the same was true for offences identified in 2020–2021. While 2023 shows a reduction in the phenomenon, its scale indicates a significant crime threat. Therefore, crime continues to significantly affect citizens' sense of security, as well as the well-being and development of families. However, the true scale of crime remains difficult to determine, as an unknown number of offences are committed but never reported to law enforcement agencies. This is particularly relevant to crimes directly related to family life, such as domestic violence in its broadest sense, as well as crimes against life and health.

It should be emphasised that the number of crimes disclosed does not equate to the number of reports. This is due to the fact that in some cases reported to the Police, pre-trial proceedings were not initiated because, as a result of preliminary investigations, it was determined that the proceedings should be discontinued before initiation, or because the evidence collected refused to initiate proceedings. Such situations are defined in the Code of Criminal Procedure:

“Proceedings shall not be initiated, and those initiated shall be discontinued, if:

- 1) the act was not committed or there is a lack of data sufficient to justify the suspicion of its commission,
- 2) the act does not contain the elements of a prohibited act or the law stipulates that the perpetrator has not committed an offense,
- 3) the social harm of the act is insignificant,
- 4) the law stipulates that the perpetrator is not subject to punishment,
- 5) the accused has died,

- 6) the statute of limitations has expired,
- 7) criminal proceedings concerning the same act committed by the same person have been legally concluded or previously initiated are still pending,
- 8) the perpetrator is not subject to the jurisdiction of Polish criminal courts,
- 9) there is no complaint from a duly authorized prosecutor,
- 10) there is no required authorization for prosecution or a motion for prosecution from an authorized person, unless the law provides otherwise,
- 11) there is another circumstance excluding prosecution” (Ustawa z dnia 6 czerwca 1997 r. Kodeks postępowania karnego 1997, art. 17).

Nevertheless, the overall number of crimes identified is high. These include common crimes that directly affect family security and stability. Particularly in local communities, crime directly impacts families’ livelihoods and development prospects.

For example, within the area of operation of the Warsaw Metropolitan Police Headquarters, i.e., the Warsaw metropolitan area (the city and counties immediately adjacent to Warsaw), the identified crime trends are similar to those observed nationwide. Compare with the table below.

Table 2. Total number of crimes in the area of operation of the Warsaw Police Headquarters in 2020–2023.

This table presents the numbers of disclosed and confirmed crimes recorded in the Warsaw metropolitan police area between 2020 and 2023. Crime levels increased between 2020 and 2022 and decreased in 2023. Disclosed crimes remained substantially more numerous than confirmed crimes throughout the period.

Year	Disclosed	Confirmed
2023	53 585	26 612
2022	57 464	28 102
2021	53 462	25 955
2020	49 381	24 462

Source: Own study based on KSIP figures.

The increase in crime between 2020 and 2022 occurred in both reported and detected crimes. A decrease in both categories was recorded in 2023.

Another area highlighted in the analysis of police datasets is the effectiveness of law enforcement, often measured by the detection rate. It is calculated as the ratio of reported crimes to detected crimes. This detection rate reflects the quality and speed of the actions taken by the police and prosecutors. In particular, the substantive preparation of police officers and prosecutors, their commitment, and

the appropriate use of resources in response to the nature of the reported crime. The speed of action and the measures employed are particularly important in crimes that harm families and undermine their well-being. One example is the use of isolation measures against perpetrators of domestic violence.

Table 3. Percentage values of the effectiveness of law enforcement in Poland in 2020–2023. This table presents the numbers of confirmed and detected crimes, along with the crime detection rate, in Poland between 2020 and 2023. Detection rates remained relatively stable, ranging from approximately 63% to 65%, despite fluctuations in the total number of crimes. The highest detection rate was recorded in 2023.

Year	Confirmed	Detected	Detection rate
2023	466 241	308 153	65,44
2022	490 934	313 424	63,22
2021	489 052	315 807	64,10
2020	469 971	307 452	64,90

Source: Own study based on KSIP figures.

The effective work of police officers and prosecutors ensures that victims do not feel alone and are aware of the efficient operation of the justice system. In turn, the sense of impunity among perpetrators is reduced, and the preventive measures and penalties implemented have a deterrent effect on offenders. Such high rates of prosecution confirm a high level of response to crime. More than half of the identified crimes are always detected. For comparison, in 1999, the overall detection rate was only 45% of identified crimes (KGP 2025). Equally important is the fact that detection rates remained similar throughout the analysed years despite the constantly decreasing number of identified crimes. In summary, this indicator reflects the areas of police and prosecutorial work that impact family safety:

- adapting police structures to threats in a given area;
- professional human resources management;
- rapid response to incidents;
- police officer involvement;
- appropriate level of specialised training;
- appropriate equipment and specialised resources;
- an efficient information management system.

2. CRIMES DIRECTLY AFFECTING THE SAFETY OF THE FAMILY AND OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS RAISED WITHIN IT

The greatest impact on public safety is the crime observed every day, known as common crime. Public opinion polls show that Poles are most concerned about their safety on the road. They also fear criminal activity, such as theft, burglary, fraud, robbery, property damage, and economic crime, occurring online. The latter

is the greatest threat to the socialization process of the youngest family members. Children and adolescents (often inadequately supervised by their parents) have unrestricted access to the internet, making them most vulnerable to online crime. They use applications and websites that host content unsuitable for children. Social media also allows for the creation of forums and instant messaging services where people with false identities appear. The content presented is characterised by hate, sexism, pornography, and violence. The lack of parental control breeds addiction to the internet and the content posted there. Domestic violence, crimes against life and limb, property crimes, and road safety crimes pose particular threats to family well-being. Below is data on selected crimes from the period under review.

Table 4. Seven selected categories of crimes in Poland in 2020–2023.

This table presents combined data for seven selected categories of common crimes in Poland, including initiated and confirmed offences and their detection rates between 2020 and 2023. The number of confirmed crimes increased over the analysed period, while the detection rate improved from 43.9% to 49.1%. The highest detection rate was recorded in 2023.

	7 selected categories of crime		
Year	Initiated	Confirmed	Detection rate
2023	229 077	114 218	49,06
2022	241 033	112 905	46,03
2021	231 520	105 941	45,10
2020	222 061	99 003	43,90

Source: Own study based on KSIP figures.

The table shows a decline in the number of crimes, both initiated and confirmed. The seven crime categories identified include:

- brawls and assaults;
- causing bodily harm;
- theft of property;
- vehicle theft;
- burglary;
- robberies, extortions, and aggravated theft;
- property damage.

The subsets of crimes posing a threat to the family also include homicide, rape, and drug-related crimes. These are presented in the table below.

Table 5. Other categories of crimes that posed a threat to families in Poland in 2020–2023.

This table presents selected crime categories affecting family security, including homicide, rape, drug-related offences, and road offences in Poland between 2020 and 2023. Drug-related crimes were by far the most numerous category throughout the period. While homicide and road offences generally declined, the number of recorded rapes remained relatively stable.

Year	Murder	Rape	Drugs	Of road
2023	559	1 040	61 713	20 936
2022	499	1 064	64 013	21 322
2021	625	1 081	62 204	22 816
2020	641	1 034	59 442	23 540

Source: Own study based on KSIP figures.

One of the most serious threats concerns road safety incidents. Although the number of road accidents is decreasing, they remain a key social problem. Data on domestic violence is included separately due to its direct impact on the family. Table 6. Domestic violence in Poland in 2020–2023.

This table presents data on domestic violence in Poland between 2020 and 2023, including Blue Card forms, initiated procedures, victims, perpetrators, and perpetrators under the influence of alcohol. The number of Blue Card procedures declined during the analysed period, while women and minors remained the main groups of victims and men the main group of perpetrators. A notable increase in the number of minors affected by domestic violence was recorded in 2023.

Year	Number of blue card forms	Number of blue card procedures initiated	Number of those affected by violence Women Men Minors	Number of perpetrators of violence Women Men Minors	Perpetrators Under the influence Of alcohol Women Men Minors
2023	62 170	54 029	51 631 9 162 17 039	7 595 55 225 196	2 171 28 079 11
2022	61 645	52 569	51 935 8 714 10 982	6 497 55 426 321	1 872 29 901 34
2021	64 250	53 985	55 112 9 520 11 129	6 173 58 349 324	1 831 31 769 22
2020	72 601	59 701	62 866 10 922 11 787	6 677 66 198 353	1 986 37 781 31

Source: Own study based on KSIP figures.

The scale of domestic violence is significant and constitutes the greatest threat to family well-being. It also contributes to marital breakdown and fundamentally

disrupts family functioning and development. In most cases, completion of the “Blue Card” form, initiates an anti-violence procedure. Women and minors constitute the largest group of victims, while men constitute the largest group of perpetrators.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring family safety is an interdisciplinary process and requires the involvement of numerous entities and institutions, including central and local government, private entities, and citizens. A significant role in this process is played by law enforcement agencies, including the Police, responsible for ensuring the safety of citizens and maintaining public order. The Police are responsible for preventing and combating negative social phenomena, including crime and domestic violence. Domestic violence poses the greatest threat to family well-being and is also a cause of its breakdown. The “Blue Card” procedure is an effective institutional tool for addressing domestic violence; however, this is also the area in which the highest number of offences is recorded. In many cases, victims of police intervention are uninterested in pursuing the perpetrator and cooperating with law enforcement and justice authorities, as they attempt to preserve the family at all costs for emotional and economic reasons. Perpetrators may exert influence over victims due to cohabitation. The application of preventive measures against perpetrators, such as restraining orders, pre-trial detention, and police supervision, plays a significant role in protecting victims. Further safeguards include the restrictions on a suspect’s liberty specified in Article 275 § 2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, as well as the order to periodically vacate the premises occupied by jointly by the suspect and the injured party under Article 275a § 1 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The intensification of negative social phenomena affects families and the children and young people raised within them. The most significant threats include common crime, road traffic crime, economic crime, and cybercrime.

In Poland, during the period under review, we have observed a decline in crime and an increase in the effectiveness of police operations. This trend should be regarded as positive and sustained, particularly in areas that are most socially harmful and detrimental to families, children, and young people. It would also be advisable to involve other services and institutions in these areas, conduct public awareness campaigns, and implement educational and training activities. This area calls for further research in family studies, security studies, and other social sciences.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board / Ethics Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Available upon request.

