

Ukrainian Students' Analysis of Abuse Treatment by Parents: Retrospective and Perspective in Virtual and Real Environments

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Abstract

Given the prevalence of violence in Ukrainian families, measures to prevent parental abusive treatment against children are urgent. It is important to study today's youth awareness about violence within families in order to enhance a culture of engagement with spouses and children in future. The aim of the study is to examine students' reflective experiences and their attitudes towards forms, frequency, causes and effects of parental abusive treatment. During the research the following methods were used step-by-step: theoretical analyses of scientific resources, anonymous questionnaire, quantitative and correlation analyses. According to result of survey 98 students who were interviewed, none of them fell victim of sexual abuse in their families. However, more than a half (51%) of the students surveyed experienced some forms of parental physical punishment. All the interviewed students encountered psychological cases of parental violence. The most prevalent forms of parental abuse among the interviewees are criticism, negative comparison, emotional detachment, arrogance, intimidation, blackmail and humiliation. The most prevalent consequences of parental abuse among students are anxiety, low self-esteem, insecurity, impatience, suspiciousness, constraint in communication. Students agree that budget limitations, forced labor, criticism, spanking, emotional detachment, ignoring type of communication, reproach, blackmail are acceptable methods of punishment to use when raising their own children. These results clearly demonstrate the problem of the impact of parental abuse on children and its consequences in the future.

A virtual dimension of the actualized problem is considered, namely:

- virtualization of aggression and cruelty in the postmodern world.
- the level of determining the factor of cruelty from the space of virtual culture.
- the mirror image of everyday cruelty in the virtual environment;
- the phenomenon of video games as a source and context of representation of the factor of cruelty in behavioral realities;
- cybercrime as a virtualized result of cruelty in family and everyday realities.
- futurological perspectives of virtualization of cruelty in communicative culture in general and in family relations in particular.

The postmodern world is fundamentally different from the traditions and culture of the past, primarily due to the development

of computer technologies and the virtualization of life in general. So, for example, virtual communities have become, in a certain way, another world, a second reality of life in general. And certain behavioral factors, in particular cruelty in the private environment, became a projection of such a phenomenon as cybercrime. Video games are a unique modern phenomenon, which multipolarly absorb all facets of human potential, communicative tendencies, behavioral and characterological factors, from the warmth of interpersonal relationships to the extreme degree of cruelty.

Keywords:

virtual dimension, virtual culture, child abuse by parents, family violence, physical punishment, psychological violence, sexual violence.

1. Introduction

Understanding the virtual vector of the representation of the factor of cruelty, which is transferred from the private space to the world of computer technologies, it can be stated that virtual culture has led to the formation of a new generation of people who identify themselves with other people, who "coexist" in two spaces, the social one and virtual one, at the same time, but mostly prefer to work and rest, communicate and have fun in the network space. Moreover, these people cannot always be classified as oppressed minorities or groups ignored by society. Virtual culture gradually forms a special type of person, the formation and development of which is largely determined by the system of network interactions.

The problem of abuse and violence against children is urgent and poorly investigated in today's society. Firstly, statistics collection vehicle on the matter of child abuse is almost missing. Most of the cases of psychological and physical abuse stay

unregistered. According to the investigations by UNICEF on "Responsibility of the system for detection, registration and report about cases of child abuse", only 15% of the professionals in child protection (teachers, medical and social workers, police officers etc.) have special knowledge in child abuse.

Secondly, there are legal and cultural differences in defining child abuse and neglect in different countries. Specifically, much of the information about child abuse stays private for many reasons: child's fear, parents' silence, social tolerance to abuse. Society demonstrates indecision as to the means of abuse control in families. Children are often considered as parents' property, but not the personalities, who have the right for protection. Abuse by significant people against a child is a reason of many psychological problems, which can influence different spheres of person's life in adulthood.

