Research of Primary School Students' Knowledge and Attitude to Internet Tolerance

Rumyana Papancheva, University Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov, Bulgaria
Maria Dishkova, University Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov, Bulgaria

The Barcelona Conference of Education 2020
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract
Internet tolerance is a very relevant problem in the context of the 21st century, when a greater percentage of communication between people in most countries, including children, occurs precisely in the virtual space. The survey included 230 girls and boys from primary school. A brief literature preview and the results, taken by the research provides an excellent opportunity some conclusions to be made, which will approve the work of primary teacher in conversations with students about their tolerant behavior. It is a fact, that there are parents and teachers with no idea what really happens in their children's and student's virtual life. It is their responsibility to keep children in safe and to control their behavior in order to learn social norms for respectful attitude towards others. Internet allows more free behavior because of the anonymity and the sense of impunity, as well as the fact that someone remains hidden behind the monitor and do not have to confront one's opponent directly. This creates the illusion of courage and often leads to reckless actions that can hurt the other person. All these facts have provoked the research that will be commented in current article.

Keywords: Tolerance, Children in Primary School, Communication, Internet

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Student's online communication is a huge challenge for pedagogical subjects, because they have to protect children and in the same time to learn them behave properly on the Internet. The number of users all over the word suppose that anything could happen in the virtual space, anything could be said and anything could be done. Children should be well trained that online communication has some rules that must be followed. Fast connection, social media, the possibility to communicate with many people is a great advantage and it should be used in the most appropriate way – not for bullying others. Some researchers are indicative that parents influence their child behavior online. Such problems as absence of family support, presence of family isolation, prevalence of failure in job and education, the feeling of worthlessness, may affect the way that child behave in Internet. Something more, these problems could be both the consequences and the causes of addictive use of the Internet (Tajalli, Zarnaghash, 2017, p. 163). Family conversation about different topics, including use of digital technologies, have positive influence regarding children's mental health and emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and academic results (Tajalli, Latifian, 2008; Tajalli, Ardalan, 2010). Family patterns are pointed as basic not only about time, spent in front of the screen, but about students' communicative e-tolerance as well. Internet is a place where millions of people meet each other. They have the possibility to stay anonymous, to express their point of view, even to be someone else. There isn't a paper with rules about e-behavior. Many sites have some kind of protection, but in most cases it is possible for everyone to say anything on Internet. "The human mind is innately different and diverse. If one looks carefully one cannot find two nations, two families, two men, or even two brothers or two sisters who think alike and behave alike. The universe is thus naturally inclined to be diverse" (Antun, 2013). That's why nowadays we speak about tolerance between people. Someone is not forced to accept other's opinion, but he/she should know that there are different points of view.

There are some benefits (getting information, increase cognitive function, building relation with others) and some risks (tendency of psychological disorders, less of Internet literacy, decrease visual function) of Internet use for children (Rachmayani, 2017, p. 142-143). Other benefits are: study help, social interaction, student community (Heinze, Procter, 2006, p. 246). Social media can be used very easily to interact both with friends and with others online and helps to improve social development of students and their relationships with peers (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, Kraut, & Gross, 2001). Parents also understand that Internet can support learning of their children and in the same time to affect them negatively, especially if they are not able to control their children's internet use and other online content (Zotova, Zinchenko, 2014). Not only at home, but also at school students' Internet use is not limited. Therefore, their internet literacy education should be improved, so to protect their online activity (Ey & cupit, 2011; Yan, 2009) and e-behavior.

Online communication is different from "face to face" dialogue. Some authors look into friendship development through the internet. A comparison between online and offline companionship shows that both have different contexts. It turns out that online communication may have a different implication, as well as used communication methods are different and have its time and place to be implemented (Hamburger, Kingsbury, Schneider, 2012). There are different reasons for people to prefer online

communication: convenience, to seek new friendship, to seek potential partners, to keep in touch with friends and families, faster response rate, reliability, cheap, current trend, accessibility and others (Nordin, 2014). "Use of the Internet for interpersonal communication is not the same as offline face-to-face communication. The absence of nonverbal cues, lack of warmth, and less demand for engagement in Internet communication lead to impersonality, shallow interactions, and difficulty in building social support" (Lee, Leung, Lo, Xiong, Wu, 2011, p. 386-387). In spite of this, results of other researches indicated that young adults spend more time communicating online and building online relationships with friends and unknown individuals, and this time is more than middle and late age adults (Thayer, Ray, 2006, p. 438).