AI Tools Declaration: Not applicable. The author declares that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Bałandynowicz, Andrzej. 1998. *Zapobieganie przestępczości [Crime Prevention]*. Wydawnictwo Primum.
- Chrzanowski, Wiesław. 2015. "Zapobieganie negatywnym zjawiskom społecznym w działaniach prewencyjnych Mazowieckiego Oddziału Żandarmerii Wojskowej w Warszawie [Preventing Negative Social Phenomena in Preventive Activities]." *Zeszyt Naukowy Międzynarodowego Centrum Dialogu Międzykulturowego i Międzyreligijnego Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie* 3: 33–46.
- Dawidowicz, Aneta, et al. 2007. *Źródła zagrożeń i ich charakterystyka [Sources of Threats and Their Characteristics]*. WN Wersus Nauka.
- Decyzja nr 165 Komendanta Głównego Policji z dnia 25 lipca 2017 r. w sprawie funkcjonowania Krajowego Systemu Informatycznego Policji [Decision No. 165 of the National Police Headquarters of July 25, 2017]. 2017. *Dziennik Urzędowy KGP*, August 1, 2017, item 51.
- Fehler, Włodzimierz. 2007. "Zagrożenie — kluczowa kategoria bezpieczeństwa [Threat—A Key Category of Security]." In *Współczesne postrzeganie bezpieczeństwa [Contemporary Perceptions of Security]*, edited by Kuba Jałoszyński, Bernard Wiśniewski, and Tadeusz Wojtuszek, 34–42. Wyższa Szkoła Administracji.
- Hołyst, Brunon. 2007. *Kryminalistyka [Forensic Science]*. Lexis Nexis.
- Hołyst, Brunon. 2009. *Kryminologia [Criminology]*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Hołyst, Brunon. 2013. *Zagrożenia ładu społecznego [Threats to Social Order]*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Hołyst, Brunon. 2014. *Bezpieczeństwo. Ogólne problemy badawcze [Security: General Research Problems]*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Hołyst, Brunon. 2015. *Bezpieczeństwo społeczeństwa [Security of Society]*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Kaczmarczyk, Bartłomiej. 2013. "Zagrożenia i jego typologie, Regionalne Centrum Badań nad Bezpieczeństwem [Threats and Their Typologies]." *Zeszyty Naukowe SGSP* 4 (48): 88–101.
- Koral, Jarosław. 2009. *Kulturowe aspekty polskiego bezrobocia [Cultural Aspects of Polish Unemployment]*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.
- Mikołajczyk, Zbigniew. 2014a. "Przestępczość jako konsekwencja braku pieniędzy [Crime as a Consequence of Lack of Money]." In *Być człowiekiem stąd [To Be a Human Being from Here]*, edited by Artur Wysocki, 259–273. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.
- Mikołajczyk, Zbigniew. 2014b. "Koncepcja Ruchomych Przestrzeni [The Concept of Mobile Spaces]." *Zeszyt Naukowy MCDMiM UKSW* 2: 240–246.
- Mikołajczyk, Zbigniew. 2015. "Zapobieganie patologii i przestępczości wśród nieletnich w oparciu o założenia Koncepcji Ruchomych Przestrzeni [Preventing Pathology and Crime among Minors Based on the Mobile Spaces Concept]." *Zeszyt Naukowy MCDMiM UKSW* 3: 133–142.
- Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 29 września 2015 r. w sprawie przetwarzania informacji przez Policję [Regulation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration of September 29, 2015]. 2015. *Dziennik Ustaw* 2015, item 1564.

- Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z 5 września 2007 r. w sprawie przetwarzania przez Policję informacji o osobach [Regulation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration of September 5, 2007]. 2007. Dziennik Ustaw 2007, no. 170, item 1203.
- Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek, Katarzyna, and Zygmunt T. Niczyporuk. 2011. *Bezpieczeństwo publiczne: zarys problematyki* [Public Safety: An Outline of the Issues]. Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej.
- Ustawa z dnia 6 kwietnia 1990 r. o Policji [Act of April 6, 1990, on the Police]. 1990. Dziennik Ustaw 1990, no. 30, item 179, as amended.
- Ustawa z dnia 6 czerwca 1997 r. Kodeks postępowania karnego [Act of June 6, 1997, Code of Criminal Procedure]. 1997. Dziennik Ustaw 1997, no. 89, item 555, as amended.
- Wiśniewski, Bernard, and Janusz Falecki. 2006. *System zarządzania kryzysowego państwa, w tym Sił Zbrojnych RP* [State Crisis Management System, Including the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland]. Wyższa Szkoła Administracji.
- Wykrywalność przestępstw. Dane statystyczne Komendy Głównej Policji [Crime Detection: Statistical Data of the National Police Headquarters]. KGP. 2025. Accessed September 14, 2025. <https://statystyka.policja.pl/st/ogolne-statystyki/47682,Postepowania-wszczete-przestepstwa-stwierdzone-i-wykrywalnosc-w-latach-1999-2014.html>.
- Zajac, Jerzy. 2015. "Tematyka bezpieczeństwa polskiej tożsamości kulturowej w 'Aurorze Serafickiej' – czasopiśmie braci franciszkańskiej z Granby (USA, stan Massachusetts) [The Security of Polish Cultural Identity in Aurora Seraficka]." *Zeszyt Naukowy MCDMiM UKSW* 3: 175–185.

Children's Road Safety in Poland: Accident Statistics, Traffic Roles, and Psychophysical Risk Factors, 2022–2024

Bezpieczeństwo dzieci w ruchu drogowym w Polsce: statystyki wypadków, role uczestników i psychofizyczne czynniki ryzyka w latach 2022–2024

Robert Idzikowski

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński
University in Warsaw,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2487-8718>

idzrob@wp.pl

Received: 14 Dec 2025

Revised: 20 Jan 2026

Accepted: 8 Apr 2026

Published Online First:

9 Apr 2026

Abstract: Children aged 0–14 constitute a particularly vulnerable group of road users because of their developmental limitations and the conditions in which they participate in traffic as passengers, pedestrians, drivers, or users of personal transport devices. This article examines the scale, consequences, and circumstances of road traffic accidents involving children in Poland between 2022 and 2024. It applies descriptive analysis to Police road accident statistics, demographic data, legal regulations, and relevant literature, comparing children aged 0–6 with those aged 7–14 and differentiating their roles in traffic. In 2024, 1,741 accidents involving children were recorded, resulting in 50 deaths and 1,838 injuries. Compared with 2023, the number of accidents decreased slightly, but fatalities and injuries increased, and the overall risk level remained high throughout the three-year period. Children aged 7–14 accounted for substantially more casualties, whereas 71.7% of casualties among children aged 0–6 were vehicle passengers. The analysis identifies limitations in perception, attention, spatial judgement, auditory processing, and reaction time as important psychophysical risk factors. The findings support age-specific road safety education and coordinated preventive measures directed at children, parents, teachers, drivers, and public institutions.

Keywords: children's road safety, road traffic accidents, young road users, child passengers, child pedestrians, psychophysical risk factors, Police statistics, Poland



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstrakt: Dzieci w wieku 0–14 lat stanowią szczególnie narażoną grupę uczestników ruchu drogowego ze względu na ograniczenia rozwojowe oraz warunki, w których uczestniczą w ruchu drogowym jako pasażerowie, piesi, kierujący lub użytkownicy urządzeń transportu osobistego. Celem artykułu jest określenie skali, następstw i okoliczności wypadków drogowych z udziałem dzieci w Polsce w latach 2022–2024. Zastosowano analizę opisową policyjnych statystyk wypadków drogowych, danych demograficznych, regulacji prawnych oraz literatury przedmiotu, porównując dzieci w wieku 0–6 i 7–14 lat oraz rozróżniając role, w jakich uczestniczyły w ruchu drogowym. W 2024 r. odnotowano 1741 wypadków z udziałem dzieci, w których 50 dzieci zginęło, a 1838 zostało rannych. W porównaniu z 2023 r. liczba wypadków nieznacznie spadła, lecz wzrosła liczba zabitych i rannych, natomiast ogólny poziom zagrożenia w całym trzyletnim okresie pozostał wysoki. Znacznie więcej ofiar odnotowano wśród dzieci w wieku 7–14 lat, natomiast 71,7% poszkodowanych dzieci w wieku 0–6 lat stanowili pasażerowie pojazdów.

Analiza wskazuje na ograniczenia percepcji, uwagi, oceny przestrzennej, przetwarzania bodźców słuchowych i czasu reakcji jako istotne psychofizyczne czynniki ryzyka. Wyniki uzasadniają potrzebę dostosowanej do wieku edukacji komunikacyjnej oraz skoordynowanych działań profilaktycznych skierowanych do dzieci, rodziców, nauczycieli, kierowców i instytucji publicznych.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo dzieci w ruchu drogowym, wypadki drogowe, najmłodsi uczestnicy ruchu, dzieci jako pasażerowie, dzieci jako piesi, psychofizyczne czynniki ryzyka, statystyki policyjne, Polska

INTRODUCTION

To determine the level of safety for children and adolescents in road traffic and the degree of control over the associated hazards, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the road safety system. Available statistical data, collected by state entities institutionally responsible for road safety, accurately describe the level of protection afforded to the youngest road users. This road safety system is defined in the specialist literature as a relationship among the human (child), the vehicle, and the road. As in any interdependent system, undesirable processes and events may occur, resulting in social, material, and health-related losses. The risk of such adverse circumstances is referred to as system failure and results from its complexity (Lejda and Karbowniczek 2013, 1343).

Road user safety has, for many years, been the subject of research and corrective measures initiated by the state. Governmental and non-governmental organisations operating within the road safety system strive to ensure the protection of road users. Road safety also constitutes a crucial element of citizens' lives, as reflected in the role this dimension of social reality plays in overall well-being. Statistical data based on road accidents recorded by, among others, the Police, when properly organised and catalogued, reflect the actual level of road safety in Poland. They also serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of state actions aimed at improving road safety. According to data from the Police Headquarters, Road Traffic Bureau, in 2024, 26,678 people were involved in road accidents, including 1,896 fatalities and 24,782 injured persons (7,796 seriously injured). Compared to 2023, this represents an increase of 660 casualties, including 3 additional fatalities and 657 more injured persons (Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego 2025, 37).

However, to fully understand the scale of the problem and accurately assess the effectiveness of the solutions adopted within existing road safety systems, it is necessary to categorise road users by age. Careful observation of behavioural patterns of in road traffic situations associated with specific age groups will allow for the identification of shortcomings in current programmes, the modification of adopted systemic solutions, and the simultaneous introduction of new, more appropriately selected, and therefore more effective, safety measures.

The author of this paper has conducted a statistical analysis of one of the social groups requiring particular attention and care from organisations concerned with road safety in its broadest sense. This group consists of the youngest road users, who

participate in road traffic both in large numbers and in high intensity. To ensure the consistency and clarity of the presented statistical data, the age of road users referred to as “children” has been defined as up to 14 years. The analysis of available statistical data, demonstrating the scope, effects, and circumstances of road accidents involving children and adolescents, fully illustrates the true scale of the problem and also serves as an indication of the need for immediate state intervention to improve this level of safety. An examination of available numerical data defining the safety status of the youngest road users indicates the need for continuous monitoring of preventive and remedial measures undertaken by the state, in terms of their appropriateness and practical effectiveness. The statistical analysis of road incidents involving preschool-age children, who, are not permitted to participate independently in road traffic (Prawo o ruchu drogowym 1997, art. 43 ust. 1); and, separately, early school-age and secondary school students, who begin to fulfil the statutory obligation to attend school in accordance with the statutory school-attendance requirements (Prawo oświatowe 2016), and thus become full participants in road traffic, constitutes reliable and valuable analytical and research material. Determining the pattern of road accidents involving children will allow for the formulation of conclusions that may contribute to improving the safety of this social group.

2. ANALYSIS OF STATISTICAL REPORTS ON ROAD ACCIDENTS INVOLVING CHILDREN AGED 0–14 YEARS

The author of this publication performed demographic calculations, categorising children by age in order to ensure accurate statistical analysis. These calculations were based on population data for Poland for 2024, as provided by the Central Statistical Office [GUS] (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2025). The results indicate that the number of children aged 0 to 14 in Poland in 2024 was approximately 6 million, representing around 15% of the country's total population. For the purposes of the analysis, and in order to obtain a detailed and thus reliable result, it was specified that in 2024 the number of children aged 0–6 was approximately 2.7 million, while the number of children aged 7–14 was approximately 3.1 million.

