

TEACHERS AND THEIR COMPETENCES IN THE PREVENTION OF PROBLEM AND RISKY BEHAVIOUR OF PUPILS

^aINGRID EMMEROVÁ, ^bTOMÁŠ JABLONSKÝ

*Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy and Psychology,
Hrabovská cesta 1, 034 01 Ružomberok, Slovakia
email: ^aingrid.emmerova@ku.sk, ^btomas.jablonsky@ku.sk*

This article is a partial output of the project KEGA 012KU-4/2022 Safety of School Environment – New Challenge for the Development of Selected competences of Primary and Secondary School Teachers

Abstract: The study deals with the competences and real possibilities of primary and secondary school teachers in the implementation of prevention of problem and risky behaviour of pupils. It also looks at the current state of problem and risky behaviour among primary and secondary school pupils. Effective school prevention, in which the teacher plays an important role, contributes significantly to the creation of a safe school environment.

Key words: problem and risky behaviour of pupils, prevention of behavioural problems, teacher as an implementer of prevention in school

Introduction

School, especially primary school, has a special status as it is attended by the entire population from the age of 6 years, with rare exceptions. It is therefore essential to implement prevention in school and to deal effectively with any manifestations of problem behaviour among pupils.

Skácelová (2003) points to the important role of the school in prevention, as it can ensure that preventive activities are included and pupils participate in them through its planned approach and influence on the pupil. In this context, she emphasises:

- the pupil spends a quarter to a third of a day at school, so the school greatly influences his/her lifestyle and the way he/she makes decisions,
- first serious problems in pupils' behaviour that require specialist care most often appear in primary school,
- the Department of Education has an extensive network of advisory services,
- pupils present first signs of problem behaviour usually before they get under the care of social curatorship,
- social and healthcare institutions provide assistance when intervention in the family is necessary and mostly when comprehensive preventive activities initiated by school institutions have not been sufficiently effective,
- school and school facilities are often the only environment in which positive peer influence can be systematically corrected, especially against disorganised individuals.

We can agree with Hanuliaková (2016), that the school environment provides opportunities to cultivate pupils' resilience and perseverance. For children and youth who have impoverished and stressful home environments, the school environment is very important, and school should provide them with a sense of accomplishment that is important to a child's self-esteem. The compensatory function of the school environment is important for every pupil; the school must provide a sense of belonging, a sense of achievement and a support for self-esteem. Similarly, Jedlička et al. (2004) state that for a minor or adolescent, socially disoriented and emotionally deprived from the family environment, the only hope is often the school, especially a personally mature and professionally motivated teacher, motivated to help his/her pupils.

Dulovics (2022a) defines the main tasks of the school in the field of prevention of online risky behaviour of pupils as follows (we add that they also apply to other types of risky behaviour of pupils): to encourage pupils to use the internet safely, to make pupils aware of the risks that can result from their reckless and ill-considered actions in virtual space, to guide pupils to respect the rules of respectful behaviour also in online communication,

to teach pupils how to react and act if they become a victim of cyberbullying or encounter other forms of virtual threat, to create a positive school climate and a space for open and friendly communication, to encourage pro-social behaviour and empathy in pupils - both in real and virtual space, to develop pupils' abilities to resolve interpersonal conflicts in an appropriate way, to develop pupils' critical thinking skills, to inform pupils about whom they can contact for help if they encounter something in virtual space that worries them.

1 The current state of pupils' problem behaviour and the necessity of school prevention

The issue of risky or problem behaviour of pupils (in terms of occurrence, forms, causes, as well as prevention and solution) has received theoretical and empirical attention for several years, in Slovakia and abroad (e.g. Emmerová, 2022; Niklová, Dulovics, Stehlíková, 2022; and others).

On the basis of partial intermediate results of our research conducted with primary and secondary school teachers within the KEGA project, we can conclude that teachers currently register the following very common manifestations of problem behaviour:

1. aggressive behaviour of pupils and bullying,
2. risky behaviour connected with online environment, especially cyberbullying,
3. use of legal drugs,
4. truancy.