In pedagogical practice, it is supposed that when students are required more frequently to cooperate online, they actually share a common problem. In result, on some level create their own "problem solving" community (Heinze, Procter, 2006, p. 236). Why online tolerance is so necessary? "Social media platforms have enabled people from anywhere in the world to express their views and discuss any issue of interest in online discussions/debates" (Mukherjee, Venkataraman, Liu, Meraz, 2013, p. 1680). Tolerance is very important concept in the field of communications. It is connected with critical thinking and exchange of rational arguments on an issue among participants that seek to achieve consensus, solution, understanding (Habermas, 1984). It is important for children in primary school to know how to be tolerant with others in Internet, because they spent much time there. They behave there without limits and restriction. Online communication shouldn't be an uncontrolled area where everyone could insult, threaten or torture others and this is a statement that students should know from an earlier age.

Methodology and Results

In current research were included 230 students from primary school. . The research is conducted through a questionnaire, which includes 20 questions and explores student's opinion in several areas: what do they really know about the concept of tolerance; are they tolerant online; are other children show tolerance in the virtual space; basic tools of communication on the Internet (emoticons, abbreviations, upper and lower case letters usage in text, i.e.) and their meaning; what is their reaction when they become offended or an object of a rude notion; when it's easier for them to communicate with their peers – online or in face-to-face conversation.

Most of children (62,4%) know the meaning of tolerance from their parents, and 31% - from their teachers (Figure 1). This shows that the basic pedagogical subjects (parents and teachers) are positive about their responsibilities to discuss such important themes with children as communicative tolerance and interaction with others. Very few children have pointed that they are informed about tolerance by Internet (4,8%) and TV (1,9%), which means that regarding these basic topics media don't have much influence.
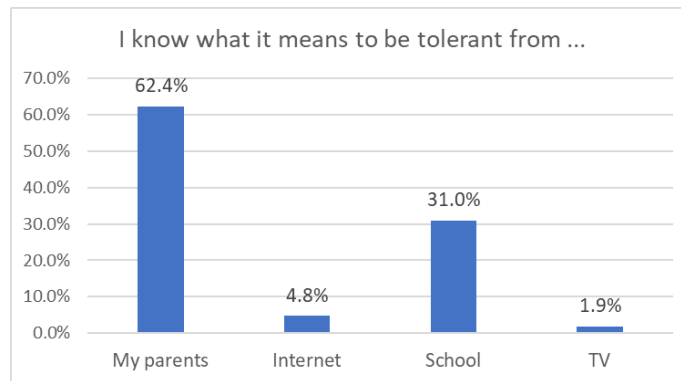
Figure 1. Sources of information about tolerance

Children, included in the research, show tolerance on the Internet (Figure 2):
- only if I know the person I'm talking to – 24%;
- only if he/she is my friend – 21,8%;
- always with no matter who is opposite – 18,2%;
- if he/she is tolerant of me too – 15,1%;
- it depends on the situation and on the person – 11,1%;
- sometimes – 8,9%;
- never – 0,4%;
- I am not tolerant with other people – 0,4%.

Most of the students set conditions for tolerance – they are tolerant to their friends, to people that they know, in suitable situation, probably when they are in good mood.
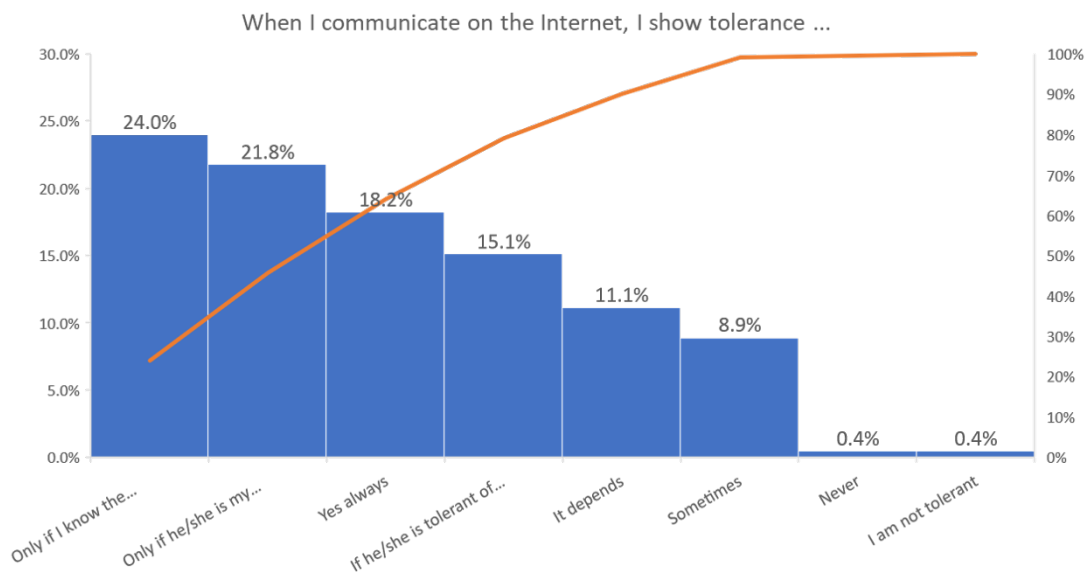
Figure 2. Conditions for showing tolerance on the Internet