The adopted division distinguishes two age groups of the youngest road users: children aged 0 to 6 and older children aged 7 to 14. This categorisation enhances the analytical value of the presented statistical data. Therefore, it appears justified to conduct separate analyses on road safety for children aged 0 to 14, divided into two subcategories: children up to 6 years of age and those aged 7 to 14.

The data on the frequency and consequences of accidents involving the youngest road users are alarming and illustrate the gravity of the problem. In 2024, 1,741 road accidents involving children aged 0 to 14 were recorded. In these accidents, 50 children were killed, and 1,838 were injured. These figures are confirmed by statistical data collected by institutions responsible for road safety in Poland. However, compared to 2023, the number of such accidents decreased by 37 (-2.1%), while the number of fatalities increased by 2 (+4.2%) and the number

of injured children increased by 6 (+0.3%). In 2022, 53 children were killed and 1,863 were injured in road accidents (Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego 2025, 40). The data cited above demonstrate the lack of any noticeable progress in improving child safety – figures from the last three years have remained at a comparably high level.

A detailed analysis of the statistical data, taking into account the distribution of the youngest road accident participants by age group, indicates a clear predominance of casualties among older children (aged 7–14), both in terms of fatalities and injuries. The figures indicating casualties in road accidents involving children aged 7–14 – amounting to several dozen fatalities and nearly one and a half thousand injuries – leave no doubt, revealing the stark reality of the effectiveness of the road safety system. They clearly point to the insufficient effectiveness of the measures currently in place to ensure children's safety in road traffic. By contrast, among children younger than 6 years, the rates are significantly lower (nearly three times lower). Such disparities between children aged 0 to 6 and 7 to 14, as reflected in statistical data on road accident casualties, are also observable in previous years. The persistent disparity of approximately 200% in the number of casualties between older and younger children should prompt a more in-depth analysis of the problem of protecting the youngest road users.

Despite the significant improvement in the safety of children participating in road traffic observed over the last 10 years (compared to 2015, the number of accidents involving children decreased by 38.3%, the number of fatalities among the youngest road users decreased by 28.6%, and the number of injured children in 2024 was lower by 40.3% (Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego 2025, 40), the fact that statistical indicators have remained at a comparable (and still high) level over the last three years remains a cause for concern. The persistent stability of statistical reports presenting the number of road accidents involving children suggests that the potential for improvement within the currently existing solutions for the safe participation of the youngest in road traffic may have been exhausted. The observable lack of progress in improving children's safety within the framework of existing programmes indicates the need to undertake efforts to modernise existing measures or to develop new solutions adapted to the dynamics of the contemporary societal and technological change.

A crucial factor to consider when determining children's road safety is the nature of their participation, and, consequently, the data-based level of risk associated with their participation in road traffic in a specific role. The adopted – statistically justified – categorisation, according to which the youngest road users may act as drivers, passengers, pedestrians, or users of assistive devices, accurately illustrates the levels of risk and negligence in specific areas of the child safety system. In accordance with the adopted criteria, a detailed analysis of road accidents was conducted, taking into account the nature of children's participation in road traffic.

It was found that the highest number of casualties in the adopted age groups occurred among children participating in road traffic as vehicle passengers. In

2024, nearly a thousand accidents were recorded in which children – in most cases through no fault of their own – became casualties of the high incidence of road accidents in Poland. Fatalities among passengers under 14 years of age occurred in several (nearly ten) cases, while approximately twice as many children sustained injuries resulting in health problems lasting more than seven days. A disturbing trend, concerning the high number of road accidents involving children as vehicle passengers is also observed in previous years. In 2023, for example, of the nearly five hundred accidents involving children aged 0 to 14, the vast majority were vehicle passengers. Several dozen children were killed and several hundred were injured. Statistical data collected and published by state institutions statutorily responsible for ensuring road safety in the analysed area remain high. This may point to the unreliability of the safety systems currently in place to protect the youngest vehicle passengers.

During the analysis of the statistical data presented in the literature, the author's attention was also drawn to the clear predominance of casualties in the "vehicle passenger" category among younger children aged 0 to 6. Among all casualties in this age group, 71.7% were vehicle passengers, while 60.0% of fatalities were child passengers (Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego 2025, 40). This fact is surprising to the author, as children of this age generally do not participate in road traffic independently, without the supervision of older persons. The decision to transport a child as a passenger is made by older, usually adult road users. The combination of these circumstances may indicate shortcomings in the safety systems currently implemented to protect the youngest vehicle passengers or errors made by those responsible for their safe transport. These elements of the safety system for the youngest vehicle passengers should be the subject of in-depth analysis by entities responsible for road safety in order to identify the underlying causes of the problem.

Pedestrian road users aged 0 to 14 constitute another category identified in statistical studies with a high accident rate. In 2024, nearly 500 accidents involving children in the above-mentioned age group were recorded (including approximately 100 involving younger children and nearly four times as many involving older children, i.e., those aged 7–14). In these accidents, more than a dozen young road users were killed and several hundred were injured. In previous years, a similarly high incidence of accidents involving children participating in road traffic as pedestrians was observed. At the same time, a concerning trend of a significant number of accidents involving older children (aged 7–14), who already travel independently on public roads, persists. This is largely due to the fact that from the age of 7, the youngest road users are permitted to travel independently on public roads, which results in their increased activity in road traffic without adult supervision.

The number of accidents involving child drivers is also noteworthy. While the number and consequences of accidents among younger children (0–6 years old) have not been high in recent years nationwide (around a dozen accidents per year, with no fatalities), the figures for older children (7–14 years old) are significantly

higher. Accident rates in this older age group amount to several hundred accidents per year (nearly five hundred accidents annually involving child drivers aged 7–14), and their consequences are significantly more severe than those among younger children. Several children are killed in these types of road accidents, and several hundred are injured. These statistics have remained consistent over the past three years, clearly indicating to organisations responsible for road safety the need to undertake remedial measures.

A similar disparity in the number of accidents between younger and older age groups among the youngest road users can also be observed in incidents involving users of assistive devices. While the number of accidents involving road users aged 0 to 6 has fluctuated at a few cases per year nationwide over the past three years, the number of road accidents in the 7–14 age group has reached several dozen annually. Although statistics for the past three years do not record fatalities in this category of road users, several dozen children using assistive devices have been injured. According to the author, the possibility for children from the age of 7 to participate independently in road traffic, in accordance with legal regulations, constitutes a statistically significant risk factor. This is confirmed by the number of road accidents involving this social group. Similarly, an increased accident rate is observed when children, from the age of 7, begin to travel independently on public roads. This constitutes a clear indication for entities responsible for road safety, broadly defined, of the need to take action to improve the level of safety for children.

3. THE MOST COMMON CAUSES OF ROAD ACCIDENTS INVOLVING CHILDREN AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES ACCOMPANYING THEM

Road traffic is governed by the principles of caution (including heightened caution), which all road users are obligated to observe. Children constitute a specific category of road users requiring extreme vigilance from others. Their behaviour, particularly during play, imposes additional responsibilities on other road users. This obliges them to anticipate potential sudden and dangerous situations that may arise as a result of the spontaneous behaviour of the youngest participants in road traffic.

The most common causes of road accidents involving children include:

- sudden entry into the roadway,
- playing on the roadway or roadside,
- lack of adequate supervision of a child on the road,
- falling out of a vehicle,
- emerging from behind fixed obstacles (e.g. a stationary vehicle),
- entering and exiting a vehicle while it is in motion (Wojdyło 2002).

A child's safe participation in road traffic depends on their mental and physical development. Despite the declared, and in many cases observable, commitment of various state institutions to the educational and preventive efforts

aimed at the youngest road users, the practical application of acquired knowledge by children remains problematic. This is due to several psychophysical factors associated with their stage of development. Their level of perception influences both the identification and accurate assessment of road hazards, as well as reaction time in emergency situations. Children perceive dangerous situations in a manner appropriate to their developmental stage and do not assess such risks in the same way as adults. It should be noted that reaction time to hazardous situations depends on factors such as the level of concentration and attention, field of vision and perspective, auditory perception, as well as the ability to anticipate the consequences of one's behaviour. These are among the factors that directly affect road user safety. The aforementioned determinants of safe participation in road traffic, in conjunction with the limitations resulting from children's ongoing development and acquisition of psychophysical abilities, illustrate the complexity of the issue of children's exposure to road traffic hazards. (Wnuk 2013, 79–85).

The dynamics and multiplicity of traffic situations significantly affect children's ability to maintain concentration while ensuring road safety. High traffic density may overstimulate a child's cognitive processes, which can, in turn, delay reactions to potentially dangerous situations. A limited ability to differentiate situations according to their level of risk is another factor that may negatively affect safety. As imagination and hypothetical thinking develop progressively with age, deficits in this area may impair a child's ability to assess situations realistically and respond appropriately to hazards.

Another equally important factor influencing the safety of the youngest road users within the road safety system is the set of limitations children face, stemming from their perception of the surrounding environment. Young children have a narrower field of vision, a different perspective from adults, and lack the ability to accurately assess the speed and distance of approaching vehicles. The limitations resulting from the "fragmented" perception of the environment in young children constitute a significant risk factor. The lack of a broader perspective when observing the surroundings may result in the failure to notice potential dangers in time. Sensory impressions, especially visual and auditory, are among the fundamental cognitive elements. A certain amount of time usually elapses between perceiving a vehicle (visually or acoustically) and making a decision, followed by a motor response. This is referred to as reaction time. It should be noted that this time depends on many individually determined psychophysical characteristics of the child participating in road traffic. These include, for example, accurate distance estimation, the ability to perceive and distinguish colours, and the previously discussed ability to maintain a clear and focused perception of the surroundings (which, in turn, also depends on factors such as visual strain or divided attentional). When combined with limitations resulting from short stature, for example, when passing parked vehicles, the scale of potential danger becomes apparent, potentially leading to very serious consequences. Possible deficits associated with a child's age and stage of development in the previously

identified elements of the child safety system automatically determine the level of risk of a road accident occurring. Children's ability to correctly estimate the distance and speed of approaching vehicles develops with age, which indicates a high likelihood of misjudgement in early childhood. Deficiencies in this area, resulting from a child's developmental stage, may lead to dangerous situations on the road. A child's inaccurate assessment of their own abilities in this respect may result in stepping onto the road in front of oncoming vehicles, which can have very serious consequences for all road users.

Other factors within the road risk domain include skills related to a child's perceptual assessment of the traffic situation and their motor abilities. Perception is the process of integrating sensory input with cognitive processes, occurring as soon as sensory information is received. It involves the active interpretation of sensory stimuli while simultaneously drawing on context, attitudes, knowledge, and experience. Auditory stimuli reaching a young child are not yet filtered quickly and accurately enough. Sounds must first be correctly identified, interpreted, and assessed as potential risk factors. This process takes more time for a child than for an adult, which correspondingly prolongs the child's reaction time to hazards while effectively shortening the time available for response by other road users. A child's instinctive reactions in sudden situations constitute another difficult-to-predict element of road traffic that must be taken into account by other road users. Such behaviour is manifested in the tendency of young children to react spontaneously and immediately in situations that capture their attention or curiosity. This type of spontaneous activity, combined with motor skills that are still developing, entails a high risk of dangerous situations on the road with potentially unpredictable consequences.

