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PROMOTION OF ANTI-VALUES IN SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE – A THREAT TO THE PROPER FUNCTIONING OF SOCIETY

Abstract

The functioning of any democratic society should be based on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law. Guarantees for such a state of affairs exist in various regulations, both at the international level and in domestic legislation. Therefore, the state and its institution should take care not only for promoting the fair value but also for preventing form promoting the anti-value. Contents appearing on the Internet – in various forms of social media, alongside many positive aspects, contain content promoting something that can be called anti-values. Access to this content is universal or public, meaning that it affects not only adult members of society but also underage or minor individuals. The main subject of this article is the harmful influence of some content of social media and the threat related to this content. The research hypothesis is given, that social media are promoting anti-values which may be harmful for society and therefore, some action should be taken to prevent this situation. Article discusses such issues as values and anti-values, the phenomenon of influencer. Some examples of harmful content given by social media also are presented. The main research method used in this article is the analyzes of different content of social media. Finally, we will conclude with the statement that content presented in social media, next to good and proper things, contains a lot of harmful ideas and the promotion of anti-values which are a threat to society's life and as such they must be combated.

Keywords: *the Internet, social media, values, anti-values, influencer*

Introduction

A human being lives and functions in two parallel words – real and virtual. and from both words takes the ideas concepts for his or her live. The statistical data is showing that almost 66% of world's population is using the Internet of which, most of them are social media users – 61,4% of global population (DATAREPORTAL, 2023).

It means that those users are impacted not only by real world but also by content which can be found on the Internet especially in social media. Proper functioning of society is based on respecting different values. The most important of them is human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law. Those values should be respected, and the society should

promote as well as teach about them the young generation. Unfortunately, when we are analyzing the Internet's content, specially when we are going through the social media, we are able to find there not only good, helpful, and useful things but also a lot of harmful content.

The main subject of this article is the analysis of the content of social media and showing the content which may be very destructive for proper functioning of societies. The assumption was made that there are situations where social media are promoting the materials containing something what can be call anti-values. The concept of anti-values is going to be explained in next part of this article. However, it must be noted that analyses of social media content show harmful and negative nature of those materials and as such should be contested.

The article will try to describe and to define the idea of values and anti-values. Also, we will try to see the phenomenon of influencer which is very closely related to the Internet and social media. In addition, we will present some examples of negative and destructive content of social media where so-called anti-values are promoted. Finally, we will show that there is a need and even an obligation to fight with the promotion of those anti-values also on legal ground.

The value and the anti-value

In order to show how harmful the promotion of anti-values in social media can be, it is worth first trying to define what values are and what their opposite is – anti-values.

If we want to talk about values and anti-values, we need to enter the area of science called axiology. This term is coming from Greek language, and it is composed of two words – αξιος – worthy or deserving and λογος – science. From lexical point of view, axiology can be described as a knowledge about those things which are valuable or desirable. The very simple definition of axiology is also given by one of the most popular English language dictionary – Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. We can read there that it *the study of the nature, types and criteria of values* (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1994, p. 81).

So, if axiology is the study about the values, we need to describe what value is all about. Following the lexical definition of axiology, saying that this is the science about something what is worthy or deserving, values can be described as all those things which are desirable, worthy, and valuable. The very similar point of view is presented among other by M. Łobacki, who is saying that values are *everything which is considered important and valuable for the individual and society and which is worthy of desire, which is associated with positive experiences and is at the same time the goal of human aspirations* (Łobacki, 1993, p. 125).

After describing the term of value or values, it is worthy to try defining the concept of anti-values. First of all, the language dictionaries are saying the term *anti* means *opposed to; against*. Therefore, we can say that anti-value means something opposed to value. Considering already mentioned definitions of values, it could be said that anti-value is everything which is not desirable, which is not worthy and is not valuable to the individual and what should not be the goal of human aspirations. The Polish language dictionary is stating that anti-values is *a value that is opposite to a given value* (Słownik SPJ, https://sjp.pl/antywarto%C5%9Bci). We can also conclude that anti-values can be understand as negative attitudes which are contrary to the ethical and moral values which regulate and guide the behavior of people in society.

In addition, it is worthy to see what kind of attitudes can be recognized as positive and which should be name as negative. The following table is compering the values and anti-values.