All mentioned above is urgent for Ukrainian families, where violence and child abuse by parents take place. The fact that parents do not consider some forms of abuse as such, thinking that abuse is in the firstplace physical punishment, worsens the problem. Frequently adults do not even realize that disciplinary methods and means acceptable by them may have short-term consequences as well as long-term ones. For that reason, we consider the events directed at forestalling child abuse by parents as urgent. Study of today's youth awareness of the problems of family abuse in order to increase the culture of cooperation with spouse and children is highly important.

2. The Problem of Research and Research Focus

The problem of domestic violence is in the focus of attention of many domestic and foreign scholars. Ukrainian psychologists T. Zhuravleva, T. Safonova, E. Tsymbal (2001, 2007) don't differentiate the terms "violence" and "abuse". They consider them synonymous and define the notions of abuse and neglect of the basic needs of the child as any actions or inaction by parents, people who substitute them or other adults, that result in damage to health and well-being of a child and (or) creates conditions that hinder his optimal physical or mental development, infringes upon his rights and freedom. The scholars mentioned above distinguish four forms of abuse: psychological,

physical, sexual, economical (neglect of needs of the child).

O. Besedina (2013), N. Koval (2015) and others believe that the concept of "abuse" is quite broad, and physical and mental violence is one of its components. N. Zinovyeva and N. Mikhailova (2003) define the concept "abuse" as the actions that inflict psychological trauma on the child.

There are a lot of definitions of child abuse and neglect (CAN) in foreign scientific literature. C.H. Kempe et al. (1962) was the first to define violence as child abuse, i.e. infliction of serious physical harm on him by a parent or guardian, which often entailed disability and / or death.

D. Gil (1970) defined child abuse as actions, which prevent a child from reaching his physical and psychological potential. VJ. Fontana (1971) called child abuse an element of child mistreatment that includes emotional deprivation, neglect and poor nutrition.

B. Bonner (1995) gives a definition to the concept "physical abuse", differentiating it from the concepts of "neglect" and "psychological abuse". Physical abuse is any deliberate injury to a child under 18 years old by a parent or caregiver. Ruth Soonets (2000) views abuse as ways of inappropriate treatment of a child. She distinguishes violent actions against a child; abandonment of a child (that is, failure to meet their needs by their parents or caregivers); overprotectiveness. It classifies four types of violence: emotional, physical, psychological, sexual.

G. Craig (2000) thinks that child abuse consists in causing deliberate psychological and physical traumas to a child. She pays attention to the fact that sometimes it is hard to tell violence from punishment.

Hart and his colleagues state that psychologically child abuse by parents is the abuse of parental power over vulnerable children, which takes 6 main forms - rejection, emotional rejection, humiliation, intimidation, isolation and exploitation (Hart, Germain & Brassard, 1987).

The International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect has compared definitions of abuse in 58 countries and found some similarities in what is considered cruel (Bross DC et al, 2000). In 1999, the WHO Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention developed the following definition (Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention, 1999): Abuse or child abuse is all forms of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual assault, neglect, commercial

or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to health, survival, development or dignity of a child in the context of relationship responsibility, trust or authority”.

E. Fyrsovade fines abuse as a form of relationship between an adult and a child, aimed at maintaining power, control and / or instilling a sense of fear, where the following is permissible:

- deliberate (intentional) use of physical force and power,
- coercive influence, oppression,
- an action that is offensive, illegal, willful, real or in the form of a threat, the result (or a high degree of probability) of which is: bodily injury, death, psychological trauma, developmental disabilities or various kinds of damage, sexual harm and suffering (Fyrsova, 2015).

Thus, violence can be abuse, but not all abuse is violence. Moreover, the results of both are the same. It is important to note that child abuse includes neglect, abandonment, emotional, psychological, physical and sexual abuse, etc. Thus, violence is a form of abuse.

As it has been already mentioned, poor, violent, and improper treatment of a child in a family is traumatic and negatively affects their development and health. Such treatment can be associated with both external factors and the characteristics of the parents and the child, it can be determined by some actions of an adult or, vice versa, their inaction (for example, failure to ensure safety) (Alekseeva & Novoselskyi, 2006).

