



# MENRE

Strengthening the mental resilience  
of youth in dealing with crises  
presented on social media

## Country-specific Report from Hungary

Hajdúsági Civilekért és Hallgatókért Egyesület

### Activity 1

**MENRE - STRENGTHENING THE MENTAL RESILIENCE OF YOUTH IN  
DEALING WITH CRISES PRESENTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Relevance of the Topic for the Target Groups

Research shows that the mental health of young people in Hungary presents a mixed picture. At the same time, they frequently use social media. According to the Hungarian Youth Survey, one in five young Hungarians from the 15-34 age group is less than satisfied with their life. 19 percent of girls and 11 percent of boys feel lonely. 75 percent of boys and 53 percent of girls reported feeling good about themselves. This may be related to the fact that body image issues are common among girls. The use of electronic cigarettes is becoming increasingly widespread among young people, while more than 60 percent having consumed alcohol and 40 percent having been drunk. Between 10 and 17 percent of high school students have tried cannabis. They spend at least 4 hours a day on social media, with excessive use being more common among girls (38 percent). According to researchers, excessive use of social media may be behind the fact that only 53 percent of girls reported feeling good about themselves (Pető 2025:27-28).

According to non-representative research results from the National Media and Information Communications Authority (NMHH), TikTok and YouTube are the most popular social media platforms among 16-24 year olds (Ságvári et al. 2023). According to a survey of 599 Hungarian high school students conducted by Szűts et al., TikTok is also the most frequently used app, ahead of YouTube and Instagram (Szűts et al. 2024).

High exposure to social media content may mean that young people encounter posts about crisis situations, sometimes with violent content, that is not intended for their age group. Fake news, misinformation, rumours, and fake images and deepfake videos created with artificial intelligence may also appear on these platforms. All of these effects can collectively expose them to increased stress, causing depression and anxiety.

According to a 2022 Hungarian study, consumption of social media content about the Covid-19 virus and the Russian-Ukrainian war increased feelings of hopelessness

and isolation, caused sadness over the loss of balance and predictability, and called into question their belief in the world, their faith in society and security. Feelings of fear and anxiety, negative thoughts, and depression were common among them (Guld – Balázs 2022:35).

This highlights the urgent need for teachers, youth workers, and mental health professionals who are able to help young people mitigate the mental and social effects of consuming crisis content on social media. Teachers and other professionals need to know what content young people consume on social media and understand its impact in order to provide effective help and assist policymakers in developing appropriate regulations, communicating crisis management strategies - including launching campaigns on these issues, even with the involvement of peer helpers, the effectiveness of which has been proven by international research (see Pavarini et al. 2023). Among young people in Hungary, coping strategies related to crisis situations include a return to nature, organizing trips, growing plants at home, and spending time with pets (Guld – Balázs 2022:35).

At the same time, the crisis situations seen in social media do not necessarily reflect the problems that actually concern Hungarian young people. The previous Hungarian Youth Survey in 2020 showed that the biggest problems among 15-29 year olds were uncertainty and an unpredictable future (23%), followed by financial difficulties and poverty (22%), and a lack of purpose and not knowing what to do with their lives (12%). These were followed by a lack of friends and communities, the spread of drugs and alcohol, fear of unemployment, crime, problems in house finding, family problems, and finally emigration among the most important problems identified by young people (Pillók – Székely 2022:7-8). According to research, crises among young Hungarians often involve problems experienced in their own personal lives and issues that threaten their personal lives.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

The aim of this country-specific report is to present the types of crisis-related content that young people in Hungary engage with on social media and to identify the associated social, emotional, and mental effects. It also seeks to highlight best-practice educational offerings in Hungary that support young people in using digital content critically and responsibly.

The research conducted for the purpose of this report is intended to contribute to the targeted support and preparation of young people. Based in this research, the consortium will develop recommendations and propose pedagogical practices that strengthen young people's resilience and their ability to critically and consciously engage with digital content on social media, especially content related to crises or emotionally challenging topics.

In addition, this research will help broaden the scope of action for youth workers and educators by providing them with specialized knowledge and practical recommendations. These insights will support digital media education, such as guiding young people in managing online content, and promote the development of critical thinking skills. These recommendations will be designed to be applicable across national contexts.

This research draws on contributions from a wide range of sources, including scientific research papers, survey findings, journalistic articles, interviews and our own field research with survey and interviews. Together, these materials help illuminate the discourse surrounding crisis-related content on social media and its effects on young people. They also serve as a foundation for developing educational offerings and formulating recommendations for the MENRE project.

## 1.3 Definition of Key Terms

### 1.3.1 Crisis Content

Crises are situations or life circumstances that cannot be managed effectively in the moment. In this paper, crisis content refers to material on social media, such as

posts, images, videos, articles, or stories, that present, discuss, or react to events involving significant danger, disruption, or distress. These may include natural disasters, wars, pandemics, violence, political unrest, mental health struggles, or personal tragedies.

