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Digitalno nasilje među mladima - slučaj Vrbas

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Apstrakt: Razvoj digitalne tehnologije i sve intenzivnije korišćenje interneta među mladima, doveli su do značajnog porasta onlajn nasilja, što predstavlja rastući društveni problem, sa ozbiljnim posledicama po mentalno zdravlje i bezbednost mladih. Ovo istraživanje kombinuje pregled relevantne literature sa kvantitativnom analizom podataka, prikupljenih anketiranjem učenika jedne gimnazije. Cilj rada je identifikacija ključnih faktora koji doprinose digitalnom nasilju, analiza njegovih posledica, kao i formulisanje preporuka za prevenciju i suzbijanje ovog fenomena. Rezultati pokazuju kritičan nedostatak digitalne pismenosti i svesti o bezbednosti na internetu među mladima, kao i potrebu za sistemskim unapređenjem zakonodavnog okvira i tehničkih mehanizama zaštite. Istraživanje zaključuje da je za efikasno rešavanje problema digitalnog nasilja neophodan integrisani pristup koji podrazumeva aktivnu saradnju između mladih, njihovih porodica, obrazovnih institucija, regulatornih tela i društvenih mreža. Predložene su konkretne mere za unapređenje digitalne bezbednosti mladih, sa fokusom na prevenciju, edukaciju i razvoj institucionalnih mehanizama podrške.

Ključne reči: onlajn nasilje, internet, mladi, bezbednost

Digital Violence Among Young People - the Vrbas Case

Apstrakt: Development of digital technology and everything more intense use of internet among to the young brought are to a significant extent increase online violence, which stands for growing social problems with serious mental consequences health and security young people. This research combines reviewing relevant literature with quantitative by analysis data collected by survey students in one grammar school. Goal work is identification key contributing factors digital violence, analysis his/her consequence, as and formulation prevention recommendation and suppression this one phenomenon. Results show critical lack digital literacy and safety awareness on internet among young people, as and the need for systemic by improving legislative frame and technical mechanisms protection. Research concludes that it is for effective solving problems digital violence to be necessary an integrated approach that involves active cooperation between young people, their family, educational institutions, regulatory bodies and social network. The proposed are concrete measures for improvement of digital security young people, with focus on prevention, education and development institutional mechanisms support.

Keywords: Online Violence, Internet, Youth, Safety

1. Introduction

In the current digital time, the Internet is a key source of information and a main way of communication, but it also poses dangers, especially for young individuals, who are the biggest users of technology. The issue of young people's exposure to dangers online has become a global concern and needs a thorough approach. Research indicates that around one in three students faced some troubling experience on the Internet in the past year, while a range of students (from 13% to 51%, based on their behavior) put themselves or others at risk in different ways (Kuzmanović et al., 2019). The results of facing issues online can last a long time, impacting a person's mental, emotional and even physical health, particularly those affected by digital abuse: mental effects can include feelings of anxiety, discomfort, inadequacy, and anger; emotional effects can manifest as shame, diminished self esteem and loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed; physical effects can

be headaches, stomach pain, fatigue and insomnia (Žunić-Cicvarić & Kalajdžić, 2021). The goal of this paper is to explore the issue of cyber violence, which is characterized by using technology to cause, facilitate, or threaten harm to individuals, potentially leading to physical, sexual, psychological, or financial damage or distress.

This can also include taking advantage of someone's situation, traits, or weaknesses (Council of Europe, 2018). The most frequent kinds of cyberbullying are: posting or sharing disturbing, offensive, or threatening messages, images, or videos on others' profiles; recording and spreading sexual content; harassing phone calls; impersonating someone else; creating a social media profile in someone else's name; leaking someone's private information; making false claims or spreading rumors about others on social media, blogs; changing or stealing passwords; sending viruses; mocking in online chats and forums; leaving inappropriate comments on pictures and messages; and ignoring or excluding others, inciting hate. This paper intends to help understand the issue of online violence among youth by analyzing the views of high school students. The research includes a survey to showcase how often they face problems online, as well as an analysis of their views on safety in the digital world. Additionally, the paper is based on theoretical knowledge concerning issues in the online environment.