Using words that insult others is the most indicative sign for not being tolerant to other people on the Internet (Figure 3). 17, 9% of questioned students think so. To criticize someone's opinion is another intolerant action – 13,2% of children have pointed that. It is very interesting that today's youth feels bad when they are not accepted or are excluded from the social group – as per 10,2% this is intolerant to them. 6,8% are afraid of not gathering enough "likes" for their post. Obviously,

priorities are quite different in 21ˢᵗ century. These results shows that every student has different idea for Internet communication tolerance.
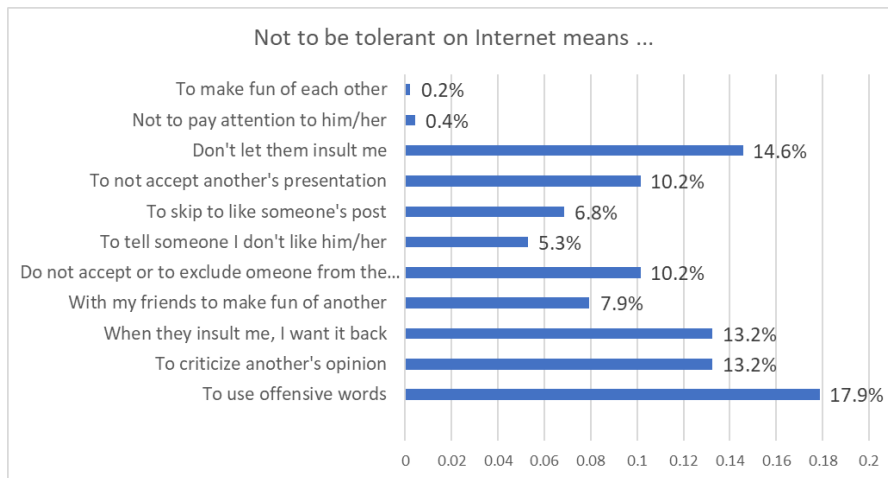

Figure 3. Intolerant behaviors on the Internet

Students in primary school are well informed about most used abbreviations in social media as OMG, LOL, CUL, NP, NB (Figure 4 & Figure 5). 83,4% of respondents know and use OMG and 73,9% - LOL. In the questionnaire were included other abbreviations as well, but they have no exact analogue in English, so to be translated and explained.
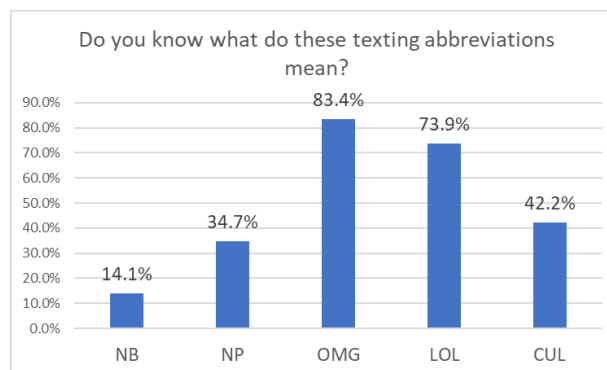
**Figure 4. Knowing the meaning of online texting abbreviations**
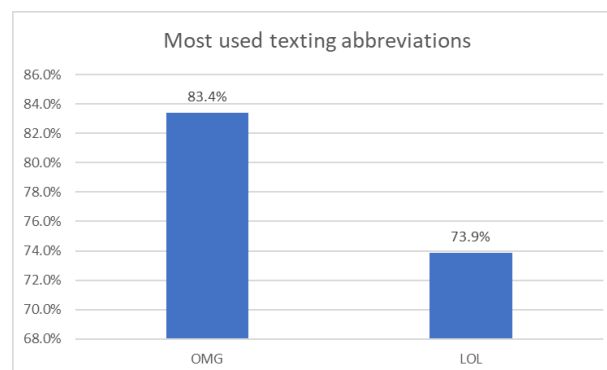
Figure 5. The most popular online texting abbreviations among respondents