Crisis-related content is often emotionally intense and may evoke fear, grief, anger, or anxiety. It can be highly disruptive, as it reflects events that challenge social, emotional, or mental stability. Due to its disturbing nature, such content is frequently shared and spreads rapidly, sometimes without proper verification. It may also include graphic images or videos. Often, this content is framed through personal experiences or fears to create a stronger emotional impact on viewers.

### 1.3.2 Psychosocial Impact

In the context of this report, psychosocial impact refers to the combined psychological and social effects that crisis content on social media can have on young people. It describes how exposure to such content influences a young person's mental health, emotional well-being, behaviour, social relationships, and overall functioning within environments such as school, family, and peer groups.

### 1.4 Research Methodology

Within the framework of Activity 1 of the MENRE project, comprehensive desk research was conducted as an initial step. The online research draws on contributions from a wide range of sources, including scientific research papers and studies, survey findings, academic journal articles, and interviews with experts, as well as newspaper articles to illustrate the media presence of the topic. This review focused primarily on German sources to map the discourse surrounding crisis-related content on social media. Together, these materials help illuminate the discourse surrounding crisis-related content on social media and its effects on young people. They also serve as a foundation for developing educational offerings and formulating recommendations for the MENRE project.

In the second step, fifteen young people aged 17–24 participated in the study based on a questionnaire developed in collaboration with the consortium. The young people completed the anonymized questionnaires online. Participation in the survey was voluntary.

In the third step, we interviewed five youth workers and educators based on questions developed by the consortium. The youth workers received a description of the project and interview guidelines via email and were free to decide whether to participate in the interview. The interviews were conducted partly by phone and partly in person, and were transcribed in writing to preserve as much information as possible.

### 1.5 Involved Target Groups

In Activity 1 two target groups were involved: young people and youth workers.

#### Young people

A total of 15 young people participated in the survey on a voluntary basis. Although the participants did not provide their ages in the survey itself, the survey administrator verified that all respondents were between the ages of 17 and 24. In terms of gender distribution, two respondents were male and thirteen were female. Seven participants indicated that they lived in rural areas, and eight lived in cities.

#### Youth Workers

We conducted a total of five interviews: two with educators and three with youth workers. For the interviews, we selected youth workers and educators who had experience working with young people and who showed an openness to the topic. Among those interviewed, three were women and two were men.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

In the desk research conducted for this report, we examined two relevant media effect theories in relation to young people's use of social media: transactional media



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effect theories, which state that users consciously choose between different media platforms according to their goals. According to this theory, young people tend to prefer social media platforms. According to selective exposure theories, young people's media use is also influenced by factors such as momentary mood elements, attitudes, personality, desires, mood, and the phenomenon of fear of missing out. Research shows that young people are particularly sensitive to crises seen on social media, which can have a significant negative impact on their mental health. Based on previous research, young people, and especially women, can be considered a group at high risk of negative psychological effects triggered by crisis situations.

## 2.1 Relevant Psychological Theories

### 2.1.1 Theories Explaining the Impact of Social Media on Young People

According to the transactional media effect theories, media use is selective, with users choosing between different media. Selective media use can result in a transaction (change) in the user, which is the media effect. The effect triggered by the media can in turn influence media use and the antecedents of media use. Social media users are more effective than users of traditional mass media (TV, radio, print) at shaping their own media effects through targeted, selective social media use (Valkenburg 2022). This is because social media has more filters and algorithms to cater to the preferences of adolescent users, which may encourage them to consume messages that match these preferences. Compared to mass media content, such posts can be more effective in attracting the selective attention of the recipients of the posts and in influencing cognitive processes, attitudes, and behaviour (Parmelee & Roman, 2020). Selective exposure theories focus on predisposing factors such as mood and existing attitudes. According to the Differentiated Susceptibility Model of Media Effects (DSMM), three types of predisposing factors can indicate adolescents' selective (social) media use and its effects: 1. Dispositional factors: the young person's temperament, personality, needs and desires, mood, but also the phenomenon of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), which can be linked to (problematic) social media use among adolescents. Such factors include a bad mood, when

adolescents in a bad mood turn to social media to look for funny videos or supportive feedback. 2. Developmental factors: Children and adolescents generally prefer media content that only moderately deviates from their age-appropriate comprehension patterns and psychosocial development level; if they encounter media content that is too different, they pay less attention to it or avoid it altogether. 3. Social Context Factors: The social context is the environment in which individuals or groups act or interact, and whose norms and opportunities can influence the cognitive processes, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors that occur within it. This includes parents and teachers, but peer groups are also prominent and can have a strong influence on media preferences. Adolescents tend to develop strong social sensors for these norms, including those related to social media use (Valkenburg – Peter 2013).