2. Research and Methods

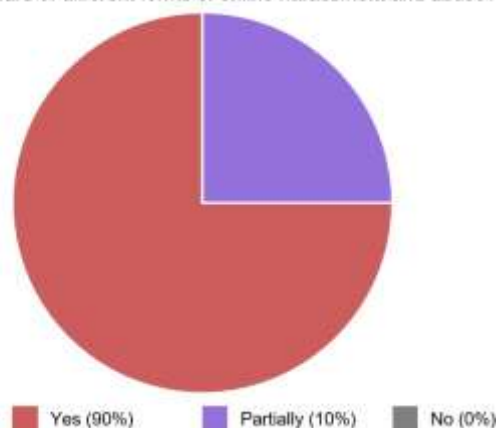
The paper using a mixed research method to study the causes, effects, and possible solutions for stopping online violence among young people. The main part is a survey of high school students. The survey included important topics related to how young people face issues on the Internet: views on online violence, how often it happens, reasons behind it, effects, protective measures, and prevention steps. The research took place in November 2024, with 21 students participating. The survey method used was paper and pencil (PAPI), which guarantees anonymity, confidentiality, and reliability of responses. The survey followed ethical guidelines, including informed consent from students, safeguarding privacy and ensuring anonymity and voluntary participation. This methodology allowed for a detailed assessment of online violence issues. The data gathered were analyzed using statistical techniques, with the results presented in tables and graphs later in the paper, alongside an interpretation focused on important findings and recommendations for future actions. The review of existing literature, national and international studies, and available statistics concerning young people's exposure to Internet issues is part of the secondary data analysis (Chlíbková et al.). The goal of this approach was to identify global trends and possible solutions for local implementation. Content analysis helped outline the framework for the primary research. The research aims to provide insights into the specific difficulties young people encounter online and to suggest ways to raise awareness, educate, and enhance current protection methods.

2.1. Awareness of Online Harassment

About knowing different types of online harassment and abuse: 90% of people said they were fully aware, while 10% said they were only partially aware. This shows that most respondents know a lot about online security problems but also points out the necessity for more education for the 10% who do not know all the dangers. Research indicates that even though online violence is increasingly acknowledged by students, there is still a part of the population that has not faced or grasped its full effects (Bogičević et al.).

Figure 1: Student's answer to question about awareness about online harassment.

Are you aware of different forms of online harassment and abuse?



Source: (Authors, 2024)

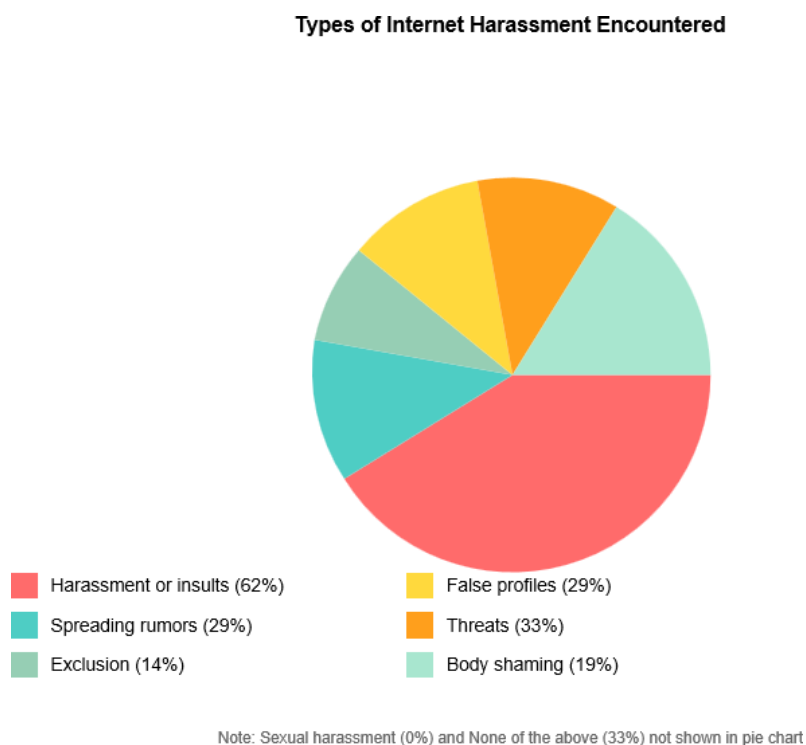
2.2. Personal Experiences with Online Bullying

The survey found that: 43% (9 people) had either seen or faced online bullying, while 57% (12 people) had not. Earlier studies show that online bullying and violence among college students can badly impact their mental and physical health, making it crucial to grasp these experiences in academic settings (Ćeriman et al.). Additionally, research indicates that online bullying occurs more often in younger groups, implying that high school students might face these problems more than university students do (Bogićević et al.).