Results on Figure 6 shows that children mostly use emoticons with positive message to the others (big smile, tears of joy, smile, tongue-out, love, wink and so on). Relatively much less is using of emoticons with negative meaning (angry and cry).
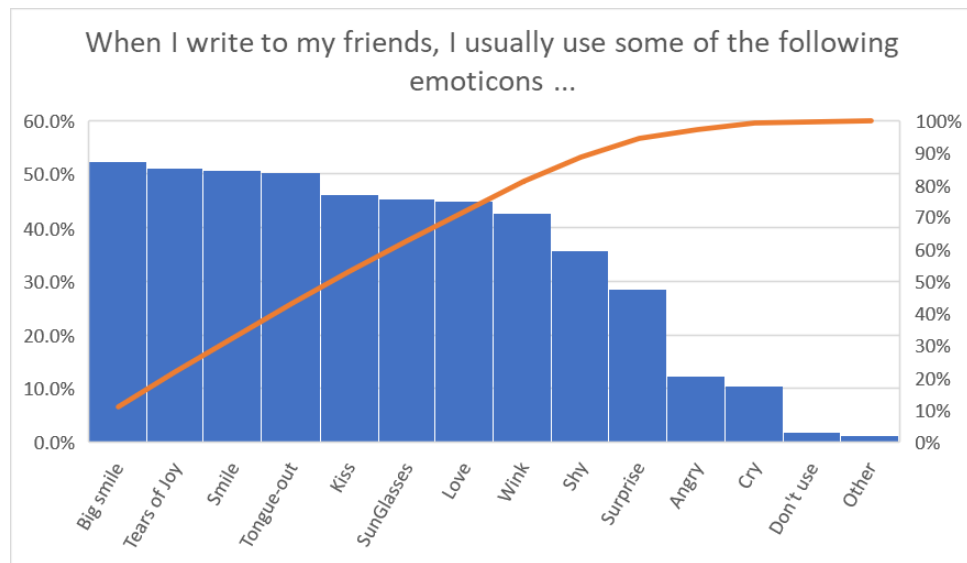

Figure 6. Most used emoticons
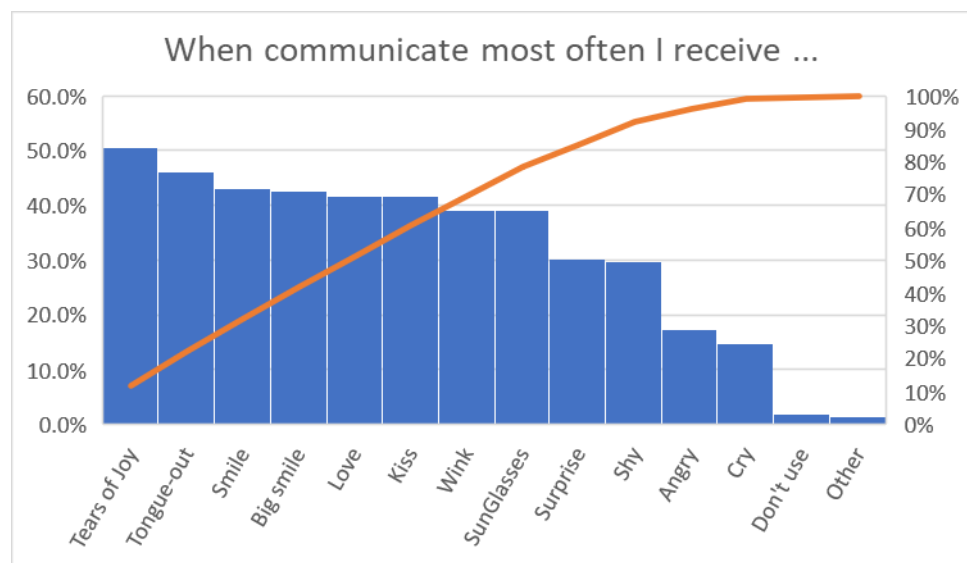
Figure 7. Most used emoticons in return