Most of the psychologists note the consequences of abuse. Apart from posing a threat to health and life of a child, parents cause damage to his physical and mental health. The consequences of an act of violence can be negative experiences of a child: guilt, intimidation, resentment, fear etc. Recurring violence causes deep psychological suffering, stress, depression, constant feelings of fear, suicidal attempts, exacerbation of chronic diseases and the emergence of new ones. Thus, emotional abuse by parents affects the severity and treatment of PTSD symptoms in children and adolescents (Chris Hoeboer, Carljinde Roos, Gabrielle E. van Son, Philip Spinhoven, Bernet Elzinga (2021).

One of the negative consequences of domestic violence is a person's repetition of violent behavior in later adulthood in relation to their children. Studies have shown that people who experienced abuse by their parents in childhood have a higher risk to impose abuse against their own children (National Research

Council. Understanding child abuse and neglect. Washington, DC, National Academy of Sciences Press, 1993).

Violence in the cyberspace has been considered in connection with different dimensions, namely related to gender issues (Todd, 2017), social and political issues (Choucri & Goldsmith, 2012), cyberterrorism (Mott, 2016). However, the relation between parental abuse and behavior of children in social networks, as well as the factors causing violence that exist in cyberspace still need to be studied properly. The area which is now covered the most widely is the connection between video games and cruel attitude towards different social groups (Hartmann, 2014), including children.

The aim of the research: the study of reflective experience and mindset of students as to the forms, frequency, reasons and consequences of parental abuse; representation of a contextual manifestation of this problem in virtual environments.

3. Research Methodology

The participants of the parental abuse study were first – third year students of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University who study the following humanitarian majors: Psychology, Practical psychology, Philology (Ukrainian), Philology (English), Social pedagogy. The following methods were used gradually in the process of the research: analysis and integration of scientific data, anonymous questionnaires, quantitative, correlation and variance analysis.

In order to collect primary data, the authors questionnaire was used (Stoliarchuk, 2017), then methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis were applied, including correlation (Pearson's coefficient) and variance (Fisher's coefficient) analysis.

In the course of the research, we analyzed the survey data of 98 respondents aged 16 to 21, 86 of them (88%) were girls and 12 (12%) were boys. It was found that 57% of students live in a nuclear family, 18% - in a single-mother family, 3% of the respondents are brought up by father only, 7% presented their family as functionally incomplete (both parents are formally present, but in fact only one of them is engaged in upbringing). Also, 11% of students interact with their mother and stepfather, 2% are brought up by their father and stepmother, 1 student is brought up by their grandparents. As to the number of children among the respondents, small families predominate (56%),

single-child families cover 29% of the respondents, and 15% of students live in families with three or more children.

4. Results of Research and Discussion

As far as adolescence is sensitive for the formation and reflection by young people of marital and family attitudes, the questionnaire survey made it possible to concentrate the research focus on the local results of the family education of students. Based on the assumption that the distribution of family power can influence the attitude of parents to children, we found out the respondents' assessment of its type. It was found that in the families of the students surveyed, democratic relations prevail (45% of choices). 28% of the respondents mentioned that the power in their families is concentrated in the hands of the mother, 6% of students lived in a patriarchal family, and 21% of respondents believe that the distribution of power in the family of their parents is situational.

When defining the type of family upbringing, the majority of students (68%) accepted the practice of democracy of parents against themselves, which provides for a combination of control with support, approval, and justification of requirements. 8% of the respondents defined authoritarian style with the characteristic features of severity, tight control, distrust and lack of parental support as the leading style of family upbringing, 6% of the students defined liberal style, which means detachment of parents from them, lack of demands and love, as the dominating style. Second place in terms of prevalence (17%) takes fluctuating style, which is based on the situational manifestations of all styles. Permissive style, according to the respondents, hasn't been practiced by their parents.

When defining their current type of relationship with their parents, the majority of the respondents (74%) insists on mutual benevolence, 8% says that they are businesslike and 7% states they are separated from their parents.