CONCLUSION

Road safety is a key social issue of interest to safety sciences and other social sciences. However, it constitutes a complex research domain encompassing many areas, including the issue of road hazards affecting the youngest road users. The materials, numerical data, and analyses conducted as part of this study allowed for the formulation of the following conclusions:

- Over the past three years, a persistent trend of a high incidence of accidents involving the youngest road users has been observed.
- The higher number of road accidents observed among older children (7–14 years) compared to younger children (0–6 years old), as indicated by the analysis of statistical data, is related to the legally permitted possibility of this group to participate independently in road traffic.
- An examination of the circumstances of road accidents involving children under 6 years of age indicates that 71.7% of casualties in this age group in 2024 were vehicle passengers (Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego 2025, 40).

- An in-depth analysis of children's psychophysical characteristics and an assessment of their perceptual capabilities reveal significant deficits among the youngest road users in areas related to the perception of traffic situations and reaction time to potential hazards.
- Deficiencies resulting from the developmental level of the youngest road users in the areas of concentration and sustained attention, spatial perception, motor skills, and auditory perception, as well as difficulties in anticipating the consequences of one's actions, constitute significant risk factors affecting road safety.

To improve children's road safety, a change in the attitudes of all road users is necessary. It is particularly important for adults to assume responsibility for children's (sometimes irrational) behaviour on the road. Awareness that children perceive road traffic and its hazards differently from adults may help prevent many dangerous situations. Children's still-developing mechanisms for rapid and accurate situational assessment in dynamic traffic conditions result in slower or unpredictable reactions in critical situations. Therefore, it is essential for adults to recognise and understand the psychophysical limitations faced by children when participating in road traffic. Both theoretical and practical understanding of this issue by adults will enable children to participate in road traffic safely, within an environment characterised by informed acceptance of all road users, despite their limitations. The need for comprehensive and coordinated cooperation among adults to improve the safety of the youngest road users should not be overlooked. This cooperation should involve consistent educational activities undertaken by parents, teachers, and institutions responsible for road safety. Consistency and coherence in adults' actions aimed at preparing children for safe participation in road traffic will contribute to the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge at a level that enables responsible and safe behaviour on the road. In the process of educating the youngest, due consideration should be given to children's psychophysical limitations, as only programmes that address these deficits have the potential to genuinely improve their safety.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new datasets were generated in this study. All analysed data are publicly available from the sources cited in the article.

AI Tools Declaration: Not applicable. The author declares that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Główny Urząd Statystyczny. 2025. *Ludność. Stan i struktura ludności oraz ruch naturalny w przekroju terytorialnym w 2024 r. Stan w dniu 31.12* [Population: Size and Structure of the Population and Vital Statistics by Territorial Division in 2024. As of 31 December]. <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/ludnosc-stand-i-struktura-ludnoscioraz-ruch-naturalny-w-przekroju-terytorialnym-w-2024-r-stand-w-dniu-31-12,6,38.html>
- Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego. 2025. *Wypadki drogowe w Polsce w 2024 roku* [Road Accidents in Poland in 2024]. <https://statystyka.policja.pl/download/20/447022/Wypadkidrogowe2024.pdf>
- Lejda, Kazimierz, and Dagmara Karbowniczek. 2013. "Bezpieczeństwo systemu człowiek–pojazd–otoczenie (C-P-O) w ruchu drogowym" [Safety of human-vehicle-environment in road traffic]. *Autobusy: Technika, Eksploatacja, Systemy Transportowe* 14 (3): 1343–1348. <https://yadda.icm.edu.pl/baztech/element/bwmeta1.element.baztech-8762c250-7d7b-4861-93d0-5c496e862f7a/c/Lejda.pdf>
- Prawo oświatowe. 2016. *Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Prawo oświatowe* [Act of 14 December 2016 – Education Law]. Tekst jednolity: Dz. U. z 2024 r. poz. 737. <https://api.sejm.gov.pl/eli/acts/DU/2024/737/text.html>
- Prawo o ruchu drogowym. 1997. *Ustawa z dnia 20 czerwca 1997 r. – Prawo o ruchu drogowym* [Act of 20 June 1997 – Road Traffic Law]. Dz. U. z 1997 r. nr 98, poz. 602, z późn. zm. <https://api.sejm.gov.pl/eli/acts/DU/1997/602/text.html>
- Wnuk, Aneta. 2013. "Relacja rodzic-dziecko w ruchu drogowym – przegląd literatury, badań i praktyk brytyjskich" [Parent–Child Relationship in Road Traffic: A Review of British Literature, Research, and Practices]. *Technika Transportu Szynowego* 20 (10): 79–85. https://yadda.icm.edu.pl/baztech/element/bwmeta1.element.baztech-81592998-68ba-4294-a116-472331e0ef3d/c/Wnuk_Relacja_10_2013.pdf
- Wojdyło, Elżbieta. 2002. *Dziecko jako uczestnik ruchu drogowego* [The Child as a Road Traffic Participant]. Publiczna Szkoła Podstawowa nr 5 w Pionkach.

Road Safety Education for Children and Young People in Selected European Union Countries: Good Practices and Recommendations for Poland

Edukacja dzieci i młodzieży w zakresie bezpieczeństwa ruchu drogowego w wybranych państwach Unii Europejskiej: dobre praktyki i rekomendacje dla Polski

Maurycy Donder

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński
University in Warsaw,
Poland

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-9538-133X>

mdonder@tlen.pl

Received: 30 Dec 2025

Revised: 31 Jan 2026

Accepted: 16 Apr 2026

Published Online First:

6 Jun 2026

Abstract: Road safety education is an important component of protecting children and young people and reducing road traffic casualties. This article compares the design and implementation of preventive and educational measures in Poland and selected European Union countries. The study combines descriptive analysis of Polish police road accident statistics for 2023–2024 with comparative document analysis of road traffic legislation, prevention programmes, the ROSE 25 project, and initiatives from Austria, Belgium, Slovenia, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, and France. In 2024, Poland recorded 1,741 accidents involving children aged 0–14, resulting in 50 deaths and 1,838 injuries, confirming the urgency of the problem. The analysis shows that well-developed models embed road safety education in long-term strategies, emphasise practical skills, involve parents and local communities, and coordinate the activities of schools, public authorities, the police, and non-governmental organisations. In Poland, implementation remains fragmented: road safety content is dispersed across school subjects, teacher preparation and practical training are insufficient, parental participation is limited, and responsibility for coordination is unclear. The article recommends strengthening institutional coordination, preparing specialist educators, increasing practical instruction, engaging families and local stakeholders, and extending road safety education beyond the formal school setting.

Keywords: road safety education, children and young people, road traffic injury prevention, road safety programmes, good practices, policy implementation, European Union, Poland

Abstrakt: Edukacja w zakresie bezpieczeństwa ruchu drogowego jest istotnym elementem ochrony dzieci i młodzieży oraz ograniczania liczby ofiar wypadków drogowych. Celem artykułu jest porównanie sposobów projektowania i wdrażania działań profilaktycznych i edukacyjnych w Polsce oraz w wybranych państwach Unii Europejskiej. W badaniu połączono analizę opisową polskich statystyk policyjnych z lat 2023–2024 z porównawczą analizą dokumentów: regulacji prawnych, programów profilaktycznych, projektu ROSE 25 oraz inicjatyw z Austrii, Belgii, Słowenii, Niemiec, Holandii, Danii i Francji. W 2024 r. w Polsce odnotowano 1741 wypadków z udziałem dzieci w wieku 0–14 lat, w których 50 dzieci zginęło, a 1838 zostało rannych, co potwierdza pilność problemu. Analiza wskazuje, że rozwinięte modele edukacji są osadzone w strategiach długoterminowych, koncentrują się na umiejętnościach praktycznych, angażują rodziców i społeczności lokalne oraz opierają się na współpracy szkół, władz publicznych, policji i organizacji pozarząd-



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

dowych. W Polsce realizacja edukacji komunikacyjnej pozostaje rozproszona: treści są podzielone między różne przedmioty szkolne, przygotowanie nauczycieli i zajęcia praktyczne są niewystarczające, udział rodziców jest ograniczony, a odpowiedzialność za koordynację nie została jasno określona. Artykuł rekomenduje wzmocnienie koordynacji instytucjonalnej, przygotowanie specjalistycznej kadry, zwiększenie wymiaru zajęć praktycznych, zaangażowanie rodzin i podmiotów lokalnych oraz rozszerzenie edukacji poza formalne środowisko szkolne.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja w zakresie bezpieczeństwa ruchu drogowego, dzieci i młodzież, zapobieganie urazom w ruchu drogowym, programy bezpieczeństwa ruchu drogowego, dobre praktyki, wdrażanie polityk publicznych, Unia Europejska, Polska

INTRODUCTION

This article analyses the issue of educating children and adolescents in safe participation in road traffic in selected European Union countries. The data cited demonstrates the significant social problem posed by road safety threats, the scale of losses caused by road accidents, and the factors influencing their occurrence. Given the subject matter of the article, statistical data are presented detailing the involvement of children and adolescents in road accidents as both perpetrators and casualties in Poland in 2023–2024. These data are used to conduct a comparative analysis of such incidents. Furthermore, the legal status of children in various forms of participation in road traffic in Poland is defined and clarified through an analysis of legal acts regulating road traffic. The article then discusses selected aspects of safety in some European Union countries. Examples of good practices promoting road safety principles at various levels, with regard to children and adolescents participating in road traffic, are identified. Based on a review of the available materials, these activities are summarised and analysed, and reference is made to the situation of children and adolescents in relation to road safety education in Poland. The article concludes with an evaluation of the problem and attempts to indicate optimal solutions to the issue of educating children and adolescents in the field of road safety.

1. ROAD SAFETY HAZARDS

The global development of the automotive industry has brought numerous benefits to society, becoming a significant element of technological progress. It has also profoundly influenced many areas of social life. Among the most important effects are the acceleration of travel, the faster and more efficient transport of people and goods, the development of modern road infrastructure, and changes in leisure activities.

However, alongside these beneficial effects, this development is accompanied by a substantial and irreversible scale of losses, including fatalities and injuries resulting from road accidents, material damage, and a significant contribution to environmental degradation, which in turn adversely affects public health. In addition to accidents, there exists the dangerous phenomenon of the so-called “near-accident” (Hołyst 2022, 633), in which an event exhibits all the characteristics

of a road accident but does not result in a collision between a vehicle and another road user or object, such as a pedestrian. This constitutes an element of road traffic that increases the sense of danger and unpredictability, particularly among the youngest road users. Despite the many social problems already identified, the growing and continuously evolving automotive industry remains one of the most important elements of modern life. As noted, “In the history of civilisation, transport has played such a significant role that it has been considered a type and component of prosperity” (Wiktorowska-Jasik 2016, 15).