Table 1. *Values and anti-values – comparison*

VALUES	ANTI-VALUES
Respect	Lack of respect, the desire to humiliate another person and his or her dignity
Tolerance	Lack of tolerance, spreading hatred towards others
Honesty	Lack of honesty
Justice	No justice, injustice
Responsibility	No responsibility for own actions or for the future of others
Loyalty	Lack of loyalty, jealousy
Solidarity	Lack of solidarity, spreading division, arrogance
Generosity and selflessness	Lack of willingness to help, lack of selflessness, selfishness
Gratitude	Ungratefulness
Being good	Not being good, being evil

Source: own study and development

The above list and comparison show that each value has its counterpart in the area of anti-values.

PROMOTING ANTI-VALUES IN SOCIAL MEDIA – EXAMPLES

The Internet has become a place where more people spend more of their life. The statistical data is showing that the world population is composed of 8,06 billion people. The same data is showing that the Internet is used by 5,30 billion people which is 65,7% of global population. In addition, as much as 4,95 billion people is using social media. It means that YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok and other platforms are used by 61,4% of world's population (DATAREPORTAL, 2023).

The above-mentioned data is showing that the Internet and social media become more popular every day. The global data is showing that there are several social media platforms which are very popular. In 2023, Facebook was the most popular, then YouTube was on second place and Instagram on the third place. Then we have WhatsApp application, WeChat and TikTok (Chwolek, 2023). Among them, the fastest growth is done by TikTok. This platform was created in 2016. In middle tile, some countries and institution put the ban on TikTok and even this, the platform is increasing, especially among young people – Z generation. Recent research shows that many of them is using TikTok more often to get information than Google (Cyganek, 2023).

The Internet, especially the social media are full of different type of content. We are able to find there a relevant content where we can learn many useful ideas and things. We can find the content such as travel guides, guides in various areas, accounts describing the current situation. We can also find accounts promoting religious values on social media (more on using the social media in the area of evangelization, see: Banaszak, 2022, pp. 45-62). Unfortunately, there are also areas of social media where people in different age have access to very harmful content. There is certain kind of conflict of values and the area of social media becomes a theater of war between what is good and what is evil (more on conflict of values, see: Banaszak, 2023, pp. 552-570).

In order to talk about the values or anti-values, we need to see the phenomenon of influencer. This term is very connected with the area of social media. In the world of social media, it is an influential person who, thanks to his or her reach, is able to influence people with whom he or she establishes lasting relationships. This term is often used to describe well-known Internet creators who have a large audience. The position of influencer is extremely popular and very desirable by young people. The research is showing that many of them are dreaming about becoming an influencer. The IQS research in Poland is showing that almost 50% of teenagers – girls in age between10-15 wants to be social media creator – influencer. The same report is presenting that 12% of mothers of those teenagers accept this choice (TVN24, https://tvn24.pl/ciekawostki/dzien-dziecka-kim-polskie-nastolatki-chcialyby-zostac-w-przeszlosci-jakie-maja-marzenia-wyniki-ankiety-iqs-5733976). The similar report was done in the United States by Morning Consult. The agency surveyed

over two thousand young Americans between the ages of 13 and 38. The results of their surveys show that the vast majority of US residents would like to become an Internet creator – 86% (Elle, 2019, https://www.elle.pl/artykul/mlodzi-amerykanie-planuja-w-przyszlosci-zostac-influencera-mi-az-86-z-nich-chce-byc-gwiazda-internetu-191108115837).

The numbers showing how many young people want to be an influencer should take our attention to one problem. Today's young generation is not thinking about challenging work for the good of society or being well educated. During the meeting with high school students, I was asking who influencers are and why so many people want to be them. Most of my respondents were saying that we are talking here about reach people, who are spending time in front of the computer doing nothing but have fame, being popular and making big money. When I ask why being an influencer is more popular than being a teacher or a doctor or car mechanic, they were telling me that this mean hard work, a lot of years of study and low income at the end. At the same time, preparing the video material and showing it in YouTube or TikTok does not cost a lot of effort but bring a lot of money and popularity.

And this is first area of promoting the attitudes which are not positive for society. Some of young people do not want to study or work hard. They want to do nothing but at the same time they want to make big and easy money. It may look like a threat for proper functioning of the society.