2.3. Types of Online Violence Encountered

The survey found different types of online bullying that respondents faced: Harassment or insults: 62%, Threats or intimidation: 33%, Spreading rumors or gossip: 29%, Fake profiles or false representation: 29%, Body shaming or bullying about looks: 19%, Exclusion or being left out: 14%, Sexual bullying: 0%, No experiences noted: 33%. These results match those of a study by the Children of Europe on the Internet (Kuzmanovic et al., 2019), which showed that verbal abuse, especially insults and mean messages, is the most frequent type of online violence faced by students. Additionally, the victimization types reported in our survey reflect larger trends in research about online violence, such as cyberbullying and sharing harmful material (Ćeriman et al.), and stress the important role of parental awareness and oversight in stopping these behaviors (Bukvić et al.).

Figure 2: Which of the following types of internet harassment have you encountered?



Source: (Authors, 2024)

2.4. Perceived Reasons for Online Bullying

Based on what respondents in different surveys said, the key reasons for online bullying included: Wanting power and control over others (67%) (Ćeriman et al.), Not having empathy or understanding the outcomes (57%) (Bogićević et al.), Seeking entertainment (57%), Having biases and discrimination (48%), Experiencing personal insecurity or frustration (43%), Facing personal conflicts and misunderstandings (38%), Following group pressure and peer influence (33%), and Other reasons (10%) (Bogićević et al.).

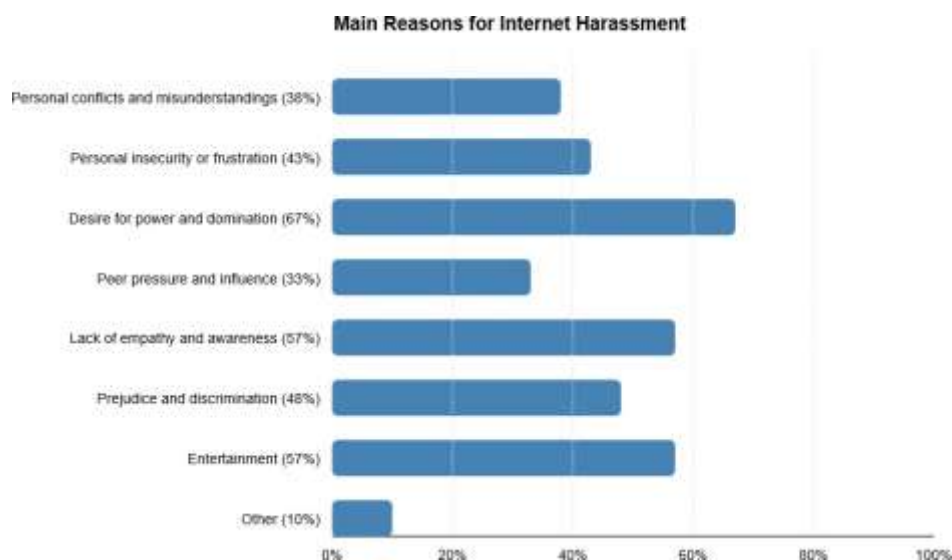
2.5. Impact on Mental Health

The different surveys revealed that many recognize the mental health effects of online bullying: 86% think online bullying greatly affects victims' mental health, 9% disagree, and 5% are unsure. These results match findings from the American Psychological Association (APA) and UNICEF, which show that online violence raises stress levels and can result in feelings of insecurity, embarrassment, depression, and anxiety, leading to lasting emotional effects (Ćeriman et al.). Additionally, a study found that about 5% of university students face online violence, with certain types of victimization like illegal photography and online bullying increasing psychological distress (Chlíbková et al.).

2.6. Contributing Factors to Online Violence

Students responded which reasons are dominant: personal conflicts and misunderstandings are 38%, personal insecurity and frustration 43%, desire for power and domination 67%, peer pressure and influence 33%, lack of empathy and awareness 57%, prejudice and discrimination 48%, entertainment 57% and other 10%. Main reasons found in other surveys is to cause online bullying: Not knowing the results (62%) (Ćeriman et al.), Being anonymous on the internet (48%) (Ćeriman et al.), Not enough education (43%), Pressure from friends or groups (38%), Unfair social situations or power differences (33%) (Ćeriman et al.), Weak enforcement of laws (24%), Poor support for victims (14%), Other reasons (14%). Authors have found their results are like other surveys.

Figure 3: Main reasons for internet harassment



Source: (Authors, 2024)

2.7. Legal Awareness and Response Mechanisms

About legal awareness: 67% know all legal actions for online harassment, while 33% know some. No one said they were completely unaware. Yet, just 29% of people have used the reporting methods for online violence, even though 43% have faced or seen it. This shows a need for better and easier ways to report.