All the positive aspects resulting from the widespread use of various means of transport in road traffic should not, however, obscure or justify the growing social problems associated with this development. Can these social losses, sometimes irreversible, be regarded as inevitable costs of civilisational development? Rather, it is more appropriate to consider them as a form of significant civilisational neglect, posing a challenge for modern societies in terms of improving road safety, introducing modern and user-friendly technologies, and developing safer road infrastructure. One of the most important challenges is reducing the number of road accidents and preparing societies for safe participation in dynamically developing road traffic. Children and adolescents constitute a particularly important group in road traffic and should be supported through targeted education in this area. It is important to recognise that today’s children and adolescents will soon become adults shaping road traffic behaviours. The issue of road safety among children and adolescents often receives heightened media attention, particularly in the period preceding the new school year. Actions aimed at improving this safety raise several fundamental questions:

- Has an adequate budget been allocated for their implementation?
- Is there sufficient material infrastructure in the form of dedicated facilities and specialised equipment?
- Is professional support provided in schools?
- Have teachers been adequately trained to deliver road safety education?
- Is there an entity coordinating the above-mentioned activities?

These questions highlight important doubts regarding the effectiveness of proposed measures aimed at improving road safety for children and adolescents in Poland.

2. SCALE OF LOSSES CAUSED BY ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

The social costs of road accidents and collisions, estimated using the PANDORA method, which is based on the valuation of human capital and restitution costs generated by road accidents, constitute a significant component of Poland’s GDP and, according to the most recent available data, amounted to PLN 52 billion in 2022, representing 1.7% of GDP (Krajowa Rada Bezpieczeństwa Ruchu Drogowego 2023, 2). This amount comprises several components: fatalities, minor and serious injuries, and material losses resulting from these events.

Additionally, the estimated costs include expenditures related to the activities of emergency services, criminal proceedings, compensation, and broader material and economic losses. Cost forecasts predict a decrease to approximately PLN 42.3 billion in 2026 (Krajowa Rada Bezpieczeństwa Ruchu Drogowego 2023, 9). This estimate is based on the assumption of comprehensive corrective measures and the effective implementation of preventive programmes aimed at improving road safety. However, it is important to assess realistically both the level of implementation of such measures and the timeframe for their execution. In this regard, a clear time lag and a lack of the expected progress in the implementation of planned objectives become evident, limiting the possibility of achieving significant improvements in road safety in Poland.

Material losses constitute an important element of the social dimension of road accidents. However, it should be emphasised that the most significant aspect remains human casualties resulting from road accidents and collisions. Numerous factors influence the number of casualties. Among the most important are the number of motor vehicles on Polish roads and the volume of transit traffic passing through the country. In 2024, the number of motor vehicles registered in the Central Vehicle Register (CEP) was over 30,033,000 (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2025, 521). In addition, 5,074,626 vehicles were recorded as entering or leaving Poland (Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej 2025, 4). In total, this indicates that tens of millions of motor vehicles travel across Poland annually.

3. ROAD ACCIDENTS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Road safety issues are closely linked to the number of road accident casualties, which are typically recorded in the basic categories of injuries and fatalities. These elements of road safety, despite significant material losses, constitute the primary indicators for assessing this situation. At the same time, year-on-year comparisons of these data provide an accurate picture of road safety. An approach based on specific numerical data leaves little room for distortion of the actual situation across different statistical analyses.

Table 1. Number of road accident casualties in 2023-2024.

This table presents the numbers of road accidents, fatalities, and injured persons recorded in Poland in 2023 and 2024. All three indicators increased slightly in 2024 compared with the previous year. Despite the relatively stable level of fatalities, the rise in both accidents and injuries indicates that road safety remains a significant public concern.

Year	2023	2024
Number of accidents	20 936	21 519
Fatalities	1893	1896
Injured	24 125	24 782

Source: Author's own elaboration based on Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego. 2025. Wypadki drogowe w Polsce w 2024 roku.

Analysis of the figures presented in the table above allows the conclusion that in 2024, 21,519 road accidents occurring on public roads, in residential areas, and in traffic zones were reported to the Police. Compared to 2023, this represents an increase of 583 accidents. In 2024, 1,896 people were killed in road accidents. Compared to 2023, this indicates a slight increase in the number of fatalities. In the same year, 24,782 people were injured in road accidents (including 7,796 seriously injured). Compared to 2023, the number of injured persons increased by 657 (Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego 2025, 6). A trend towards stabilisation in the number of fatalities can be observed; however, this level remains far from the assumptions of “Vision Zero” (Malinowski 2019), which continues to be postponed by several decades in road safety forecasts. The situation regarding injuries is particularly concerning, as a further increase in the number of injured persons has been recorded. The steady rise in injuries indicates that no significant progress has been achieved in this area.

Furthermore, 390,580 road traffic collisions were reported in 2024, representing an increase of 24,589 compared to 2023 (Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego 2025, 6). It should be noted that the issue of the so-called “dark figure” of collisions persists, referring to incidents that occurred but were not reported to the Police. Therefore, data on reported collisions do not fully reflect the actual situation. This limitation affects the reliability of forecasts and conclusions derived from the available data concerning this type of social phenomenon.

With regard to the perpetrators and casualties of road accidents, this study focuses on children aged 0–6 and those aged 7–14. In 2024, 1,741 accidents involving children aged 0–14 were recorded in Poland. In these incidents, 50 children were killed and 1,838 were injured. Compared to 2023, the number of accidents decreased by 37, while the number of children killed increased by 6. In 2024, children aged 0–14 were responsible for 483 accidents, representing an increase of 75 compared to the previous year (Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego 2025, 39–45).

4. THE ISSUE OF CHILDREN’S SAFETY IN ROAD TRAFFIC

The latest report of the European Transport Safety Council (Carson et al. 2022, 15) indicates that between 2011 and 2020, over 6,000 children under the age of 14 died in the European Union. Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile (FIA) estimates that over 500 children die on roads worldwide each day (Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile n.d.). Nearly half of these fatalities occur when children are travelling in vehicles with adults. The most significant causes of these deaths during or following road accidents include the failure to use child restraint systems or their improper use. The remaining fatalities occur on or near pedestrian crossings and on roads outside built-up areas, as well as during activities such as cycling or riding scooters.

In light of the regulations governing children’s participation in road traffic, the location, age, and manner of participation constitute important determinants.

In pedestrian traffic, pursuant to Art. 43 of the Road Traffic Act (*Prawo o ruchu drogowym* 1997, art. 43 ust. 1, 3), a child under the age of 7 may use the road only under the supervision of a person who is at least 10 years old. It is, however, noteworthy that such supervision may be entrusted to another minor who, despite being older, may not yet be fully emotionally mature or adequately prepared to provide such care. This provision does not apply to roads designated exclusively for pedestrians. An exception is the residential zone, where pedestrians have priority and may use the space freely, and where children under the age of seven do not require supervision by an adult or a person aged at least 10 years. However, this remains an area of mixed traffic. Despite having priority, pedestrians must remain aware that they share the space with vehicles. Residential zones are most commonly found in urban areas and they regulate traffic, for example, in residential neighbourhoods where children spend time playing, riding scooters, or cycling. It is therefore important, as part of road safety education, to reinforce children's understanding of the specific nature of such areas, which function as relatively safe spaces for pedestrians.

Another form of participation in road traffic is cycling. In Poland, a child over 10 years of age who holds a bicycle licence becomes a full road user and is therefore permitted to use designated cycling infrastructure or carriageways (*Ustawa o kierujących pojazdami* 2011, art. 7, ust. 1, pkt 2). A younger child using a bicycle must be supervised by an adult and is classified as a pedestrian; accordingly, they use the pavement and comply with pedestrian traffic regulations. Pursuant to Art. 33 point 5 of the Road Traffic Act (*Prawo o ruchu drogowym* 1997, art. 33 ust. 5), an adult guardian accompanying the child is permitted to ride on the pavement. A child may also participate in road traffic as a passenger and, up to the age of seven, may be transported on a bicycle; however, pursuant to Art. 33 point 2 of the same Act (*Prawo o ruchu drogowym* 1997, art. 33 ust. 2), an additional seat ensuring the child's safety must be used. It is also permissible to transport a child in a specially designed trailer. Certain regulatory aspects related to cycling remain controversial. In Poland, a person who has reached the age of 18 may ride a bicycle without holding a bicycle licence. This could lead to the unjustified assumption that legal adulthood equates to adequate knowledge of road traffic regulations. At the same time, it is worth noting recent initiatives aimed at improving the safety of children using bicycles, including proposed legislation – following deliberation in the Sejm – that would introduce an obligation for children and adolescents to wear protective helmets.

Another form of children's participation in road traffic is pedestrian traffic. This most common form of participation is subject to numerous regulations that apply to all road users, including children. Pedestrian traffic may be divided into two categories: within built-up areas and outside built-up areas. The responsibilities of pedestrians in residential zones have been discussed above. A child travelling on a road outside a built-up area, up to the age of 7, should be under the supervision of a person aged at least 10, as specified in Art. 43 of the Road Traffic Act (*Prawo*

o ruchu drogowym 1997, art. 43 ust. 2–3). An important safety requirement is the obligation to use reflective elements from dusk to dawn, as stipulated in Art. 11 section 4a of the Road Traffic Act (Prawo o ruchu drogowym 1997, art. 11 ust. 4a). It should be noted that a pedestrian without reflective elements in such conditions is visible from a distance of approximately 20–30 metres, whereas a person equipped with reflective elements may be visible from a distance of over 100 metres (Kępa et al. 2017). All other regulations concerning pedestrians, both within and outside built-up areas, apply equally to all road users, including children and adolescents.

Another common form of participation in road traffic for this age group is as passengers in vehicles, both in public and private transport. In practice, this most often involves transporting children in passenger cars. In this case, the relevant regulations are clearly defined. However, above all, parents and guardians should prioritise children's safety and assume responsibility for compliance with the applicable legal provisions. The general rule is that children should be transported in an appropriate child restraint system. It should be emphasised that the restraint system must be adapted to the child's growth and physical characteristics. Up to the age of 3, a child must be transported exclusively in a seat approved in accordance with European Union standards. In addition to age, the primary criterion is the child's height. If a child is under 1.5 metres tall, certain exceptions to the general regulations apply. One exception concerns public transport or taxis; however, it is increasingly common practice for service providers to equip vehicles with child seats upon request. Another exception applies when a child is over 1.35 metres tall and weighs more than 36 kg and, for justified reasons, cannot use a standard child seat. When transporting three children in the rear seat of a vehicle, a child over 3 years of age may be seated in the middle position and secured with a seat belt. Children over 3 years of age weighing between 25 and 35 kg may be transported using a booster seat, which must also comply with European approval standards. The above obligations are precisely defined in legal provisions, including the Road Traffic Act (Prawo o ruchu drogowym 1997, art. 39 ust. 3–4, 3b–3c, w brzmieniu zmienionym ustawą z 9 kwietnia 2015 r., Dz. U. 2015 poz. 591), which align national regulations with standards adopted in European Union countries. Although many devices supporting the transport of children in vehicles are available on the market, some do not meet the required approval standards and may pose a risk to the child in the event of a collision or accident.

5. SELECTED ASPECTS OF CHILD SAFETY IN EU COUNTRIES

Child road safety is becoming a priority within the European Union. Measures are being undertaken at multiple levels to protect the youngest road users. These efforts constitute an important component of achieving the objective of reducing road accident casualties by 50% by 2030 and, ultimately, of implementing the “Vision Zero” concept, which aims to eliminate road accident fatalities by 2050. The Polish Road Safety Observatory highlights the importance of the ROSE 25

research project (Polskie Obserwatorium Bezpieczeństwa Ruchu Drogowego n.d.). The aim of this project, initiated by the European Commission for Transport and Energy, was to collect information on the implementation of road safety education activities in 25 EU Member States, identify best educational practices, develop a European guide on this subject, and propose guidelines for an effective road safety education system in the EU.