Except on sending more emoticons with a well-meaning message than negative, current research shows that students usually receive positive emoticons in return (Figure 7). This is indicative for presence of positive communication between student in primary school with no aggression and lack of tolerance. It is the same with pupils' favorite emoticons (Figure 8 & Figure 9).
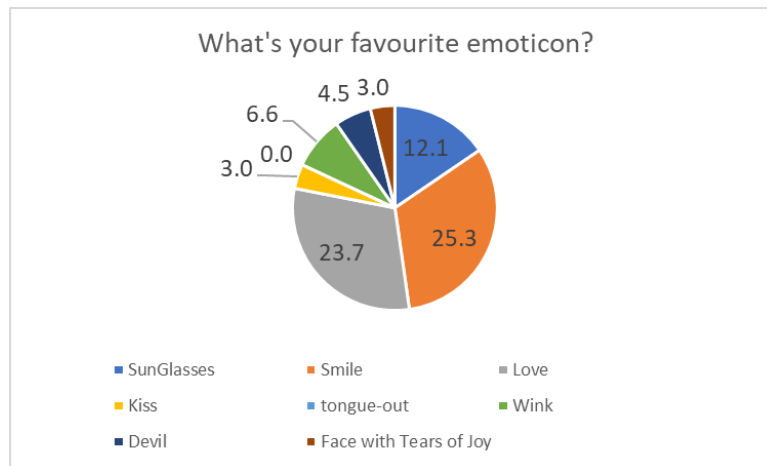
Figure 8. Pupil's favorite emoticons

Definitely, positive emoticons are used more often than negative, which is a hopeful fact for future online communication between students in primary school.
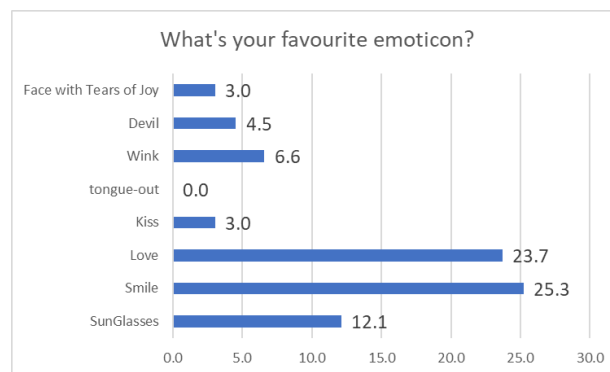
Figure 9. Pupil's favorite emoticons

Most of the pupils questioned (70,9%) are sure that they have never been insulted in the virtual space (Figure 10). Despite this satisfactory result, there are 27,4% that claim the opposite. It is a serious percent that should draw attention to the theme. This is a value that can be easily increased, that's why pedagogical subjects must be activated to prevent and to overcome this problem. Otherwise it could affect destructively the whole child's growth, provoking aggression, depression, alienation.
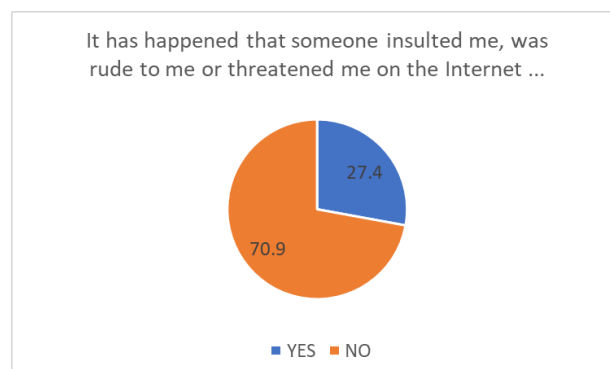

Figure 10. Have respondents been insulted on the Internet?

When have been insulted, respondents react in different ways, as follows in descending order (Figure 11):

- I share with a friend or an adult – 60,5%.
- I'm looking for a way to get it back – 21,1%.
- I go offline – 20,4%.
- I explain that this is not correct – 19,7%.
- I immediately insult him/her too – 17%;
- I'm looking for new friends – 13,6%.
- I don't know what to do – 9,5%;
- I am getting sad – 9,5%.
- It happens so often that I don't pay attention at all – 8,2%.
- I get scared – 6,8%.
- I am crying – 5,4%.
- Everyone does it – 4,8%.
- I'm threatening the abuser back – 0,7%.