These results correspond with the findings of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, which carried out a questionnaire survey in primary and secondary schools in 2021 in order to find out the real situation in terms of the occurrence of socio-pathological phenomena. The results show that smoking, truancy and bullying are the top three most common negative behaviours among pupils. Cyberbullying, violence among pupils and vandalism were also highly represented. The increase in aggressive behaviour of pupils is now becoming a serious problem, which is also confirmed by the results of other researches (Holguin-Alvarez et al., 2020; Patah et al. 2022). According to Winding, Aust and Andersen (2022), pupils' aggressive behaviour influences teachers' stress and burnout.

Experts, in connection with cyber environment and cyberbullying in particular, point out another risk, which is body shaming (e.g. Dulovics, 2022b, Židová, Kurincová, Turzák, 2022 and others). It arises as a negative consequence of the presented ideal of beauty, especially through social networks. Those who deviate from the ideal and the trend are humiliated, which can escalate to bullying or cyberbullying.

Poláková and Čonková (2021) point to the risks of the online environment as the possibility of drawing information from various sources, but often unverified, choosing entertainment programs (and not to educate oneself), the risk of becoming addicted, the excessive use of modern technology changes the personality, concentration is reduced, and the negative impact is also passivity in thinking and decision-making. According to Pasternáková (2019), social networks suppress the authority of parents and educators in a negative sense; uncontrolled and unrestricted use can lead to psychosomatic problems, it can cause problems with socialization, communication, obesity, addiction, health problems, etc. Vanková and Henželová (2022) include among the most significant negative phenomena the following: internet addiction, bullying, viewing sites with toxic content, defamatory speech and intolerance, false fraudulent messages and conspiracies, radicalisation, communication with unknown people via the internet, distribution of child pornography, sexting and cybergrooming.

A serious risk is that excessive use of the internet can develop into highly addictive behaviour (internet addiction). Excessive use of the internet may lead to complications in various areas of life. Excessive use of the internet is more prevalent among children and young people. The addictive risks of internet have been pointed out by e.g. Hupková (2022) or Niklová, Ševčík, Šimšřková (2022).

The anonymous environment of the internet also puts children and young people at risk of sexually risky behaviour. Sexting and sextortion pose real risks for both adolescents and teenagers, as confirmed by the results of several studies (Barrense-Dias, Chok, Stadelmann, Berchtold, Suris, 2022; Frankel, Bass, Patterson, Dai, Brown, 2018; Hollá, 2020; Mori, Park, Temple, Madigan, 2022; Wals, Tener, 2022; Wolak, Finkelhor, Walsh, Treitman, 2018).

2 The teacher and his/her competences in the prevention of risky and problem behaviour of pupils

The staffing of prevention in schools, i.e. the implementers of prevention, plays an important role. Prevention can be carried out by pedagogical and specialist school employees. We will focus on the roles and realistic possibilities of a school teaching staff in prevention. A current challenge in contemporary school practice is the readiness of the teaching staff to implement effective prevention as well as to address behavioural problems adequately.

Based on the intermediate results of our research within the KEGA project, we can conclude that teachers in practice are not adequately prepared for the implementation of prevention and resolution of behavioural problems with their pupils. In identifying their educational needs, they have shown interest in exactly those areas. According to Rovňanová (2015), as many as 73.8% of teachers feel subjective deficiencies and the need to improve by further education in the field of prevention and correction of risky behaviour. What is striking is that the situation has worsened based on the intermediate results of our current research.

According to Hasajová (2016), teachers support socio-moral development of pupils based on:

1. Acceptance of basic psycho-social values that are essential for human coexistence (this includes respect, support for mental and physical functioning, social order built on the basis of social coexistence and social cooperation).
2. Meeting pupils' needs for motivation and learning (pupils have choice and creative space in the learning process).
3. Ascertaining the state of discipline in the classroom, identifying various forms and severity of inappropriate behaviour. Systematic management of the prevention and correction of unwanted behaviour in the classroom.