Answering the questionnaire, the students assessed the frequency of cases of various forms of abuse by their parents. Response processing showed that more than half of the respondents faced physical punishment by their parents in childhood, 4% of the respondents faced it often (Table 1). It was also found that negative comparisons, unmotivated reproaches, blackmail, and emotional detachment were popular

psychological forms of parental abuse. A positive fact is that there is no victims of sexual violence among the surveyed students, there are rare cases of rejection of these students by their parents, oppression of initiative and the right of choice, as well as causing deliberate damage to things.

Table 1. The Frequency of Parental Abuse against Children

| Form of abuse | Frequency (%) (n=98) | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------|-------|
| | Never | Sometimes | Often |
| Physical punishment | 49 | 47 | 4 |
| Causing damage to goods intentionally | 88 | 11 | 1 |
| Sexual assault | 100 | - | - |
| Misuse in household chores | 54 | 36 | 10 |
| Emotional coldness | 63 | 25 | 12 |
| Intimidation | 53 | 37 | 10 |
| Mockery | 64 | 31 | 5 |
| Rejection | 71,5 | 21,5 | 7 |
| Disregard in communication | 59 | 36 | 5 |
| False allegations | 45 | 48 | 7 |
| Negative comparisons | 36 | 42 | 22 |
| Arrogance | 61 | 29 | 10 |
| Communicative restrictions | 65 | 28 | 7 |
| Suppression of initiative and the right to choose | 77 | 18 | 5 |
| Mistrust | 61 | 31 | 8 |
| Horrification | 61 | 29 | 10 |
| Unmotivated reproaches | 45 | 36 | 19 |
| Blackmail | 57 | 28 | 15 |

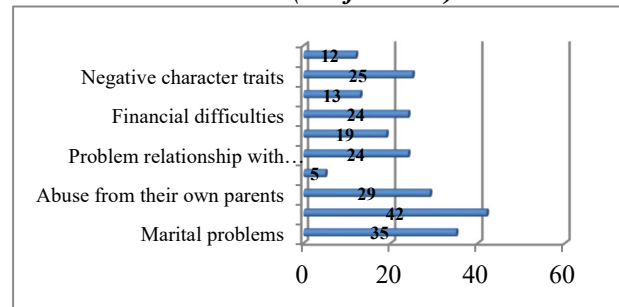
Taking into account the established fact of the prevalence of parental abuse against the students surveyed, it was important to find out how they assess the psychological consequences of this fact for themselves. The consequences most mentioned by students were frequent cases of anxiety, low self-esteem, self-doubt, indecision, shyness, and suspicion (Table 2).

Table 2. The Psychological Consequences of Parental Abuse against Children

| Form of manifestation | Frequency (n=98) (%) | | |
|--|----------------------|------------|--------|
| | Never | Some times | Of ten |
| Anxiety | 45 | 42 | 13 |
| Low self-esteem, insecurity | 44 | 43 | 13 |
| Indecision, shyness | 42 | 46 | 12 |
| Fear of teachers, bosses | 80 | 16 | 4 |
| Irritation | 55 | 34 | 11 |
| Unmotivated aggression | 69 | 22 | 9 |
| Pessimism | 70 | 24 | 6 |
| Mistrustfulness, distrust of others | 59 | 32 | 9 |
| Suspicion | 67 | 21 | 12 |
| Emotional restraint, indifference | 65 | 28 | 7 |
| Excessive compliance | 59 | 34 | 7 |
| Unsociability, constraint in communication | 74 | 17 | 9 |

Students consider problems at work, difficulties in relations with a spouse and close ones, as well as their own childhood experience of parental aggressive attitude towards them as the dominant causes of parental abuse (Fig. 1). Negative traits of their parents' character (anxiety, arrogance, peremptoriness, etc.), financial difficulties, health problems and incorrect educational attitudes are among the reasons for cruelty that are frequently mentioned by respondents.