It is quite sure that pupils are theoretically prepared how to deal with such an unpleasant situation, namely to seek the assistance of an adult – parent, teacher or another trusted person. More anxious are other results that show willing for immediate revenge, fear of being bullied, resignation to aggression, which is clearly everywhere.
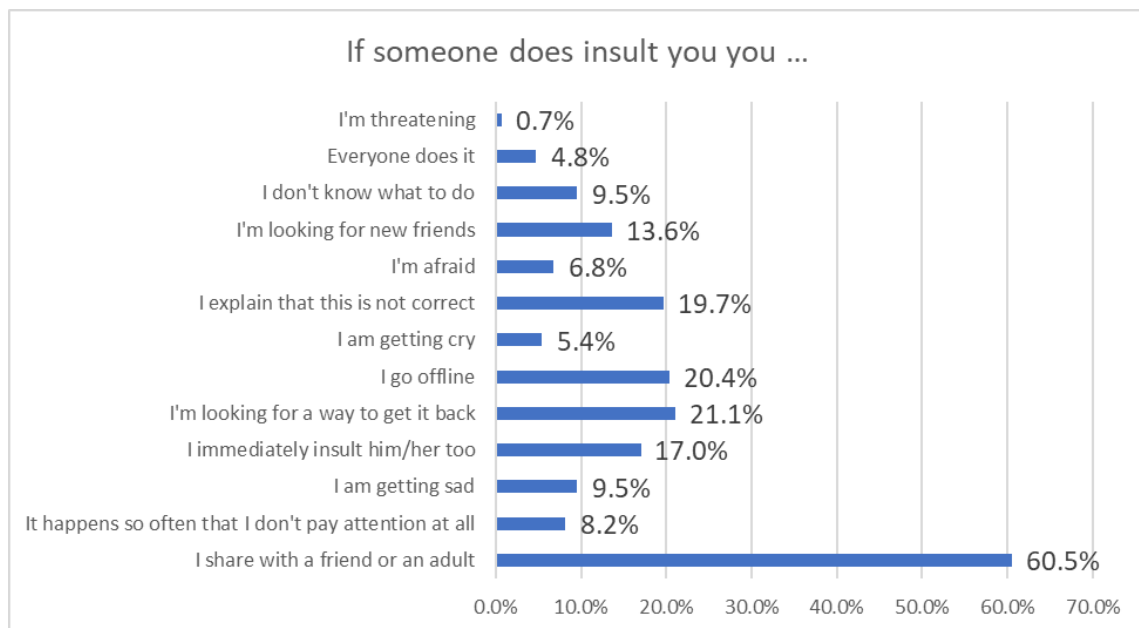
Figure 11. Actions in return of an insult received

Very few children point that there is possibility to have insulted someone on the Internet (Figure 12). 87% are positive that such a thing has never happened, but 10,8% confess that they were in the role of an e-abuser sometimes.
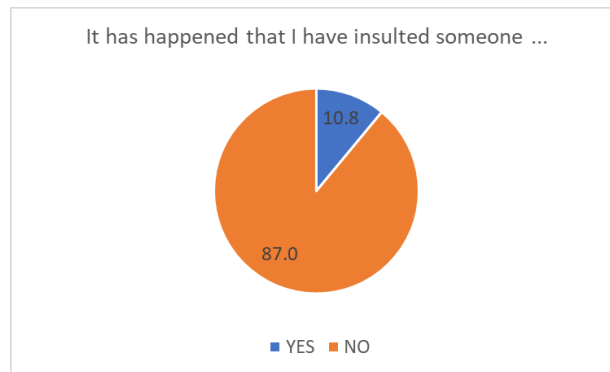
Figure 12. Have respondents insulted someone on the Internet?

When respondents behave bad with someone online they react in some of the ways, listed below (Figure 13):
- I'm looking for a way to apologize – 47,1%.
- I'm feeling uncomfortable – 23,1%.
- I get an insult back – 23,1%.
- I'm losing a friend – 20,2%.
- Nothing is happening – 18,3%.
- I don't pay attention – 14,4%.
- This is normal – 11,5%.
- I feel good – 11,5%.
- Everything is allowed on the Internet – 10,6%.

Most of the pupils feel bad and look for a way to fix the problem, especially if it affects a friend. Although there are opinions shared that are quite disturbing as "nothing is happening", "I don't pay attention", "this is normal", "I feel good" and "everything is allowed online". This is a sign for low tolerant culture and lack of skills for positive communications with others.
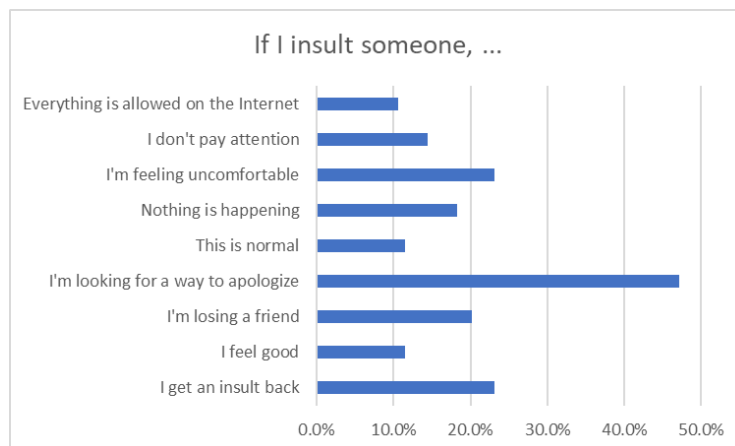