The competency profile of a primary and lower secondary school teacher, and an upper secondary school teacher includes:

- to have basic practical experience in recognising socio-pathological manifestations of pupils' behaviour,
- to know the risks of socio-pathological phenomena and the possibilities of primary prevention and correction,
- to recognise socio-pathological manifestations of pupils' behaviour,
- purposefully includes primary prevention of socially pathological phenomena activities in the classroom,
- detects manifestations of socially pathological behaviour, actively cooperates with the pupil's legal representatives and professionals (colleagues) to eliminate them,
- evaluates the effectiveness of interventions (solutions) in eliminating socio-pathological phenomena in cooperation with the pupil's legal representatives.

Act No. 138/2019 on pedagogical and professional staff defines the career position of school coordinator in education and training. In current school practice in Slovakia, the weight of

responsibility for the implementation of prevention rests on their shoulders - they are the teachers who usually teach full-time. The coordinator in education and training coordinates the primary prevention of drug addictions and other socio-pathological phenomena, cross-cutting themes determined by the school education programme or informing and education through information and communication technologies. The coordinator should coordinate prevention activities in the school and should also cooperate with prevention, counselling and other professional institutions; the coordinator in education and training is certainly not the only implementer of prevention in a school.

From an educational point of view, the function of the class teacher is important, as he or she plays an important role in both preventing and dealing with problem or risky behaviour. The class teacher has many responsibilities and performs various functions or tasks, e.g. education, training, management, organisation, coordination and integration, activation, control, diagnosis, etc. The class teacher has the best insight into pupils' behaviour and their family environment and also the right conditions for preventive action on pupils during classroom lessons. He also cooperates with pupils' families and other teaching and professional staff in the school. The classroom lesson is intended for direct educational influence of the class teacher on the personality of the pupil. The aim of the classroom lesson is also to solve educational and educational problems and activities in the classroom, thus providing a space for preventive activities.

In the conditions of primary and secondary schools, the teacher can best and most often influence pupils within primary prevention in the classroom, in classes of ethics and religion, in classes of natural science and biology, history, and social studies. There is also space in other lessons where the curriculum thematically allows it. The preventive dimension of physical education is pointed out by Bartfk (2012), according to whom it contributes to the prevention of civilizational diseases, the development and formation of positive attitudes of pupils and at the same time it is a means of health and social prevention. He particularly emphasises the contribution of physical education and sports activities in the prevention of drug addiction, and of course there is a positive impact on other types of risky or problem behaviour as well.

In the prevention of problem behaviour of pupils, the teacher in the educational process, according to Lipnická (2022), strives to:

- to balance the educational influences in the family and at school, to help the pupil to compensate for the negative consequences of family education in the school environment (e.g. if the pupil does not have suitable conditions to prepare for school in the family environment, the teacher compensates for these negatives with other types of educational tasks at school and does not punish the pupil, if the pupil has a language deficit - the family uses a language code that is different to the language of instruction at school, the teacher chooses specific methods of eliminating the language deficit in the pupil's learning performance, etc.), coercion and disregard for the pupil's individual circumstances can trigger negative emotions and problem behaviour in the child in relation to both - the school and the teacher;
- always arouse the pupil's interest and alternate learning activities, so that the pupil does not perceive them as an obligation to learn and memorize what has been learned, but as an attractive path to further active cognition in the varied processing and expression of knowledge in the curriculum; knowing less is sometimes more than having a negative attitude towards the curriculum, the classroom and the teacher;
- being a natural authority for the pupil, an example of humanity, professionalism, honesty and fairness, at the same time being an emotionally balanced personality that is patient, calm, fair, but demanding on the child's behaviour and learning; being a model of a democratic and

humane personality for children is much better than lecturing them daily on the rules of behaviour;

- inform the pupils (verbally and visually) about the sequence of activities throughout the day, so that they can orient themselves in time and follow-up duties, reduce the learning load, alternate educational methods and forms of work, include frequent movement and relaxation activities, because a one-sided and prolonged load triggers unwanted reactions and behavioural manifestations that relieve the pupil's tension and stress;
- not to react at all costs to problematic behaviour of pupils, to rise above some minor manifestations of problem behaviour is sometimes better than constant warning, criticism, lecturing, which deprive the teacher of enthusiasm and optimism in the profession and the pupils of interest in working with such a teacher.