In accordance with the project assumptions, the following target groups for educational activities were identified:

- a. children and adolescents aged 3 to 17
- b. parents of younger children
- c. individuals implementing road safety education.

As road safety education for children and adolescents is primarily delivered in preschools and schools, as well as in other institutions, these areas were included in the study. Accordingly, the following definitions were adopted:

- a. activities/actions: all activities and initiatives related to road safety, ranging from one-off events to those included in the core curriculum.
- b. tools/media: all educational materials and tools used in preschools and schools for instructional support.

At the same time, measures aimed at developing practical skills for safe participation in road traffic were assessed. The study also sought examples of effective media communication of road safety content. An important element of the research was the identification and evaluation of the attitudes of all road users with regard to mutual respect, helpfulness, consideration, cooperation, and responsibility.

Based on the Final Report – ROSE 25, Inventory and Compiling of the European Guide on Road Safety Education Targeted at Young People (Weber 2005), the Polish Road Safety Observatory, prepared a national version of the document, titled Good Practices in Road Safety Education for Children and Youth – European ROSE 25 Project (Polskie Obserwatorium Bezpieczeństwa Ruchu Drogowego n.d.). This was possible due to Poland's participation in the project through the Polish Road Safety Observatory (POBRD). As indicated in the report, the project was coordinated by representatives of the Austrian Road Safety Board. To achieve the research objectives, a committee was established comprising road safety institutes from Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (which was still a member of the EU at the time), while Poland was represented by the Road Safety Centre of the Motor Transport Institute. The analysis of the submitted materials revealed several challenges associated with the implementation of road safety education:

- a wide variety of traffic education structures in schools
- traffic education is not implemented in some regions of individual countries
- ineffective debate regarding the mandatory or optional status of traffic education in schools
- insufficient financing of traffic education
- significant discrepancies between the demand for and implementation of traffic education

- outdated and ineffective teaching methods (a disconnect between theory and practice, teaching only theory and regulations)
- a lack of clear teacher responsibility for road safety content due to its distribution across multiple subjects, resulting in limited accountability for educational outcomes
- a lack of facilities for practical learning - the effectiveness of traffic parks remains questionable
- the risk of marginalisation of traffic education within educational institutions
- a lack of motivation among teachers to deliver such content
- insufficient information flow to teachers and inadequate preparation for delivering road safety education
- the acquisition of competences for teaching road safety content is voluntary for teachers
- a relatively good level of road safety education among younger children, contrasted with significantly weaker outcomes among adolescents, who, under certain conditions, may apply for a driving licence from the age of 17 (in Poland, for example, category B)
- insufficient training of police officers involved in educating children, primarily due to a lack of pedagogical preparation
- a lack of coordination with educational institutions at both the state and local levels.

An analysis of the above issues enabled the identification of good practices, understood as those forming part of a structured and planned process of road safety education. Such practices are not limited to one-off initiatives but constitute elements of a long-term strategy. Initiatives implemented by multiple institutions, multi-phased in nature and widely accessible, were assessed particularly positively. Attention was paid not only to the transmission of knowledge but also to the development of specific skills and attitudes, as well as to the ethical dimension of these activities, which, although significant, is often underestimated. The importance of fostering appropriate habits and social attitudes consistent with broadly accepted standards of behaviour was also emphasised (Polskie Obserwatorium Bezpieczeństwa Ruchu Drogowego n.d.; Weber 2005).

6. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES

One such initiative is the “Kangaroo Campaign” implemented in Austria, which aims to promote the safe transport of children using child restraint systems and seat belts. The target group consists of children aged 3–10. The programme is implemented in kindergartens and schools, where not only children but also parents and teachers constitute the target audience. The implementation of this initiative is multi-phased. The first phase is directed at children, while the second is addressed to parents. The meetings are interactive in nature and are conducted by instructors from the Austrian Road Safety Council (Kuratorium für Verkehrssicherheit – KFV).

Another project aimed at pedestrians – in this case children – is implemented in Belgium under the name “Save the Zebra”. The primary objective is to increase awareness among children participating in road traffic, particularly in the vicinity of pedestrian crossings. The main focus is on children’s appropriate behaviour in traffic; however, considerable attention is also given to drivers’ behaviour, especially in terms of recognising pedestrian crossings as critical safety elements. This is a practical, activity-based project. Children observe and monitor the behaviour of drivers approaching pedestrian crossings, including their speed and reactions. The campaign targets children aged 8–10. The topic is first addressed in school, after which participants take part in an organised march with parents under police supervision.

In Slovenia, the “Safe Bike” campaign is implemented within the school system and targets children aged 10–11. The activities are nationwide and involve approximately 500 schools, reaching nearly 80% of the target group. The campaign promotes the use of equipment that enhances cyclist safety and encourages the preparation of bicycles for the season; it is typically launched in spring. The programme is implemented by the Slovenian Road Safety Council, local authorities, and the police, with active cooperation between parents and children. Although participation is not mandatory, the programme covers almost all bicycles used by 10-year-olds. Additionally, the “A Wise Head Wears a Helmet” project is implemented. This is a nationwide initiative aimed at children and young people aged 6–17. Each year, the Slovenian Road Safety Council recommends approved safety helmets and facilitates access to them at favourable prices through schools. The campaign is linked to legislative measures requiring the use of protective helmets by cyclists up to 14 years of age. This represents an interesting solution, particularly in the Polish context, where planned legislative changes may introduce an obligation for cyclists up to 15 years of age to wear helmets. If such regulations are implemented, the question arises as to which institutions will be responsible for recommending helmets that meet European approval standards and under what conditions.

In Germany, the non-governmental organisation Deutsche Verkehrswacht was founded in 1924, was banned between 1933 and 1945, and was re-established in 1950 (Deutsche Verkehrswacht n.d.-b). Today, it operates under the motto “Road safety in all phases of life in line with Vision Zero” (Deutsche Verkehrswacht n.d.-a). The organisation aims to promote safe participation across all categories of road traffic and to support intergenerational communication in this field. The core idea of this movement, which has evolved over time into a structured, nationwide system, is the promotion of intergenerational dialogue and safe participation in road traffic. School-age children and adolescents constitute a particularly important target group. A key component of the organisation’s activities is the strong social engagement of individuals across different age groups. In response to contemporary needs, Deutsche Verkehrswacht promotes long-term cooperation by organising periodic “Road Safety Days” in schools, providing comprehensive

logistical support and assistance from trained professionals implementing the programme. Additionally, an online platform operating under the DV Campus initiative functions in the digital environment (Deutsche Verkehrswacht n.d.-c). It enables users to select target groups and thematic areas, such as children cycling, children travelling in vehicles, or other issues related to road safety education. An interesting initiative implemented in Germany is the Bus Guards programme, within which adolescents aged 13–18 act as supervisors for younger children using public transport (Weber 2005).

The selected examples presented here do not exhaust the range of activities aimed at improving road safety among children and adolescents; however, they illustrate noteworthy initiatives and directions for the further development of measures aimed at preparing the youngest road users in the European Union.

7. PROBLEMS AND WAYS OF ADDRESSING THEM IN SELECTED EU COUNTRIES

In the article „Children in traffic: how do they do it in the West?” (Fundacja Drogi Mazowsza 2025), the Masovian Roads Foundation analyses the challenges and methods of addressing them in the implementation of safe participation of children and adolescents in road traffic, particularly in the context of cycling. The study presents examples from several countries that have undertaken comprehensive measures to improve road safety.

In the Netherlands, widely recognised as a leader in cycling, the current high level of cycling infrastructure, including extensive networks of cycle paths and pedestrian crossings, has not always been the norm. In the 1970s, motor vehicle users were prioritised. The process of change was initiated by parents concerned about the risks their children faced when travelling to school. This grassroots initiative was quickly recognised by the government, which introduced programmes aimed at improving road safety. The system of road safety education for children and adolescents is based on cooperation between parents and local authorities, supported by organisations of instructors and examiners. Parents receive guidance from schools regarding how and what to teach. This constitutes a key element of both the educational process and family engagement. Although a bicycle licence is not mandatory in the Netherlands, parents are strongly encouraged to ensure that their children undergo assessment to verify the knowledge and skills necessary for safe cycling. Schools and cycling organisations may also play a supporting role in this process.

A more detailed analysis revealed that cycling on dedicated cycle paths had led to the perception of these spaces as safe zones in which general traffic regulations were less strictly observed. In response to this issue, the education system established a joint fund to support local authorities in developing safer cycling routes. It is noteworthy that the Danish system of road safety education relies primarily on recommendations and guidelines that support local initiatives. A cooperative framework has been established involving local authorities, parents, and educational institutions.

In France, despite a long tradition of cycling, systematic institutional support for cycling was for many years limited, and cyclists often encountered a high level of tolerance from drivers in road traffic. Cycling was perceived primarily as a recreational and sporting activity. However, in 2018, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the National Road Safety Council, introduced nationwide guidelines defining the knowledge and skills required of young cyclists. The culmination of theoretical and practical training for approximately ten-year-old children is an examination. Upon successful completion, the child receives a certificate; however, this does not constitute a licence to ride a bicycle, as such a requirement is not mandatory in France.

In summary, initiatives undertaken by local authorities and residents of specific areas to engage in road safety education for children and young people can be observed. All forms of government intervention play a supportive role, including financial assistance, the provision of appropriate educational materials, and support for local initiatives through the involvement of professional facilitators. A key element of this cooperation is the involvement of various non-governmental entities in achieving the common goal of ensuring the safety of children and young people in road traffic. This is a significant investment in the development of modern societies with a shared ideal of safe behaviour in road traffic, which accompanies people throughout their lives and constitutes a strong point in their value system, passed down through generations. How does Poland compare to this?

In Poland, road safety education began to be introduced into primary schools in 1995. Unfortunately, from the outset, content related to road safety was delivered through cross-curricular integration and was generally “lost” within the core subject matter of the respective disciplines covered by the curriculum. Decisions taken by the Ministry of National Education outpaced the preparedness of schools for implementation. Teachers lacked the necessary competences and attempts to prepare them for delivering road safety education were sporadic and lacked a systemic approach. A fundamental problem was the absence of a dedicated subject addressing both the theoretical and practical aspects of safe participation in road traffic. In practice, the intended objectives were not achieved, despite the emergence in those years of the term “Disappearing School.” This term reflected the annual number of fatalities in road accidents among school-age children. Initiatives aimed at involving parents in road safety education across various domains of road traffic were largely absent. Educational institutions typically limited their activities to inviting police officers to meet with children or organising one-off initiatives, for example at the beginning of the school year. These experiences should serve as a basis for introducing necessary changes in this area. However, similar challenges persist. There is still no dedicated subject for road safety education, and school principals assign responsibility for this content to individual teachers or, in some cases, to police officers with pedagogical training. Furthermore, there remains a significant deficit in practical training conducted under real traffic conditions. It should also be noted that, under current regulations, a child as young as 10

may supervise a younger child in standard road traffic conditions. The National Road Safety Council of Poland (KRBRD) undertakes initiatives in this area in line with European Union recommendations; however, it should also function as a coordinating and supporting body for local government and community initiatives. In addition, it should provide targeted support for specific initiatives, for example by facilitating cooperation between various stakeholders. Another valuable approach is the development of partnerships, for instance between schools and local businesses, which should recognise road safety as an important element of their social responsibility.