Secondly, I would like to present some social media content which many experts describe as neutral. They are saying that watching those videos will not bring any good, but they are not harmful either. As a person who is a teacher pedagogue and educator as well as a person who analyzes various content on the Internet, I would like to disagree with the statement that these neutral contents are not useful, but they cannot be described as negative content either. In my opinion, this content is harmful, especially for young people. These include, for example, the very popular trends on the Internet such as: *get ready with me*, *how much is your outfit* and *outfit of the day*. In the videos, the influencer, in front of cameras, are preparing make-ups using expensive cosmetics, they are wearing different outfits, very often the expensive once or they are answering to the questions about the price of stuff the have on them, given big number about the cost of shoes, jackets,

t-shirts or purses. In some cases, one piece of influence's clothing cost more than monthly salary of watcher's mother or father. This type of social media content seems neutral, although it is not entirely so. Young recipients fixated on their idols, firstly, waste valuable time, and secondly, they also want to be like them, but they cannot always be. People get depressed because they do not look like influencers, they do not have the money to buy the things which are promoted – often, the influencer receives these things for free as part of paid cooperation. This gives rise to conflicts at home, in the family, and mutual jealousy among peers. Moreover, when a young person sees influencers who have everything, who can afford a lot, who are not much older than them, who do not go to school and who do not work hard – it builds the belief that they want to be the same. And then, those followers are trying to imitate their idols by recording and publishing videos or organizing the so-called *lives*. But the only result is waste of time and frustration because there are hundreds or thousands of viewers at influencers' sessions and no one comes to them. Therefore, they are trying to produce the content that they think will interest the viewers. Often, it brings to the situation where the content is not always legal or healthy.

And this is second area where we can point out to social media content which is not bringing any good or even lead to the situations which are danger for proper functioning of young people.

Thirdly, I would like to point out to the content which directly promotes anti-values. I would like to show here the area of social media related to so-called *the universe of freak-fights*. Those events are being organized all over the world, but they are also extremely popular in Poland. We have many organizations which make huge money from those events. They are hiring the most popular influencers to fight in the rings, octagons, or cages. We had the situation where the fights were organized even in the telephone booth. Those freak fighter do not usually have any fighting skills as martial art worriers. But they are popular, and they make a show which gave them and the organizers big income and at the same time. The Internet and social media are full of the information about those events. They are promoting such negative attitudes and anti-values as: hatred, quarrels, rudeness, vulgarity, arrogance, insolence, lack of culture, malice, obscenity, or promotion of immoral behavior.

In order to show how dangerous for social life and proper functioning of society are those events, let me show few examples. I understand that some of the statement quoted here should not be used in scientific paper. However, only showing this directly can give us idea how danger, destructive and harmful is these contents. We have to remember that access to this content is open for everybody, regardless the age, are able to watch it.

There is one freak fight organization call FAME MMA. They organized the event called press conference before the FAME MMA 19 gala. They did pre-fight meeting between two popular and famous influencers: Amadeusz Ferrari Roślik and Arkadiusz Tańcula. It started with Ferrari's attempted of physical attack on Tańcula where the influencer first attacked his opponent and, when he was stopped by security, threw him a container with a drink. Then, then mutual verbal attacks were continued with such content:

- *come here you f…*
- *you're sick f…*
- *I am a f… descendant of people thanks to whom, you spotted f… walk on this earth.*
- *in my veins there is a blood of f.. warriors who liberated this f… Poland.*
- *which Poland – you are the one who is the f.. idiot.*

And another statement made by Amadeusz Ferrari during pre-fight face to face meeting: *I will take your life on Saturday; I will rip your heart out*. This was followed by another statement: *he is today a living dead, tomorrow he will be a real dead and today he is still alive.*

The conference took place on 28th August 2023 was watched live by a full house – approximately 20,000 viewers. On You Tube, FAME MMA profile has more than 1.2 million subscribers and the live coverage from this event has closed to 1,5 million viewers so far.

There is another example of negative behavior also related to the area of freak-fights. Another influencer – Michał Andrzej Baron known as a Boxdel and called by Wikipedia *the internet personality*, co-owner of the FAME MMA federation organizing fights, met during the above-mentioned conference a young 10–12-year-old boy, who is his huge fan. First – the great ruler of the federation gives the boy a gift – a coupon giving him free access to *pay per*

view – it means the access to free viewing of the freak fight gala, then Boxdel takes him to the hall and shows him how freak fight organization is working, including the imitation of fights with the boy. Finally, the influencer gave him free admission tickets to Saturday's gala. The boy cried with happiness. Over the next few days, materials of admiration for Boxdel's behavior appear on social media, showing what a wonderful person, he is. And yet… freak fight galas and all the surroundings associated with them based on conflict, violence, vulgarity, seeking a solution to the conflict not in dialogue and understanding, but in hurting each other – this is not content and events for children.