Figure 1. The Reasons of Parental Abuse against Children (% of Choice)



Against the background of sufficient awareness by the respondents of the causes, manifestations and consequences of the problem of parental abuse, it was important to find out what conclusions were drawn by students to prevent such an attitude towards their own children. This question was raised during the questioning in the definition of acceptable methods of punishment that respondents consider possible to use in relation to their own children.

Topchart of acceptable forms of punishment are material restrictions, forced labor and criticism (Table 3). One student considers it possible to beat their child, and 18% of the respondents are inclined in the future to use a light force impact (kick, slap, slap on the head). In fact, all the forms of punishment provided in the questionnaire, which are, in fact, manifestations of violence against children, were selected by the respondents as promisingly possible, except for intimidation.

Table 3. Rating of Acceptable Forms of Punishment

| Form of punishment | Frequency (%) | Position in the rating |
|--|---------------|------------------------|
| Physical punishment (beating) | 1 | 14 |
| Light force impact (kick, slap, smack, slap on the head) | 18 | 4 |
| Destruction of irrelevant child's belongings | 4 | 11 |
| Forced labor | 39 | 2 |
| Emotional detachment | 17 | 5 |
| Criticism | 22 | 3 |
| Mockery | 2 | 13 |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----|----|
| Rejection | 5 | 10 |
| Disregard in communication | 13 | 6 |
| Material restrictions | 53 | 1 |
| Negative comparisons | 7 | 9 |
| Arrogance | 3 | 12 |
| Communicative restrictions | 13 | 6 |
| Rejection of the right to choose | 2 | 13 |
| Distrust | 1 | 14 |
| Intimidation | 0 | - |
| Reproaches | 10 | 7 |
| Blackmail | 9 | 8 |

The use of correlation analysis elicits direct links between physical punishment and psychological forms of parental abuse of children. In particular, a direct correlation was found between physical punishment and humiliation ($r=0.455^{**}$), rejection ($r=0.254^*$), negative comparison ($r=0.407^{**}$), arrogance ($r=0.331^{**}$), intimidation ($r=0.305^{**}$), reproaches ($r=0.252^*$) and blackmail ($r=0.422^{**}$). Direct links have also been recorded between almost all psychological forms of parental abuse with children. For instance, emotional detachment correlates with humiliation ($r=0.424^{**}$), mockery ($r=0.505^{**}$), rejection ($r=0.353^{**}$), disregard ($r=0.514^{**}$), false allegations ($r=0.390^{**}$), arrogance ($r=0.295^*$), oppression ($r=0.375^{**}$), distrust ($r=0.372^{**}$), intimidation ($r=0.269^{**}$), reproaches ($r=0.444^{**}$) and blackmail ($r=0.393^{**}$). Against this background, the established direct connection between practice of physical punishment by parents in relation to students and their current relationships – conflict ($r=0.298^{**}$) and detached ($r=0.270^{**}$) looks logical. A direct correlation was also found between the frequent use of accusations ($r=0.209^*$) and distrust ($r=0.204^*$) of parents in large families.

It has been found that respondents who faced the emotional coldness of their parents in childhood may, intimidate ($r=0.237^*$) and ridicule ($r=0.232^*$) their children in the future. The revealed stable direct connection between the conscious attitude to the use of light force in relation to their children and the experience of using physical punishment by parents ($r=0.289^{**}$), as well as negative comparisons ($r=0.259^{**}$) regarding the respondents, is also alarming.

The use of analysis of variance made it possible to clarify the significance of various forms of parental abuse for the subsequent events of the personality problems of their children. It has been established that the most frequent negative consequence of such a parental attitude is anxiety as a personality trait of students. An increased level of anxiety in them has become entrenched and manifests itself as a result of such forms of systemic cases of parental abuse: emotional detachment ($F=5.866$ at $p=0.004$), mockery ($F=6.236$, $p=0.003$), false allegations ($F=5.127$, $p=0.008$), negative comparisons ($F=6.542$, $p=0.002$), arrogance ($F=6.632$, $p=0.002$), unmotivated communication restrictions ($F=6.869$, $p=0.002$), distrust ($F=8.606$, $p=0.000$), intimidation ($F=11.956$, $p=0.000$), reproaches ($F=8.136$, $p=0.001$), blackmail ($F=11.244$, $p=0.000$).