The 2025/2026 school year will once again demonstrate the extent to which decision-making processes are preceded by appropriate preparation for the implementation of road safety education in educational institutions. Considering that today's children and young people will soon become adult road users, and that they will shape patterns of behaviour in road traffic, it is important to recall the well-known statement by Jan Zamoyski: "Such will be the Commonwealth as the upbringing of its youth" (Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie n.d.; author's translation).

CONCLUSION

The safety of children and young people in all forms of participation in road traffic currently constitutes a serious social problem in all European Union countries. For obvious reasons, this group of road users is considered the most vulnerable and least protected in situations involving a high risk of accidents. Various approaches are being developed across Europe to address this issue. Undoubtedly, the most important objective is to prepare children and young people for safe participation in this common social activity. To achieve this goal, a range of methods has been employed, taking into account multiple factors:

- the activity of schools and extracurricular educational institutions
- the engagement of local communities
- parental involvement in addressing the problem
- national programmes aimed at improving road safety
- initiatives undertaken by other stakeholders
- preparedness for the implementation of relevant measures.

Road safety education integrates the fields of education and road safety and should therefore involve cooperation among multiple stakeholders influencing both the content of educational programmes and the level of engagement in their implementation. The current model for the implementation of road safety education in Poland does not appear to meet expectations effectively. This is clearly indicated by the statistical data presented earlier, which continue to show an increasing involvement of children and adolescents in road traffic accidents. It can be observed that many entities responsible for road safety in Poland recognise the problem and implement remedial programmes and projects related to European

Union activities in this area. This has led to numerous initiatives by the National Road Safety Council of Poland (KRBRD) and the Polish Road Safety Observatory, Motor Transport Institute (POBR ITS), as well as the Ministry of National Education (MEN), aimed at introducing road safety education in schools. These projects and programs play a crucial role in shaping children's and young people's road safety, but the implementation phase must always be kept in mind.

In this context, it is worth considering several proposals based on the analysis of European Union experience in this field:

- introducing a separate subject titled Road Safety Education
- promoting road safety issues among children and adolescents through support for the organisation of interest groups and clubs focused on these topics
- increasing the number of practical hours within the curriculum, with particular emphasis on teaching appropriate behaviour in real, local road traffic conditions
- providing professional support through the involvement of road safety specialists in education for children and adolescents
- creating mobile road safety training facilities
- ensuring parental involvement in the implementation of the curriculum
- encouraging the engagement of insurance companies, businesses, and other entities operating in the local market.

These proposals have been successfully implemented across the European Union and could also contribute to improving the safety of this group of road users in Poland. An analysis of the findings of this study allows for several valid conclusions:

- the introduction and development of road safety education in schools should be preceded by the preparation of qualified specialists, appropriate teaching materials, and suitable facilities for delivering such content
- elements of road safety education should be extended beyond the formal school environment
- local communities should be more actively involved in implementing the above-mentioned programmes and initiatives
- a specialised pathway for road safety educators should be developed within the higher education system
- efforts should be made to influence public awareness, for example through media campaigns promoting shared responsibility for the safe participation of children and adolescents in road traffic
- the development of an intergenerational approach to road safety education should be embedded within the educational system
- reinstating the appointment of a road safety (BRD) representative (this may be a voluntary or community-based role) should be considered.

The study does not fully exhaust the social problems associated with the need to ensure safety for future generations of Poles. However, it identifies directions and possibilities for improving this safety and offers the hope that it may serve as a source of inspiration for those working in this field.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Available upon request.

AI Tools Declaration: Not applicable. The author declares that no use of AI tools requiring disclosure under the Seminare Policy on AI in Scholarly Publishing occurred in the preparation of this manuscript or in the underlying study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES:

- Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie. n.d. "Założenie Akademii Zamojskiej – 1594 r." [Establishment of the Zamość Academy – 1594]. <https://lublin.ap.gov.pl/popularyzacja/galerie-online/15-najwazniejszych-wydarzen-z-historii-lubelszczyzny-w-dokumentcie-archiwalnym/zalozenie-akademii-zamojskiej-1594-r/>.
- Carson, Jenny, Graziella Jost, and Maria Meinero. 2022. *Reducing Child Deaths on European Roads: PIN Flash Report 43*. European Transport Safety Council. https://etsc.eu/wp-content/uploads/ETSC_PINFLASH43-correct-DIGITAL.pdf.
- Deutsche Verkehrswacht. n.d.-a. "Aufgaben & Struktur." Deutsche Verkehrswacht. <https://www.verkehrswacht.de/organisation/aufgaben-struktur/>.
- Deutsche Verkehrswacht. n.d.-b. "Historie." Deutsche Verkehrswacht. <https://www.verkehrswacht.de/organisation/historie/>.
- Deutsche Verkehrswacht. n.d.-c. "Verkehrswacht Campus." <https://campus.verkehrswacht.de/>.
- Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile. n.d. "Road Safety." <https://www.fia.com/road-safety>.
- Fundacja Drogi Mazowsza. 2025. "Dzieci w ruchu drogowym. Czyli jak to robią na Zachodzie" [Children in Traffic: How They Do It in the West]. <https://drogi-mazowsza.org/dzieci-w-ruchu-drogowym-czyli-jak-to-robia-na-zachodzie/>.
- Główny Urząd Statystyczny. 2025. *Rocznik Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* [Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland]. <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/rocznik-statystyczny-rzeczypospolitej-polskiej-2025,2,25.html>.
- Hołyst, Brunon. 2022. *Kryminologia* [Criminology]. Wolters Kluwer.
- Kępa, Paweł, Wojciech Żagan, and Krzysztof Tereszkievicz. 2017. "Badanie zakresu widoczności pieszego wyposażonego w element odbłaskowy w porze nocnej" [The Study of the Scope of Visibility of a Pedestrian Equipped with a Reflective Element during the Night Time]. *Autobusy: Technika, Eksploatacja, Systemy Transportowe* 18 (6): 242–246.
- Komenda Główna Policji, Biuro Ruchu Drogowego. 2025. *Wypadki drogowe w Polsce w 2024 roku* [Road Accidents in Poland in 2024]. <https://statystyka.policja.pl/download/20/447022/Wypadkidrogowe2024.pdf>.

- Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej. 2025. *Informacja statystyczna za 2024 r.* [Statistical Information for 2024]. <https://strazgraniczna.pl/download/1/41000/InformacjaStatystycznaSGza2024rnowe.pdf>.
- Krajowa Rada Bezpieczeństwa Ruchu Drogowego. 2023. *Wycena kosztów wypadków i kolizji drogowych na sieci dróg w Polsce na koniec roku 2022, z wyodrębnieniem średnich kosztów społeczno-ekonomicznych wypadków na transeuropejskiej sieci transportowej* [Valuation of the Costs of Road Accidents and Collisions on the Road Network in Poland at the End of 2022, with the Identification of Average Socio-Economic Costs of Accidents on the Trans-European Transport Network]. <https://www.krbrd.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Koszty-wypadkow-drogowych-w-Polsce-w-2022-r.-prezentacja.pdf>.
- Malinowski, Łukasz. 2019. "Wizja Zero. Szwedzki sukces wystawiony na próbę" [Vision Zero: Swedish Success Put to the Test]. *Transport Publiczny*. <https://www.transport-publiczny.pl/wiadomosci/wizja-zero-szwedzki-sukces-wystawiony-na-probe-62967.html>.
- Polskie Obserwatorium Bezpieczeństwa Ruchu Drogowego. n.d. "ROSE 25." <https://obserwatoriumbrd.pl/projektybadawcze/rose-25/>.
- Prawo o ruchu drogowym. 1997. Ustawa z dnia 20 czerwca 1997 r. – Prawo o ruchu drogowym. Dz.U. 1997 nr 98 poz. 602, z późn. zm. [Act of 20 June 1997 – Road Traffic Law].
- Ustawa o kierujących pojazdami. 2011. Ustawa z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 r. o kierujących pojazdami. Dz.U. 2011 nr 30 poz. 151, z późn. zm. [Act of 5 January 2011 on Vehicle Drivers].
- Ustawa z dnia 9 kwietnia 2015 r. o zmianie ustawy – Prawo o ruchu drogowym. 2015. Dz.U. 2015 poz. 591 [Act of 9 April 2015 Amending the Road Traffic Law].
- Weber, K., ed. 2005. *ROSE 25: Inventory and Compiling of a European Good Practice Guide on Road Safety Education Targeted at Young People: Final Report*. Austrian Board of Safety and Prevention. Final report for European DG TREN.
- Wiktorowska-Jasik, Anna. 2016. "Rozwój ruchu drogowego – najważniejsze osiągnięcia światowej motoryzacji i ruchu drogowego w ujęciu historycznym" [Development of Road Traffic: The Most Important Achievements of Global Motorization and Road Traffic in Historical Perspective]. *Logistyka Porty* 1: 15–19.

Report on the Activities of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society in 2025

Sprawozdanie z działalności Towarzystwa Naukowego Franciszka Salezego za rok 2025

Sylwester Jędrzejewski

Secretary of TNFS

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0619-1106>

Jerzy Gocko SDB

The John Paul II Catholic
University of Lublin, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6513-5681>

Received: 15 Mar 2026

Revised: 30 Mar 2026

Published Online First:

1 Apr 2026

The Francis de Sales Scientific Society (TNFS) focuses, in accordance with its Statutes, on the broadly conceived “world of youth”. It conducts and supports academic research, organises events to facilitate knowledge exchange, and initiates projects to address contemporary educational, formative, and cultural challenges. Its work combines scholarly rigour with the Christian humanism of St Francis de Sales.

During the reporting period from 1 January to 31 December 2025, the Society’s activities centred on the following areas.

I. THE 17TH TNFS CONGRESS AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The principal statutory event of 2025 was the 17th TNFS Congress, held on 15–16 May at the Golden Forest Hermitage in Rytwiany. It brought together 33 participants, including Society members, invited speakers, and guests. The programme combined academic, statutory, organisational, spiritual, and community-building elements.

The second day began with the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by the President of TNFS, Rev. Prof. Jerzy Gocko SDB.

The central academic event was the conference entitled “Youth and the Meaning of Life”, which inaugurated the five-year TNFS research project *Youth in Search of Meaning*, scheduled to run from 2025 to 2029. The project examines how contemporary young people experience and seek meaning amid ongoing cultural, social, religious, and technological transformations.

The speakers were Prof. Krzysztof Wielecki, Prof. Marek Melnyk, Rev. Prof. Witold Kawecki, and Prof. Dariusz Wesołowski. Their presentations addressed civilisational crisis and intergenerational communication,



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

transformations in youth spirituality, the relationship between culture and values, and the educational dimension of the search for meaning.

A panel discussion with young people and pastoral workers complemented the academic presentations by relating them to the experiences of young people today, particularly regarding meaning, interpersonal relationships, and digital technologies.

As the required quorum was not reached at the first session, the General Assembly reconvened in accordance with the Statutes. It approved the Society's financial and activity reports for 2024, allocated the financial surplus, and accepted the Audit Committee's report.