A lot of other examples could be given here. Social media are full of them. We could talk here about so-called PANDORA GETE, where some influencers sexually abused minors, we could show here the sick fight between 20 years old Nikola Alokin and her would-be mother-in-law – 50 years old Goha Magical. We could talk here about anti-social values promoted by Denis Załecki who preaches in social media total humiliation and absolute lack of respect for police officers and other officers serving the common good as well as promoting the prison's culture. We could give here the examples of many patho-streamers such as Kawiaq or Tłucznik who started streaming with showing use of pepper spray on random people on the streets and ending with patho-streams showing criminal activities such bullying and harming people.

The idea is that all these behaviors and this type of content promote an extremely negative and destructive attitudes and anti-values. This content is harmful for individuals and danger for society. It is a big threat for proper functioning of the world.

The need to prevent the promotion of anti-values in the Internet

After getting the idea what are the values and anti-values, and how those anti-values are being promoted in social media, it is worthy to discuss if there is a need or even an obligation to prevent the promotion of anti-value on the Internet with special attention to social media.

The need of promoting good and positive values and fighting against anti-values comes from the foundations of our country's functioning as a member of the European Union. The Consolidated versions of the treaty on European Union and the treaty on the functioning of the European Union, in the article 2 is stating: *The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail* (Official Journal of European Union, 2016, C – 2002/1, art. 2). The European Union not only says that the community is built on those values but also point that only countries respecting those value can be a members of Union: Any European State which respects the values referred to Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union (Official Journal of European Union, 2016, C – 2002/1, art. 49). It proves that everything what is against the values mentioned in article 2, should not be allowed in the territory of the European Union. It should be also states that from the beginning, the idea of European communities was built on the ground of respecting the positives value. One of the founding fathers of the European Union – Alcide De Gasperi demanded that when creating a common Europe, we should not think only about it as a place to increase prosperity, but about a community of values (Florek, 2021, p. 329).

We have also, many places in Polish legal system about those values but especially interesting is a passage from Code of Offenses. In the article 141 of this act is saying that *Whoever places an obscene advertisement, inscription or drawing in a public place or uses obscene words shall be subject to the penalty of restriction of freedom, a fine of up to 1500 PLN or a reprimand* (Journal

of Laws, 2023, item 2119). I regard to this quote; it is worthy to ask if the Internet or social media can be recognized as public place. The answer to this important question is given by the Polish Supreme Court. In one of the court's decisions, we can read: "Moving on to the present case, the Supreme Court in its current composition fully shares the views that the Internet, although it is a virtual space, is a public place at the same time. Taking into account the above considerations, it should be stated that in the event of using the Internet to post obscene advertisements, inscriptions or drawings or using obscene words, a public place within the meaning of the article 141 of Code Of Offence there are websites such as: information portals, corporate portals, but in the space for potential customers, open discussion forums, blogs, vlogs (so-called videoblogs), to which access is not limited and therefore not secured with a login and password, limiting the possibility of gaining access to a separate internet space for Internet users by the website owner. However, in the context of the concept of a public place referring to virtual space, it is not important where the hardware server on which the website is provided is physically located. (The Supreme Court, ref. no. IV KK 296/17 of 17th April 172018). This very crucial statement of Supreme Courte is clearly saying that posting such content on the Internet should be punished in the same way as in real world.

Searching the base which gives us right to combat the promotion of anti-value in social media, we can also point out to the problem of so-called hate speech. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in the Recommendation no R 97(20) 30.10.1997 on hate speech is stating the it is *all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin* (Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 1997).

The Polish Penal Code introduces sanctions for spreading hate speech. In the article 119, paragraph 1 we read that: *Whoever uses violence or an unlawful threat against a group of persons or an individual person because of his or her national, ethnic, racial, political, religious or non-denominational affiliation shall be subject to the penalty of deprivation of liberty for a term of 3 months*

up to 5 years. *While the paragraph 2 of the same article adds "Whoever publicly incites the commission of the crime specified in § 1 shall be subject to the same penalty* (Journal of Law, 2024, item 17) Additionally, the article 256 of the Criminal Code indicates that "Whoever publicly promotes a fascist or other totalitarian state system or incites hatred on the basis of national, ethnic, racial, religious or non-denominational differences shall be subject to a fine, restriction of liberty or deprivation of liberty for up to 2 years (Journal of Law, 2024, item 17).