Analysis of variance also showed that the problem of parental abuse against children has a pronounced dynamics between generations. For instance, one's own negative experience of interacting with parents became the reason for the subsequent use of physical punishment ($F=6.216$, $p=0.003$), deliberate damage to children's things ($F=8.435$, $p=0.000$), their humiliation ($F=3.915$, $p=0.023$), false allegations ($F=4.604$, $p=0.012$), arrogance ($F=3.328$, $p=0.040$), emotional detachment ($F=6.121$, $p=0.003$), reproaches ($F=6.291$, $p=0.003$) and blackmail ($F=8.732$, $p=0.000$).

Taking into account the fact that the mental life of today's youth actively unfolds in the virtual world as well, it seemed important to find out to what extent the problem of parents' cruel attitude towards children is reflected in the virtual dimension. For this purpose, we included several relevant questions in the student survey. In particular, the question was formulated whether the virtual world provokes cruelty in parent-child interaction. The points of view of the respondents we interviewed were divided, which is shown in fig. 2.

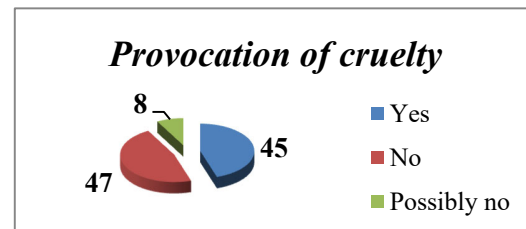


Figure 2. Provocation of cruelty by the virtual world (in % of choices)

Respondents who recognized the virtual world as a predictor of parental cruelty towards children argue that it is provoked by scenes of violence posted on the Internet. Another group of students believes that cruelty is caused by the circumstances of the real life of the family, and the virtual world is not involved in this. And the interviewees, who chose only the probability of its influence on manifestations of cruel treatment of parents towards children, specified that such a situation arises if the individual is prone to violence.

The next question helped to find out whether the virtual space of the individual reflects the cruel treatment by parents (Fig. 3).

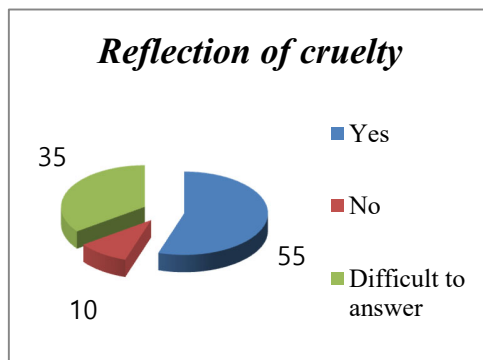


Figure 3. Reflection of parental cruelty in the virtual world (in % of choices)

Most of the surveyed students answered affirmatively, citing the excessive dependence of a social network user on the approval of followers as examples, since a person does not have this recognition and approval from parents. The tendency to hate or bully as a projection/substitute for violent behavior of parents was also mentioned. A tenth of the interviewees do not associate virtual and real family communication with psychological violence. They emphasize that in the process of growing up, a person can understand the negative impact of family violence and abandon its manifestations in their own behavior. More than a third of respondents could not decide on an answer.

The next question asked the students' opinion about whether virtual interaction provides a distraction from domestic violence for a child who is a victim of abusive parental treatment. Most of the interviewees admitted that the virtual environment can be

completely or at least partially the basis for distraction (Fig. 4).

