# Teaching Russian Children to be Safe When Using Social Networks

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**ABSTRACT** This paper is devoted to a new sphere of the Russian humanitarian knowledge and practice of ensuring the media security of children on social networks, which can be considered as the prior channel of mass media, especially for this demographic category of teens. The researchers consider that media security is the state of protection of the essential interests of the individual against threats coming from mass media systems. There exists the law on the protection of children from information harmful to their health and development in Russia, but most of its requirements do not apply to social networks because their legal status as the mass media in Russia remains undetermined. While the level of cybercrime in social networks is extremely high, Russian schools ignore this problem. At the end the researchers gives basic recommendations to teachers on how they can help pupils be safe in the social networks.

## INTRODUCTION

Social networks are nowadays one of the prior channels of mass media, especially for the demographic category of teens and young people. As it is well known, the term "social network" was introduced by sociologist James Barnes as far back as in 1954 (Barnes 1954), but both the word and the phenomenon actually spread in the first decade of the 21st century along with the development of the respective Internet technologies (first ever social network was Classmates. com that was launched in USA in 1995).

Fleming (2012) together with the Forrester Research Officials pointed out to the fact that fans of brands on Facebook are far more likely to purchase the product or service offered as compared to non-fans. Haigh et al. (2012) concluded that an organization should employ the corporate social responsibility communication strategy when engaging with fans to boost public value of an organization. Further, regardless of the strategy employed, interacting with fans contributes to an enhanced value associated with organizational-public relationships, corporate responsibility, attitudes, and purchase intent. Finally, Lee et al. (2012), and Turkmen (2016), found that when fans have an emotional attachment or interaction with an event on a Facebook page, fans perceive greater value from social marketing.

In Russia, this phenomenon was also introduced in early 2000s through the social network *Odnoklassniki* (similar to Classmates.com), while the most successful project in this area, *Vkon-takte* (similar to Facebook), was launched in 2006 and since then its popularity has been growing rapidly. Simultaneously, other social networks were developed (Moikrug.ru, Professionali.ru, Instagram.com, LinkedIn, etc.) and in 2010, ComScore, Inc., the company as the international leader in measurements of digital world, claimed that Russia has the most involved (that is, the most active) social network audience in the world, with average amount of time spent by Russian users in social networks exceeding average world figures more than two times at that moment (Russia Has Most Engaged Social Networking Audience Worldwide 2010).

During the current 2014 year, the number of accounts, registered in Vkontakte alone, reached the number of 250 billion. Teens make up a significant part of the total number of users, therefore researchers and educational specialists as a reasonable question on how safe it is. The aims of this work are to identify educational, legal and media aspects of the problem "Russian children and young people in the social networks" and to find ways to solve this urgent problem.

## METHODOLOGY

Due to the heterogeneity of issues addressed in the paper, the researchers have to use the set of scientific methods, and the most important of them are term and lexicological analysis, monitoring the domestic and foreign laws governing the protection of children in the information field, historical, genetic and comparative methods, and

content analysis of textbooks, didactic documentation and media publications and other information resources.

## RESULTS

On the issue of "children in social networks", the researchers operate with such terms as "information security" and "media security". The definition of the first term is provided by the Federal Law as, "The protection of children from information harmful to their health and development", that is, children's information security, the state of protection of children, in which there is no risk associated with information causing harm to their health and/or physical, mental, spiritual and moral development.

It should be said that the law aims to protect children from all kinds of "harmful" information. It may come both from mass media and other sources like entertainment and theatrical performances, concerts, social events and classes in educational institutions. To focus attention on the problem of protecting children and young people from information they may find in mass media, the researchers prefer to use the term "media security" because it has more narrow meaning than the term "information security" in context of the problem of "clearing" information received by the children. Thus, "media security" is the state of protection of the essential interests of the individual against threats coming from mass media systems.