Preventive work with a group of pupils as a priority appears to be effective. The advantages of preventive work with a group of pupils include the use of group dynamics, socialisation of group members, social learning and the promotion of pupils' social development. Group relations have an impact on the individual and influencing group relations leads to improved school climate and educational process. Preventive work with a group of pupils increases understanding and appreciation for the feelings of classmates, pupils can be taught that expressing feelings has communicative value, they practise open and functional communication, they understand that people can have different opinions on things.

In the context of prevention, the most frequent group of pupils in the school to work with is a class. As Sokolová (2022) notes, effective programmes in the field of prevention, as well as personal and social development, rely mainly on long-term work with the group, using elements of social dynamics and group interaction, while using a wide range of methods.

Within the framework of non-specific prevention, all teachers can act and influence the pupil's personality in the direction of the desired development. According to Jablonský (2017), interpersonal skills, such as the ability to communicate and work in a team, are increasingly important. Within the framework of preventive activities, school action should be aimed at developing pupils' social competences with regard to effective problem solving and developing social communication.

3 Conclusion

School, as a professional institution, ensures the implementation of prevention, especially primary prevention and, since problem behaviour is widespread among pupils, also secondary prevention. Secondary prevention involves comprehensive care for pupils with problem behaviour, from educational problems in the family, through breaches of school rules, to breaches of the provisions of the legislation in force.

The requirement for permanent training of teachers in the field of prevention and dealing with risky behaviour of pupils is becoming extremely topical; they should participate in training activities and purposefully develop their competences.

Prevention must be implemented at a professional level. It is essential that education coordinators as well as other teachers actively participate in training activities and take an interest in new information in this field.

Literature:

1. Barrense-Dias, Y. – Chok, L. – Stadelmann, S. – Berchtold, A. – Suris, J. C.: Sending one's own intimate image: Sexting among middle-school teens. In: *Journal of School Health*. 2022, 4, pp. 353 – 360. DOI: 10.1111/josh.13137
2. Bartík, P.: Motor and sports activities as a good means against of drug use. In: *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*. 2012, 1, pp. 147 – 153.