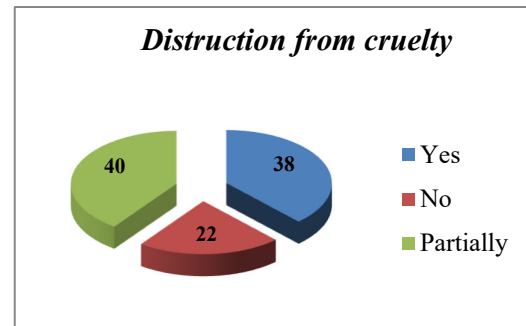
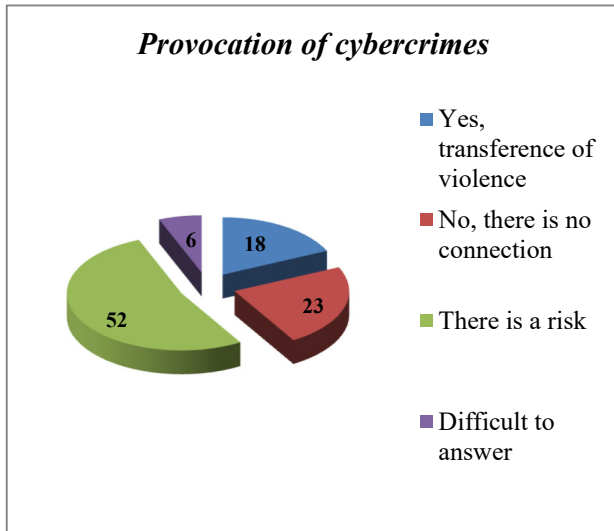


Figure 4. The virtual world as an environment for distraction from parental cruelty (in % of choices)

Students who chose the affirmative answer explained this by the fact that during virtual interaction, the child can choose a safe circle of communication and thus increase personal feeling of self-worth. A sample of students who insisted on the local effect of the virtual environment as a resource for distracting the child from the cruelty of the parents noted that this is possible if the victim's behavior does not extend to the child's communication in social networks and messengers. These students also mentioned the excessive dependence of the child on the parents and their attitude towards the child, which complicates the distraction procedure. The arguments of the respondents' negative answer were cases when parents strictly control the virtual interaction of the child.

Against the background of the spread of virtual risks and dangers, it was appropriate to find out the opinion of students regarding the probability of a connection between the cruel treatment of parents towards a child and the commission of cybercrimes. Some of the respondents confirmed the possibility that the cruel attitude of parents towards the child provokes the child to commit cybercrimes due to the transfer of violence from the real to the virtual plane (Fig. 5).

Figure 5. Cruel attitude of parents as a factor in the



commission of cybercrimes by a child (in % of choices)

Most of the respondents believe that there is a risk, but cybercrime can be provoked by a number of other reasons, for example, such characteristics of social networks as anonymity, limited ethical regulation, manipulativensness. About a fourth of the students did not see a direct connection between the cruel treatment of the parents towards the child and the child committing cybercrimes.

And finally, it was found out whether the increase of human involvement in the virtual environment in the future will affect the manifestations of parents' cruelty towards children.

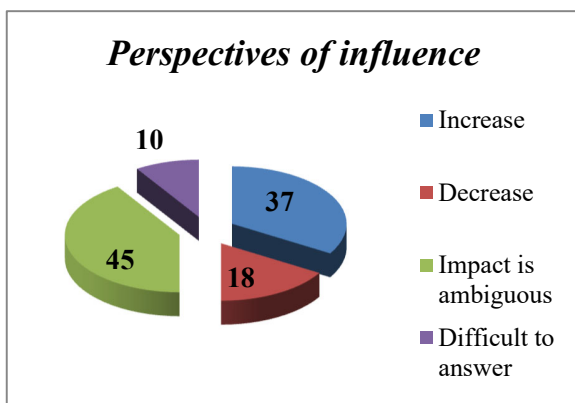


Figure 6. Perspectives of the influence of the virtual world on parental cruelty (in % of choices)

It should be noted that about 10% of the respondents could not predict this impact (Fig. 6). A significant part of the sample saw the risk of increased violence in the future due to the emotional distancing of parents and children. Optimistically, 18% of students assume that a reduction in cruelty is possible due to the fear of its publicity by children and subsequent public outcry and condemnation. The largest part of respondents, namely 45%, believe that the impact is ambiguous, because parents can hide manifestations of this cruelty in the dimension of virtual communication. Thus, 90% of the students we surveyed still saw the connection between the increase in human involvement in the virtual environment and the cruelty of parents towards children.