Disregarding the particular and complex situations, the researchers can say that before 1990 (the year when preliminary censorship has been repealed) the media security problem in the country was not an issue, since the protection of minors from inappropriate content was provided by censorship authorities simultaneously with their primary goals. But in the post-Soviet era, (since 1992) the problem of the protection of children in the media has become crucial. This is due to two factors. These include the country's transition to a capitalist socio-economic system and the corresponding model of the bourgeois-commercial model of the media that are aimed primarily at making a profit and ready to step over the moral values   and norms (the phenomenon of "yellow press"), secondly, Russia's accession to the Council of Europe in 1996 and its obligation to comply with the European standards in the field of human rights.

All the territories of the former USSR faced the same problem. Some countries have been solving the problem more rapidly. For example, Georgia has become a member of the Council of Europe in 1999, and already in 2001 implemented the law on the protection of minors from harmful influences. Other examples are Lithuania that joined the Council of Europe in 1993 and adopted the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information in 2002, and Ukraine, as it has become a member of the organization in 1995, and adopted the Law on Protection of Public Morality in 2003.

Judging by the reports of the press, the idea of developing similar laws in Russia appeared in 1999, but it has been written and passed by the State Duma only in December 2010, entitled pn "the protection of children from information harmful to their health and development" (came into force on 1 September 2012). Very controversial, it received mixed reviews in the Russian society. Leaving them aside, just to say that most of its requirements (for example, the requirement to carry out age-marking information products using the icons 0+, 6+, 12+, 16+, 18+) actually does not apply to social networks because their legal status as the mass media in Russia remains undetermined.

Of course, the offenses in social networks are repressed when possible, qualified under Russian law as a whole, but it is extremely difficult to prove the fact of the offense. Firstly, because of the high level of latency of these cases, and secondly, due to the fact that, while law machinery is waiting for the decision of the court, the page in the social network changes its name and address, and its creators are changing IP addresses, so the court's decision becomes irrelevant. This is one of the problems of legal regulation of media security from the perspective of law enforcement.

## DISCUSSION

Generally speaking, the level of cyber crime in social networks is extremely high. As a result of the monitoring of judicial practice, all offences committed in social networks can be divided into three groups depending on the socially dangerous consequences they may draw:
 * The emergence of a civil (financial) responsibility
 * The emergence of criminal responsibility

⬧ The emergence of administrative responsibility

All three groups feature cases in which minors are involved either as the victim or as participant in the criminal intent.

The matters of particular concern are the precedents of legal cases under the criminal law that are involving minors. Taking two examples that involve teenagers from the researcher's native city of Chelyabinsk (city with a population of over 1 million people, it is the capital of the region that has an area more than 88 thousand square miles and a population of 3.5 million inhabitants). Both cases were quite actively covered by the news media of Chelyabinsk (news agencies, newspapers and websites).

The first legal case took place in 2011. It involved a 16-year-old student of the school of Chelyabinsk, which has the status of the Lyceum. In December 2010, he posted a call for radical action against people from the Caucasus republics on his page in the social network "VKontakte". The high school student was charged of making "public calls to extremist activity" and of "inciting hatred or hostility humiliation of human dignity on the basis of nationality." The court decided to apply compulsory educational measures as a punishment for a teenager. According to this decision, for one and a half years he was not allowed to visit night clubs, bars and was not to stay away from home after 22:00 hours, and his parents were obliged to control his actions in the Internet and his studies in school.

Another trial was held in one of the district courts of Chelyabinsk recently and ended on August 13th, 2014 with a detention of 23-year-old local student who got acquainted with children in social networks, and then blackmailed them to force them to appear on pornographic photos and videos. During the trial, it was announced that the investigators have collected information on 30 children from different cities of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, who suffered from his actions. The criminal case against their abuser was filed on the basis of Paper 132, part 4, paragraph "B" of the Criminal Code (sexual assault with the use of a helpless state of the victim, committed against a person under 14 years old). The maximum detention for this crime is up to 20 years in prison. The criminal was identified through the IP address as the result of the investigation, initiated at the request of the mother of one of the victims living in Vladivostok (Russian city that is located at a distance of more than 5,000 kilometers away from Chelyabinsk).