2.8. Platform Responsibility and Legal Measures

Social media platforms implement various technical and administrative measures to reduce the presence of digital violence. According to Gorwa, Binns, and Katzenbach (2020), platforms use algorithmic methods to detect and remove offensive content. On a national level, the report by the Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Postal Services (RATEL, 2020) indicates that Serbia is continuously improving content moderation protocols, particularly in the context of protecting children and adolescents.

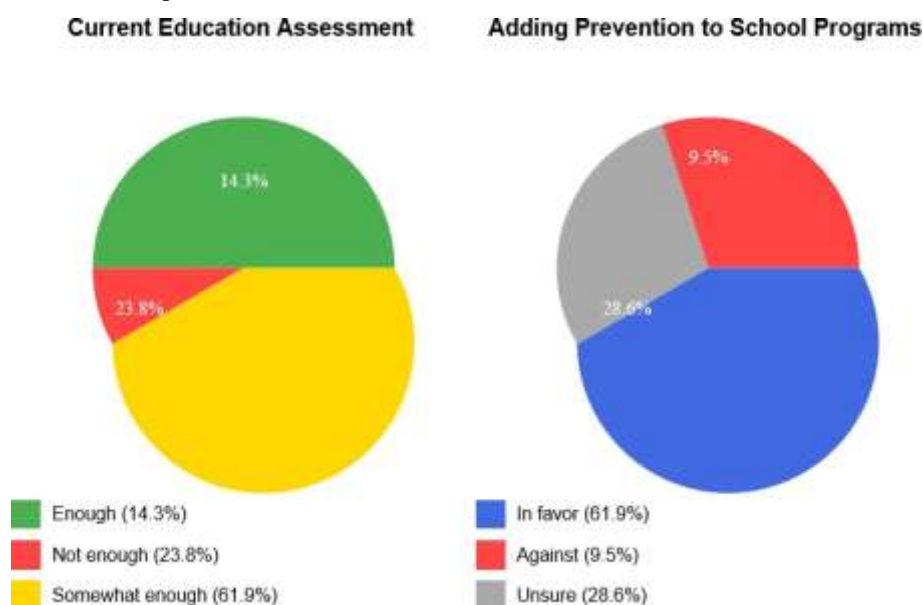
Despite this, eighty-one percent think that online platforms need to do more to stop online bullying. Additionally, eighty-one percent view the existing laws against online bullying as inadequate. Also, ninety percent feel that people who participate in online bullying should face legal punishment.

2.9. Educational Aspects

About formal education on online violence: 14.3% think current education is enough, 23.8% think it not enough, 61.9% think it somewhat enough.

As for adding it to school programs: 61.9% favor adding online bullying prevention to school programs, 9.5% against it, 28.6% unsure. Also, student participation in educational programs has a positive link with their behavior results, suggesting that better integration into the curriculum might improve positive behaviors in teenagers (Bogićević et al.). Education on the risks and protective measures on the internet is a key element in the prevention of digital violence. O’Keeffe and Clarke- Pearson (2011) emphasize the importance of educational programs that empower young people in using the internet, while Kowalski and Limber (2009) show that school-based interventions can reduce the frequency of bullying behavior. On a local level, the Strategy for the Advancement of Digital Literacy in Education (Vlada Republike Srbije, 2020) defines specific measures and programs aimed at increasing awareness of internet safety, directly contributing to the prevention of online violence.

Figure 4: Educational aspects



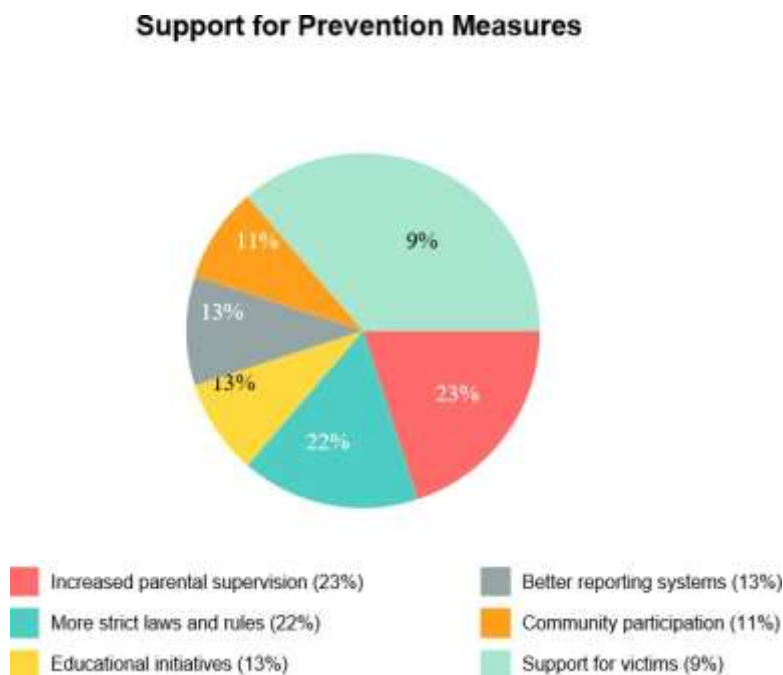
Source: (Authors, 2024)