Figure 13. Actions when someone insults others

It is noteworthy that children studied don't live with illusion that Internet is a safe place. They know that bad things could happen there. And here is there opinion about the reasons which provoke that (Figure 14):
- Nobody knows you – 45,9%.
- No one is afraid of the opinion of others – 30,1%.

- More opportunities to express personal opinion – 30,1%.
- Nobody sees you – 27,3%.
- People don't know each other – 12,6%.
- Because people are sometimes very bad, rude – 6,6%.
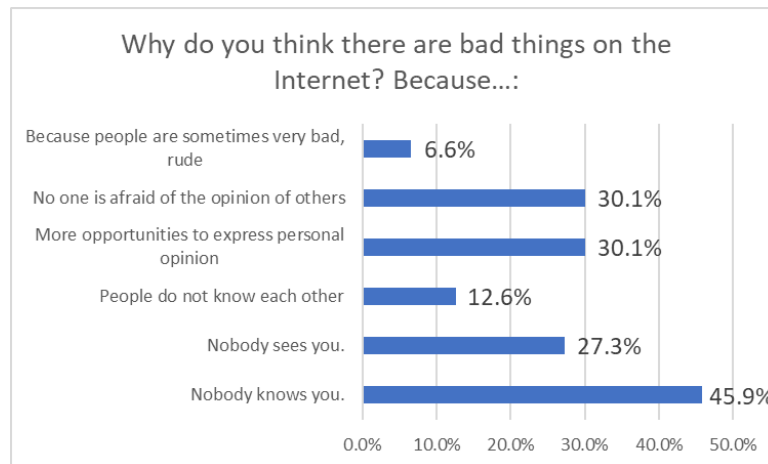
Figure 14. Reasons for Internet not to be a safe place for children

Sending messages at any time is a kind of e-violence. That's why pupils have been asked if they pay attention about hours, in which they send messages online. 57,8% of the respondents answer positively, but 23,4% give negative answers with the explanation that no one of their peers complies with the time (Figure 15).
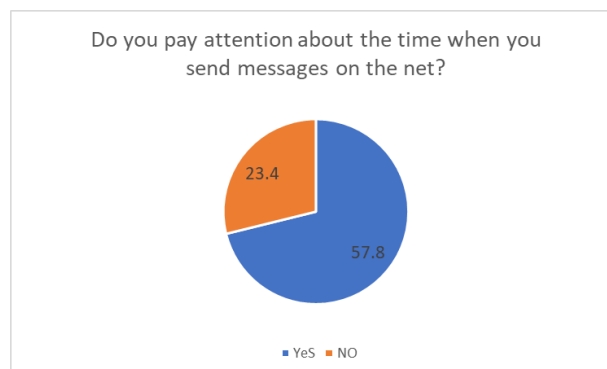
Figure 15. Showing tolerance about messages sending time

The older the child grows, the less the influence of his parents and teachers becomes at the expense of the influence of his peers. This is also evident in the answers to the last question from the survey, which is who the child's preferred people for are sharing personal information (Figure 16). Most of the children have marked "my friends" – 78,5%. Only 10% prefer to share their opinion on the Internet and 9,6% - in social groups. Apparently "face to face" communication is the preferred one for trusted connection with other people.
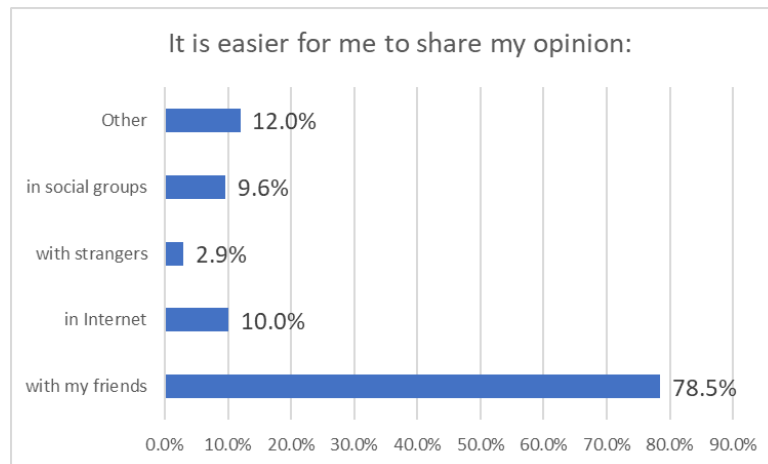
Figure 16. People that pupils share their opinion with