3. Dulovics, M.: Teoretické a legislatívne východiská prevencie online rizikového správania v slovenských školách. In: *Socialia 2022. Sociálna pedagogika v meniacej sa spoločnosti*. Banská Bystrica: 2022a, pp. 283 – 288. ISBN 978-80-557-2012-8.
4. Dulovics, M.: Vybrané virtuálne ohrozenia generácie Z a možnosti ich prevencie. In: *Swiat na trajektorii cierpienia*. Dabrowa Gomicza: 2022b, pp. 217 – 225. ISBN 978-83-66794-75-7.
5. Emmerová, I.: Prevention of aggressive behaviour of pupils as the basis for creating a safe school environment. In: *AD ALTA*, 2022, 2, pp. 35 – 38.
6. Frankel, A. S. et al.: Sexting, risk behaviour and mental health in adolescents: An examination of 2015 Pennsylvania Youth risk behaviour survey data. In: *Journal of School Health*. 2018, 3, pp. 190 – 191. DOI:10.1111/josh.12596
7. Hanuliaková, J.: Edukačné prostredie – podmienka efektívnej prevencie. In: *Stratégie tvorby bezpečnej školy*. Praha: 2016, pp. 35 – 38. ISBN 978-80-7512-711-2.
8. Hasajová, L.: Prosociálne správanie ako prevencia. In: Hanuliaková, J. et al.: *Stratégie tvorby bezpečnej školy*. Praha: 2016, pp. 39 – 55. ISBN 978-80-7512-711-2.
9. Holguin-Alvarez, J. et al.: Aggressive school communities: transformation of coexistence through activist education methods. In: *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*. 2020, 4, pp. 553 – 575. DOI: 10.33225/pec/20.78.553
10. Hollá, K.: Sexting types and motives detected among Slovak adolescents. In: *European Journal of Mental Health*. 2020, 2, pp. 75 – 92. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5708/EJMh.15.20.20.2.1>
11. Hupková, I.: Duševné zdravie a závislosti. In: *Sociálna prevencia*. 2022, 2, pp. 33 – 34.
12. Jablonský, T.: Vzdelávanie a školstvo – výzvy, sklamania, očakávania. In: *Studia Scientifica Facultatis Paedagogicae Universitatis Catholicae Ružomberok*. 2017, 1, pp. 13 – 18.
13. Jedlička, R. – Klíma, P. – Koťa, J. – Němec, J. – Pilař, J.: *Deti a mládež v obtížných životních situacích. Nové pohledy na problematiku životních krizí, deviací a úlohu pomáhajících profesí*. Praha: 2004, 478 p. ISBN 80-7312-038-0.
14. Lipnická, M.: *Pedagogické prístupy k deťom s rozmanitými potrebami*. Banská Bystrica: 2022, 86 p. ISBN 978-80-973966-3-3.
15. Mori, C. – Park, J. – Temple, J. R. – Madigan, S.: Are you sexting rates still on the rise? A meta-analytic update. In: *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2022, 4, pp. 531 – 539. DOI: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.10.026
16. Niklová, M. – Dulovics, M. – Stehlíková, J.: *Generation Z in the virtual environment – competencies and risks*. Poldek: 2022, 199 p. ISBN 978-80-949543-3-8.
17. Niklová, M. – Ševčík, J. – Šimšková, A.: Internet addiction among primary school pupils. In: *AD ALTA*. 2022, 2, pp. 176 – 180.
18. Patah, I. A. – Ihsan, J. N. – Ma'mun, A. – Mulyana: Effectiveness of teaching personal and social responsibility model in aggressive control (Experimental Study in Pencak Silat Learning at SMPN 1 Lembang). In: *Journal of Positive School Psychology*. 2022, 4, pp. 7424 – 7432.
19. Pasternáková, L.: Sociálne siete v kontexte edukačného procesu. In: *Manažment školy v praxi*. 2019, 10. Available at: www.direktor.sk
20. Poláková, E. – Čonková, A.: Informačné a komunikačné technológie vo vyučovacom procese. In: *Didaktika*. 2021, 1, pp. 23 – 26.
21. Rovňanová, L.: *Profesijné kompetencie učiteľov*. Banská Bystrica: 2015, 201 p. ISBN 978-80-557-0739-6.
22. Skácelová, L.: Osobnosť, dovednosti a techniky v primárnej prevencii. In: Kalina, K. et al.: *Drogy a drogové závislosti 2. Mezioborový prístup*. Praha: 2003, pp. 329 – 333. ISBN 80-86734-05-6.
23. Sokolová, L.: *Psychologické princípy prevencie a osobnostného a sociálneho rozvoja*. Bratislava: NIVAM, 2022, 14 p. Available at: www.nivam.sk
24. Vanková, K. – Henželová, G.: Riziká, sociálne hrozby a informačno-komunikačné technológie (1). In: *Didaktika*. 2022, 1, pp. 18 – 20.
25. Walsh, W. A. – Tener, D.: „If you don't see five other pictures I am going to post the photo online“: A qualitative analysis of experiences of survivors of sextortion. In: *Journal of*

Child Sexual Abuse. 2022, 4, pp. 447 – 465. DOI: 10.1080/10538712.2022.2067093

26. Winding, T. N. et al.: The association between pupils' aggressive behaviour and burnout among Danish school teachers – the role of stress and social support at work. In: *BMC Public Health*. 2022, č. 22. DOI: 10.1186/s12889-022-12606-1

27. Vyhodnotenie dotazníkového prieskumu zameraného na prítomnosť sociálno-patologických javov na slovenských školách v školskom roku 2019/2020. Dostupné na: www.minv.sk

28. Wolak, J. et al. 2018. Sextortion of minors: Characteristics and Dynamics. In: *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2018, 1, pp. 72 – 79. DOI: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.08.014

29. Židová, M. – Kurincová, V. – Turzák, T.: Body shaming as a modern form of cyber aggression. In: *AD ALTA*. 2022, 2, pp. 270 – 274.

Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AM