The above-mentioned recommendation of the Council of Europe as well as regulation of Polish Panel Code give tools to fight with the promotion of anti-values. Not all agree that the promotion of negative and destructive values in social media and hate speech are the same. The are trying to proof that the hate speech must be directed to special groups such as – religion groups, national or ethnic groups and people with different skin color. They are also adding that each hate speech is connected with hate, but we also have kind of ordinary hate which cannot be considered as hate speech and therefore cannot be sanctioned.

Again, the author of this article does not agree with such thinking. I agree and support the idea that all symptoms and manifestation of hate speech should be combated and punished. If somebody is talking against people of particular religion or against people with different skin color, he or she should be punished according to given provision. But at the same time, those who are using the regular and ordinary hate not directed to appointed group but to anybody and if they are using public scene as the Internet to promote those negative attitudes and anti-values, should be punished. Especially, if they belong to group of influencers and other people are fallowing them.

Promoting anti-values by those influencers and other types of the Internet creators is very destructive. Children and youths are watching this, and they are trying to do the same as the followers of their idols. Young people learn that the only way to solve the problems is fighting physically with others.

There are several examples how destructive the promotion of anti-values for young generation is. We know the cases when media are informing about illegal fights organized at schools. Two young boys were fighting, and others were recording this on their mobile phones (Jankowska, 2019). Not long time

ago, we have followed the media case of two patho-streamers – Kawiaqua and Tłucznik. Finally, the police and the prosecutor took care of them. But it all started a few years ago, when one of them was using pepper spray against passers-by on the street. Everything was recorded and often broadcast live on the Internet. Back then, no one reacted to these hooligan activities. Eventually, mental, sexual, and physical abuse occurred, and someone got seriously hurt.

Those negative and destructive situations in social media are watched by incredibly young children. Some of the influencers or the Internet creators promote among other so-called prison subculture. I was reported from pre-school and early school education's teachers that the students from class *0* were calling each other *sixty* (in Polish language: *sześdziesiątka* which means informer or confident – the word related to the article no 60 of the Panel Code where there is about extraordinary mitigation or suspension of punishment for a perpetrator cooperating with the police or prosecutor's office). Other teachers told a story that children in second or third class of primary education did not to shake their friend's hand because the father of this boy is a police officer.

All this facts and examples shows that promotion of anti-values in social media needs to be combated and we should noy allowed for it. There is a need but also the obligation to prevent society from the promotion of anti-values. Already existing legal tools should be used for making platform administrations and the Internet creators responsible for the published content and promoted in this content ideas. In addition, new tools and solutions should be implemented and, in this way, the security society could be protected.

The special attention should be given to the area of young generation which have almost unlimited access to all social media platforms. And even, the social media platforms are giving some kind of age limit – for example TikTok allowed only adults – so 18 or more years old to run the live session, nobody is monitoring it and there are different *LIVES* run by children under eighteen. Children are particularly exposed to the destructive and negative effects of social media. First of all, the parents should take care of those problem, but public institution should take actions too.

Conclusion

Today, the virtual world is as important area of our living and function as the real world. People in different age spend a reasonable amount of time in both words. Our life in real world is ordered and arranged according to applicable rules. Because, we are also leaving in virtual world, our activities there also should be done according to some provisions and regulations. Unfortunately, the legal principles do not keep up with changes and with all this what is happening on the Internet.

It should be said that this article is not written against the entire content of social media and against the Internet. The virtual world, the Internet and the social media are part of our life and our participation in cyber-reality will increase. This article does not want to fight with reality, but we want to show that there are some situations in which a society should be careful and in which some action should be take.

In addition, it must be said that virtual world can be helpful for our everyday life. There is a lot of areas where the cyberreality can be extremely useful. Also, social media may and are used as something very good. Social media gives unlimited opportunities in many areas such communication, education, getting know the world etc.

The author of this article does not want to call for censorship of content or preventive censorship. But we need to be aware that social media may contain a huge amount of content promoting anti-values and this content is often very harmful. There are some behaviors promoted in social media which normal and healthy society cannot and should not accept. Promoting of such content build, especially among young generation, the impression that life looks like on the Internet. The truth is often much different.

The big problem today is that nobody or not too many pays attention to bad content and responds to it appropriately. There is a certain indifference that is extremely dangerous. Therefore, it is necessary to force administrators and the so-called *creators* to take responsibility for content which is published. It is also necessary to make the society aware and to show how harmful this content may be and how destructive is for society's life and proper functioning. All people are impacted by this content but is it especially harmful young generation. But it is important not only to show the danger which is coming from this content but also talk about the need to react and take action in order to protect society from them.

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