2.10. Recommended Prevention Strategies

The prevention measures that receive the most support is: Increased parental supervision (23%), More strict laws and rules (22%), Educational initiatives and awareness efforts (13%), Better reporting systems on social media (13%), Community participation and aid (11%), Support for victims through counseling (9%). Preventive strategies, which include comprehensive school programs and legal interventions, have a significant impact on reducing the number of digital violence cases. A meta- analysis by Ttofi and Farrington (2011) confirms that school programs incorporating student and teacher education, social skills development, and strict rules on unacceptable behavior significantly reduce the prevalence of bullying. These programs are particularly effective when they are part of a broader strategy that involves parents, schools, and the local community.

Local data from the RATEL report (2021) further confirm that improving moderation systems and preventive mechanisms has a positive impact on reducing incidents in the digital environment, highlighting the importance of combining education with technological protection measures.

Figure 5: Recommended prevention strategies



Source: (Authors, 2024)

2.11. Victim Support Strategies

Support for victims of online violence encompasses various aspects, ranging from emotional assistance to concrete interventions in crisis situations. Smith et al. (2008) and Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2015) highlight the significant positive impact of counseling programs on victims' recovery. Suggested approaches for aiding victims include: Providing emotional support (21%), Encouraging positive self esteem and self-care practices (21%), Promoting offline activities and social interactions (19%), Offering education on privacy and online safety (15%), Connecting with professional assistance (15%), and other methods (9%).

3. Conclusion

Online violence is a big and serious issue in society, especially for young people. Studies show that young individuals face many types of online bullying, including harassment, threats, and insults, as well as the spreading of rumors. A major factor in the growth of this problem is the lack of understanding of its consequences and the anonymity the internet provides. While young people know about the risks and harmful effects of online violence, they often do not have enough knowledge or tools to handle bullying and to protect themselves and others (Bogićević et al.). The issue of online violence is complex and solving it requires cooperation from all parts of society (students), families, schools, lawmakers, authorities, and social media platforms. Parents are crucial in preventing online violence by actively engaging in their children's online activities. They should guide their kids on how to use the internet safely and recognize potential dangers online (Bogićević et al.). Their involvement is also essential when children are victims of bullying, as they need to provide emotional support. Family education about digital violence and how to respond is vital for helping young members stay safe online (so they do not become victims or bullies). Schools should also introduce internet safety programs that prevent and respond to digital violence and inform students about their rights on digital platforms. It is important to enhance the educational role of the school, where changes in the structure and content of curricular and extracurricular activities could improve student relationships, encourage the development of their social skills and prosocial behavior, and contribute to creating a positive school climate. (Jevtić & Milošević, 2022). Education should not be just for students, but also for teachers and parents, so they can identify signs of bullying and provide the right support. A useful step for prevention is creating peer groups where young people can launch awareness campaigns on online safety, sharing knowledge with their classmates. These peer groups can also offer support for victims of online violence.

To establish a safe digital space, it is important to enhance the efforts of responsible institutions and existing laws in this field. Although there are some laws in place, they are not nearly enough to address the issue (Bogićević et al.). Actions should focus on protecting and supporting the victims of online violence while also working to identify and penalize the offenders. Social media platforms must also participate by implementing better safety measures and effective response strategies to online violence. For those targeted by online violence, it is crucial to provide clear information, resources, and contacts they can reach out to in cases of digital bullying, ensuring internet safety. Recommendations for young people experiencing this issue include seeking help from trusted adults, educational institutions, the National Security Contact Center for Children on the Internet, social work centers, various protection organizations, social media platforms, and law enforcement. Online violence is a worldwide issue that demands coordinated and thorough efforts at all levels. Only with joint prevention, educational initiatives, better legal frameworks, and support for young people can a safer digital environment be achieved for everyone.

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