5. Conclusions

The study has confirmed the relevance of the problem of the prevalence of parental abuse towards children for the Ukrainian society. It was found that the interviewed students have childhood experience of systemic manifestation of psychological forms of abuse towards them by their parents, and also physical measures of educational influence were often used. The complex nature of parental abuse toward children is confirmed by the established direct correlations between physical punishment, domestic exploitation, and almost all forms of psychological abuse. It was found that in complete and functionally incomplete families, parents practice less abuse towards children. Most of all, the manifestations of such an attitude were recorded in families with a remarriage of parents.

Despite the high level of reflection by the interviewed students of the forms, causes and consequences of parental abuse towards children revealed in the survey, the respondents' tendency to use a number of punishment methods that express this violence towards their own children was recorded. The established direct correlation between the experience of using physical punishment by the parents of students and the willingness of the students themselves to use violence against their children in the future confirms the negative impact of family and parental abuse. Consequently, it confirms the need for systemic preventive and corrective work in the mainstream of solving this problem.

Considering the virtual vector of the representation of the factor of cruelty, which is transferred from the

private space to the world of computer technologies, it can be stated that virtual culture has led to the formation of a new generation of people who identify themselves with other people, who “coexist” in two spaces, the social one and virtual one, at the same time, but mostly prefer to work and rest, communicate and have fun in the network space. Moreover, these people cannot always be classified as oppressed minorities or groups ignored by society. Virtual culture gradually forms a special type of person, the formation and development of which is largely determined by the system of network interactions.

The particular danger is that virtual culture undoubtedly has a special influence on children and adolescents who have not yet developed their psyche and for whom the creation of virtual doubles and frequent role changes can further increase the loss of interest in real life. Nick becomes the embodiment of Third Space culture as a threat to national security (Matveev et al., 2021). Video games can also be a place both to hide and to conduct illegal activities, especially when we talk about games with the so-called system of microtransactions.

A teenager who experienced abuse in a private environment may “unleash” personal reaction into the virtual world at least through the nature of the nickname. And sometimes, it may cause rising interest in the cyber fraud and cybercrime. After all, cruelty breeds even greater cruelty.

Escaping from the real world (where the child encountered cruelty towards themselves) to the virtual one as well as fascination with a nickname (one or many of them) in a certain way embodies the phenomenon and state of loneliness. Loneliness is a spiritual and worldview “handwriting” of a certain person. Loneliness as a “handwriting” can be aesthetically calligraphic, flexible, harmonious and clear, or it can be the opposite: broken, crossed out, traumatic and morbid, which is impossible to read, perceive and understand. Nick and everything that is represented by it may embody the state of loneliness experienced by the owner of the nickname. So, nickname is a “scar” of cruelty and loneliness. And each person has one’s own (Aleksandrova et al., 2020). The Internet remains the most popular and reliable “refuge” of a large number of criminals who, thanks to its anonymity and limitlessness of the network, use it to carry out illegal activities. And crime is usually a projection of the lack of justice and a confrontation with cruelty.

IT technologies are one of the most incredible things that happened in the history of mankind. Today’s ability to access anything connected to the Internet is a luxury we cannot afford to lose. However, the more people use online systems, the more cyber threats there are. The factor of cruelty strengthens the tendencies of cyber fraud on the part of teenagers who are not yet able to adequately evaluate the results of their actions and “stop in time”.

Cyber hygiene is, first of all, a self-assessment of risks. That is why the issue of the ecology of communicative culture becomes especially relevant (Kryvyzyuk et al., 2021). Enthusiasm for cultural innovations (which are virtual communities) should not neglect the established traditional norms and rules of cultural communication. After all, it is the communicative component that unites the past, present and future.

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