The General Assembly also discussed plans to hold the 18th TNFS Congress in Łąd on 14–15 May 2026. It confirmed that *Youth in Search of Meaning* would remain the Society's principal framework for future academic initiatives.

II. MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF THE FRANCIS DE SALES SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY IN 2025

The Board held three meetings in 2025: on 31 March, 15 May, and 24 October. The meetings were held online, in person, or in a hybrid format. Average attendance was 90.5%. Representatives of the Audit Committee participated as observers and advisers.

During its meetings, the Board reviewed the Society's 2024 reporting documentation, prepared for the 17th TNFS Congress, and launched the five-year research programme *Youth in Search of Meaning*. It also admitted five new members and discussed the development of *Seminare. Studies in Youth and Society*, international cooperation, scholarly patronage, external funding, and publishing cooperation with the Salesian Sports Organisation of the Republic of Poland.

Publishing matters formed an important part of the Board's work. Measures were considered to increase the number of articles published in *Seminare*, improve the journal's academic quality, strengthen its international profile, and continue efforts to secure inclusion in international indexing databases. The Board also discussed the journal's fiftieth anniversary.

The Board discussed conferring the Praemium Societatis Scientiarum Francisci Salesii on Rev. Prof. Kazimierz Misiaszek SDB. Owing to the recipient's health, the award ceremony was postponed and will be held in a form adapted to his circumstances.

International cooperation was developed through contacts with Salesian academic institutions in Rome, including the Salesian Pontifical University. The Society's overarching research area, *Youth and Their World*, was presented during these meetings, together with the five-year research programme *Youth in Search of Meaning*. Possible forms of scholarly cooperation and the involvement of international researchers in the Society's work were also discussed.

The Board adopted a provisional budget for 2025. It granted scholarly patronage to selected initiatives, including a conference in the Humanistic Ecology series, the publication series *Salesian Spirituality Notebooks*, a symposium in Łąd devoted to the

continuing relevance of St John Bosco's charism, and the conference Rehabilitation through Work, organised by the Salesian Educational Centre in Trzciniec.

The Board confirmed its decision to co-publish the SALOS RP Monographs series and to participate in the organisation of its annual scholarly symposium. It also established the main organisational arrangements for the 18th TNFS Congress in Łąd. The accompanying conference will form the next stage of *Youth in Search of Meaning*, with responsibility for the academic programme entrusted to Rev. Prof. Henryk Skorowski SDB and Prof. Monika Podkowińska.

After reviewing the documentation relating to the Society's work in 2025, the Audit Committee concluded that the Society's activities were conducted in accordance with the Statutes and internal regulations. No irregularities were identified, and no additional recommendations were made.

III. MEMBERSHIP AFFAIRS

In 2025, five new members were admitted to the Francis de Sales Scientific Society: Krzysztof Wielecki, Rev. Mariusz Kuźniar, Rev. Radosław Mazur, Magdalena Wilczek-Karczewska, and Katarzyna Mazela.

As of 31 December 2025, the Society had 133 ordinary members, two honorary members, and five supporting members.

The honorary members remain Rev. Pascual Chávez Villanueva SDB, Rector Major of the Salesian Society from 2002 to 2014, and Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime SDB, Rector Major from 2014 to 2024.

The Society pursued its statutory objectives using funds derived from membership fees, grants, and donations. The annual membership fee remained PLN 50. In 2025, 71 of the 133 ordinary members paid their fees (53.38%).

IV. ACADEMIC AND PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES

In 2025, the scholarly activity of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society continued to focus on *Youth and Their World*, pursued primarily through the five-year research programme *Youth in Search of Meaning*. Its first stage was the conference Youth and the Meaning of Life, held during the 17th TNFS Congress in Rytwiany.

Publishing remained one of the principal areas of TNFS activity, centred on *Seminare. Studies in Youth and Society* and the Society's monograph series.

In 2025, *Seminare* maintained its twice-yearly publication schedule. Two issues were published, comprising 37 research articles, two review articles, two reports, and editorial introductions. The editorial team continued its efforts to strengthen the journal's academic quality, international visibility, and presence in indexing databases. The year also marked the fiftieth anniversary of *Seminare*.

Volume 19 of the TNFS Studies and Dissertations series was published under the title *Lenda Vetera et Nova: The Former Abbey in Łąd—Research and Conservation, 2019–2024*, edited by Rev. Janusz Nowiński SDB.

As part of its cooperation with the Salesian Sports Organisation of the Republic of Poland, TNFS became a co-publisher of the SALOS RP Monographs series. In 2025, volume 44 was published under the title *Education for Universalism through Sport*, edited by Jerzy Gocko SDB, Andrzej Pawłucki, and Edward Pleń SDB.

In 2025, TNFS also became a co-organiser of the annual SALOS RP academic symposia. This cooperation broadens the scope of the Society's publishing activities and strengthens its presence in research on the educational, social, and axiological dimensions of sport.

As of 31 December 2025, the series associated with TNFS comprised:

- 19 volumes in the *Studies and Dissertations* series;
- 5 volumes in the *Library of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society* series;
- 10 volumes in the *Biblica et Theologica TNFS* series;
- 44 volumes in the *SALOS RP Monographs* series.

The Society continued to develop cooperation with academic and educational institutions in Poland and abroad, particularly the Salesian Pontifical University and other Salesian institutions in Rome. TNFS also collaborated in organising the Humanistic Ecology series of conferences and granted scholarly patronage to initiatives on Salesian pedagogy, social rehabilitation, spirituality, and youth education.

CONCLUSION

In 2025, the Francis de Sales Scientific Society continued to pursue its statutory mission through academic, publishing, and organisational activities. The year was marked by the launch of *Youth in Search of Meaning*, the 17th TNFS Congress, the fiftieth anniversary of *Seminare*, expanded cooperation with SALOS RP, and the development of international academic partnerships.

The Board expresses its gratitude to all members, collaborators, and partner institutions for their contributions to the Society's work in 2025.

CONTENTS

47(2026)1

ARTICLES

Monika Wojtkowiak

Young People in Digital Environments: A Theoretical Review of Disinformation, Online Communication, and Media Literacy 5

Jolanta Łodzińska, Mariusz Chamarczuk

Internet and Social Media Use among Primary School Students: Digital Habits, Online Safety, and Parental Supervision in a Local Polish Survey 21

Agnieszka Żabińska, Sebastian Warchoń, Julia Rojek, Weronika Fetraś

Generative AI and ChatGPT in Self-Directed Learning among Year 7 and 8 Primary School Pupils: Survey Findings from Radom, Poland 33

Wojciech Słomski

Religion in the Digital Media Age: The Religious Formation of Young People from the Perspective of Christian Personalism 49

Artur Chejnowski

From Christian Rock to the Psalms: The Music of 2 Tm 2,3 and Listeners' Religious Lives in an Empirical Study 63

Marek Woś

Chronostructures of Meaning and Rhythms of Subjectivity in Critical Realism 89

Kinga Lisowska

Re-Acculturation, Reverse Culture Shock, and Peer Relationships among Young Return Migrants to Poland: Three Case Studies 107

Elżbieta Subocz, Magdalena Sternicka-Kowalska

Entering Adulthood after Forced Migration: A Focus Group Study of Ukrainian Refugee Youth in Olsztyn and Kraków 121

Jadwiga Daszykowska-Tobiasz, Zbigniew Babicki

The War in Ukraine and Perceived Quality of Life among Pedagogy Students in Poland: Repeated Cross-Sectional Surveys in 2022 and 2024 135

Agnieszka Leszcz-Krysiak, Andrea Wardal

Preschool Children's Concepts of Peace after Peace Education Activities: A Participatory Analysis of Drawings and Verbal Narratives 149

Olga Modzelewska

Sociotherapy as a Field of Support and Education for Adolescent Boys 167

Zbigniew Kazimierz Mikołajczyk

Crime, Domestic Violence, and Family Security in Poland: Trends in Police Data, 2020–2023 179

Robert Idzikowski

Children's Road Safety in Poland: Accident Statistics, Traffic Roles, and Psychophysical Risk Factors, 2022–2024 191

Maurycy Donder

Road Safety Education for Children and Young People in Selected European Union Countries: Good Practices and Recommendations for Poland 201

REPORTS

Sylwester Jędrzejewski, Jerzy Gocko

Report on the Activities of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society in 2025 217

SPIS TREŚCI

47(2026)1

ARTYKUŁY

Monika Wojtkowiak

Młodzi ludzie w środowisku cyfrowym: teoretyczna analiza dezinformacji, komunikacji internetowej i kompetencji medialnych 5

Jolanta Łodzińska, Mariusz Chamarczuk

Korzystanie z Internetu i mediów społecznościowych przez uczniów szkoły podstawowej: nawyki cyfrowe, bezpieczeństwo w sieci i nadzór rodzicielski w lokalnym badaniu ankietowym 21

Agnieszka Żabińska, Sebastian Warchoń, Julia Rojek, Weronika Fetras

Generatywna sztuczna inteligencja i ChatGPT w samodzielnym uczeniu się uczniów klas VII i VIII szkoły podstawowej: wyniki badania ankietowego przeprowadzonego w Radomiu 33

Wojciech Słomski

Religia w epoce mediów cyfrowych. Formacja religijna młodzieży w perspektywie personalizmu chrześcijańskiego 49

Artur Chejnowski

Od chrześcijańskiego rocka do psalmów: muzyka zespołu 2 Tm 2,3 a życie religijne słuchaczy w świetle badań empirycznych 63

Marek Woś

Chronostruktury sensu i rytmy podmiotowości w perspektywie realizmu krytycznego 89

Kinga Lisowska

Powrotna akulturacja, powrotny szok kulturowy i relacje rówieśnicze młodych reemigrantów powracających do Polski: trzy studia przypadków 107

Elżbieta Subocz, Magdalena Sternicka-Kowalska

Wchodzenie w dorosłość po przymusowej migracji – badanie fokusowe młodych uchodźców z Ukrainy w Olsztynie i Krakowie 121

Jadwiga Daszykowska-Tobiasz, Zbigniew Babicki

Wojna na Ukrainie a postrzegana jakość życia studentów pedagogiki w Polsce: powtarzane badania przekrojowe z lat 2022 i 2024 135

Agnieszka Leszcz-Krysiak, Andrea Wardal

Rozumienie pokoju przez dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym po zajęciach z edukacji dla pokoju: partycypacyjna analiza rysunków i narracji werbalnych 149

Olga Modzelewska

Socjoterapia jako obszar wsparcia i edukacji dorastających chłopców 167

Zbigniew Kazimierz Mikołajczyk

*Przestępczość, przemoc domowa i bezpieczeństwo rodziny w Polsce:
tendencje w danych policyjnych z lat 2020–2023* 179

Robert Idzikowski

*Bezpieczeństwo dzieci w ruchu drogowym w Polsce: statystyki wypadków,
role uczestników i psychofizyczne czynniki ryzyka w latach 2022–2024* 191

Maurycy Donder

*Edukacja dzieci i młodzieży w zakresie bezpieczeństwa ruchu drogowego
w wybranych państwach Unii Europejskiej: dobre praktyki i rekomendacje dla Polski* 201

SPRAWOZDANIA

Sylwester Jędrzejewski, Jerzy Gocko

Sprawozdanie z działalności Towarzystwa Naukowego Franciszka Salezego za rok 2025 217