To avoid further similar cases in the future, it is necessary to make sure that the topic of safe social networking finds its place in the education system. However, in Russia today, children are not taught safe social networking, as well as media security in general (in relation to other media sources).

How does one find the way to solve the identified problem? In what form, when and where it is appropriate to carry on serious and didactically accurate in shape conversation with teenagers about their security in social networks?

Firstly, it seems to the researchers that it can be carried out within a specific academic discipline called "Safe Living Basics". It is studied at school for several years and gives basic knowledge of traffic rules, fire safety, environment and chemical safety, and the topic the researchers are interested in may find its place within this course. Such a proposal has been made in the summer of 2011 by the Commissioner for the children's affairs under the President of the Russian Federation P.V. Astakhov (Transcript of the joint meeting of the State Council and the Commission on the Implementation of Priority National Projects and Demographic Policy 2011), and it is hard to disagree with. However, in most schools, the subject is taught by former teachers of basic military training (subject, which has been conducted in previous times schools in the days of the Soviet Union), and for them mass media is a very strange topic, both because of their age, and social and psychological reasons. Therefore, there is an urgent need to make strenuous efforts to retrain these specialists, to improve their skills, as well as to introduce the appropriate media courses in the training of future teachers of "Safe Living Basics" who are currently studying in teacher training institutions. Maxfield (2015) states also that Justice Professionals also need to know not only how to interpret research accurately but also how to produce accurate research.

In addition, subject of media security could find its place in the activity of social workers, organizers of extracurricular activities, as well as class tutors in schools (class tutors are teachers who are responsible for all activities of their class). They could hold specific lessons on relevant topics, provide media security classes, tell pupils about the rules of behavior in social networks, cover this topic at the parents' meetings, involving them to work on this problem and thus increasing their own level of media literacy, which unfortunately, is extremely low. It may be either a

single, isolated event, or a series of events carried across the school, region and even the country at one time, as some sort of social actions. In USA 2015, students use SNS (Social Network Security) in a similar way to those users who are not in education, with more that 60 percent using SNS for both socialising and gathering information. Benson et al. (2015) find that students are less likely to be victims of cybercrime than non-students suggesting that SNS activity is less risky within the university lifespan. Russia has a similar experience. The researchers are referring to the initiative mentioned above by the children's commissioner P.V. Astakhov, who called upon holding of media security lessons in schools all over Russia on September 1, 2011. This action did not turn to be country wide, but in some places the lessons were carried out (one of them, in the Stavropol region, was even visited by the President of that time Dmitry Medvedev). In some territories, this initiative had a continuation. For example, in the Chelyabinsk region, with the support of the Commissioner for the children affairs M. Pavlova, it was decided to hold similar lessons next year (at the beginning of the school year 2012-2013), when there can be better preparation for this action (Fateeva 2013).

## CONCLUSION

In general, the readiness of teachers to teach media security is a key factor. Without efforts to improve the media competence of teachers all other efforts will fail. The responsibilities of class tutors in Russian schools are carried out by subject teachers (teachers of physics, mathematics, literature, physical education). Consequently, in one form or another, the subject of media security must be taught in all faculties of teacher training universities. The researchers are talking about the introduction of compulsory media education for future teachers, which is carried out in the EU according to a decision of the European Parliament in 2008. Unfortunately, in Russia, the specialized department (Ministry of Education and Science) remains deaf to the ideas of mass media education. Perhaps in time the situation will change for the better.

As long as the teachers have not received special training in the field of media and information literacy, the researchers can recommend them to include in their work such a simple methodical form as an invitation of professionals, whose work is related to the topic of offenses in telecommunication networks (for example, lawyers, employ-

ees of Ministry of Home Affairs' department that investigates Internet crimes, workers of Federal Drug Control Service), who could talk to students. Usually, students have more confidence in the information obtained from such people than the information provided by their teachers, known to them as professionals in the areas far from the problem of security in social networks. Another form of work may include discussing media publications (newspaper and magazine, television, film) and fiction works with reference to the realities and challenges that are presented in the report.

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