Conclusions

Online communication has different aspects that are object of scientific interest and research. Online communicative tolerance is a personal characteristic that could be educated from an earlier age. Current research shows quite positive results of pupils' intentions to behave appropriate in the virtual space. Most of the respondents know well what is expected from them and they can be a corrective for others' behavior. There are, however, some students that share a different point of view, as per which non-tolerance is usual for e-communication. This is because of different factors: guarantee of anonymity and impunity, variety of expression tools, instant response, space free of adults, lack of control and others. There is no doubt that parents and teachers are responsible for pupils' social skills, including Internet communication tolerance.

Some of the children studied demonstrate selective tolerance – their behavior depends on the people standing on the opposite. They are tolerant to their friends, but could be much rude to strangers. This is a sign for communicative immaturity that also should be developed and turned into acceptable style of communication with others.

Acknowledgements

References

Antun, F. (2013). The Meaning of "Tolerance", Which Is the Basis of Modern Civilization. *Journal of Levantine Studies,* Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 159-172.

Habermas, J. (1984). The theory of communicative action: Reason and rationalization of society. (T. McCarthy, Trans. Vol. 1). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hamburger, Y., Kingsbury, M., & Schneider, B. H. (2013). Friendship: An old concept with a new meaning? *Computers in Human Behavior,* volume 29, part 1, pp. 33-39.

Heinze, Al. & Procter, Ch. (2006). Online Communication and Information Technology Education. *Journal of Information Technology Education,* Volume 5, pp. 235-249.

Nordin, A. A. M. P. H. (2014). Online Communication Vs. Traditional Communication: A Quick Look Into The Preference in The Bruneian Community. *Thesis for: Professional Communication & The MediaAdvisor: Dr Francis Steen,* DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.4161.5208.

Lee, P. S. N., Leung, L., Lo, V., Xiong, Ch., Wu, T. (2011). Internet Communication Versus Face-to-face Interaction in Quality of Life. *Social Indicators Research,* volume 100, (3), pp. 375-389, DOI: 10.1007/s11205-010-9618-3.

Mukherjee, A., Venkataraman, V., Liu, B. & Meraz, Sh. (2013) Public Dialogue: Analysis of Tolerance in Online Discussions. *Proceedings of the 51st Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics,* pages 1680–1690, Sofia, Bulgaria.

Rachmayani, D. (2017). Internet for Children: a Review Study. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR),* volume 58, 3rd International Conference on Early Childhood Education (ICECE-16), pp. 141-146.

Subrahmanyam, K., Greenfield, P., Kraut, R., & Gross, E. (2001). The impact of computer usage on children's and adolescent development. *Applied Developmental Psychology,* volume 22, pp. 7-30.

Tajalli, F., Ardalan. E. (2010). Relation of Family Communication Patterns with Self-efficiency and Academic Adjustment. *Journal of Psychology,* volume 14 (1), pp. 62-78.
Tajalli, F., & Latifian. M. (2008). The effect of family communication patterns on mental health with mediation of emotional intelligence. *Journal of Family Research,* volume 4 (16), pp. 407- 422.

Tajalli, F. & Zarnaghash, M. (2017). Research Paper: Effect of Family Communication Patterns on Internet Addiction. *Practice in Clinical Psychology,* Volume 5, Number 3, pp. 159-166.

Thayer, St. E. & S. Ray (2006). Online Communication Preferences across Age, Gender, and Duration of Internet Use. *Cyber psychology & behavior,* Volume 9, Number 4, pp. 432-441.

Yan, Z. (2009). Limited knowledge and limited resources: Children's and adolescents' understanding of the internet. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology,* volume 30, pp. 103- 115.

Zotova, O. Y., & Zinchenko, Y. P. (2014). Parent notions of the internet information aimed at children. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences,* volume 146, pp. 61-67.

Contact email: Papancheva@dgklaz.net