According to research, young people are particularly susceptible to the negative effects of social media because at this age they are very sensitive to social acceptance/appreciation: what society thinks of them and what their peers think of them. Quantifiable indicators of this are the number of likes and comments, as well as views, the absence of which can also cause psychological distress. Adolescents react to negative events experienced in the online space with more lasting negative emotions than in personal interactions (Silk et al. 2024). Information overload from social media can also lead to emotional stress and social anxiety (Pang 2021; Rameezunnisa – Maheen 2021). Content about crisis situations in social media can trigger primary emotions such as anger, disgust, fear, and sadness in the recipient. These can lead to secondary emotions such as stress, anxiety, and information fatigue (Vaccaro-Witt et al. 2025). The negative effects of inaccurate information appearing on social media must also be taken into account. Consuming false, alarming, and exaggerated information can also cause fear, anxiety, stress, depression, despair, and frustration (Gupta 2020; Ramaiya et al. 2021). Previous research conducted in various countries has shown that the proportion of people suffering from depression and anxiety was higher among women, young people, and those with lower incomes during the COVID-19 crisis (Yan et al. 2021; Shuster et al. 2021; Hansmann et al. 2021; del-Valle et al. 2022). The same findings were reported

in a study examining the mental health effects of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza among Jordanians aged 18 and over (Al-Ajlouny et al. 2025). Based on these studies, young people, and women in particular, are considered a group at high risk of negative psychological effects triggered by crisis situations.

### 2.1.2 Theories Related to How to Cope with Stress

However, social media use can also have positive effects on mental health: it can provide a social experience, offering opportunities for social support and connection that are not available in personal communities, and thus contribute to improved emotional health (Silk et al. 2024). Social media can also help people cope during times of crisis: private, personal social media communication with friends and family-members reduces crisis-induced depression and anxiety and provides emotional support through social connections (Niu et al. 2024). Posts reflecting support and solidarity also elicit positive emotional responses, especially joy (Vaccaro-Witt et al. 2025). Social media can also be a source of useful, helpful information related to a given crisis (Zhong et al. 2021), but it is also suitable for science communication to shed light on various aspects of a certain crisis (Caferra et al. 2025). Finally, social media can also provide entertainment and relaxation during a crisis, for example through the consumption of humorous content (Pan et al. 2021). In addition to the positive use of social media, there are other offline coping strategies, such as keeping pets and engaging in various physical activities (Kassem et al. 2024). Subjective psychological tension is reduced by having one's own garden, engaging in increased physical activity, and pursuing hobbies such as reading and cooking (Hansmann et al. 2021).

## 3. Types of Crisis Content on Social Media

During our desk research for this report, we identified several types of crises discussed in Hungarian and international literature on the relationship between young people and social media. The main categories are as follows: personal crises, social



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crises, and global crises. We examined these categories in our own empirical research. According to the results of our own questionnaire survey, most of the young people surveyed encounter crisis-related social media content for 10-30 minutes a day (5 respondents) or less than 10 minutes a day (5 respondents).

## 3.1 Personal Crises

### 3.2.1. Loss of social status

Loss of social status is considered a personal crisis, a feeling of worthlessness, which can also be triggered in young people if they receive fewer likes than expected, are blocked, unsubscribed from, or see posts from which they have been excluded, or if they are subjected to public cyberbullying (Silk et al. 2024). According to our own questionnaire survey conducted among young people, the vast majority of respondents encounter personal crises on social media, such as posts about illness, trauma, or loss. This type of crisis was indicated by the highest proportion (13 responses). Mental health-related issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, ADHD) also frequently appear on social media (12 responses), while bullying is less common, but the vast majority of respondents still see such content (8 respondents). At the same time, personal crises (5 responses) and mental health-related issues (8 responses) were much less common among their own fears, but they fear bullying in their personal lives (10 responses) more than they encounter this crisis on social media.

### 3.2.2. FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)

Another personal crisis is the so-called FOMO phenomenon among young people. During our desk research, previous studies raised the issue of FOMO among young people. Fear of Missing Out refers to the feeling that young people are missing out on something important if they do not participate in social media interactions or if others are enjoying meaningful experiences or learning about things that they are not (Grúz – Fekete 2022: 78). We did not ask about this in our own questionnaire survey, but interviews with teachers and youth workers reveal that this type of personal crisis is

also significant among Hungarian young people, although not nearly as common as other types of crisis.

### 3.2.3. Anxieties

Anxiety and tension arising from concerns about the future or the state of the environment and its impact on human health and safety. These can also be caused by news reports in the media (Prisniakova et al. 2024). According to our own questionnaire survey, young people feel most depressed when they see content related to crises on social media (8 responses), followed by anxiety and concern (6 responses). Feelings of disappointment and disillusionment with political institutions and democratic processes are also common, while at the same time there is a sense of being informed (6 responses each). At the same time, interviews with teachers and youth workers clearly show that the majority of young people react with anxiety to crises seen on social media.

### 3.2.4. Personal addictions

During previous desk research, personal addictions also appeared among personal crises in the literature, e.g. alcohol, drug use, social media addiction or gambling addiction (Pillók – Székely 2022). During our research, young people did not report encountering crises of this nature on social media. However, this does not mean that they do not occur in their own lives. Teachers and youth workers mentioned in the interviews that excessive use of social media is common among young people, which can even lead to addiction.

## 3.2 Social Crises

### 3.2.1. Economic crises

These include the housing crisis, difficulties in accessing housing, impoverishment, unemployment (Pillók – Székely 2022), inflation and homelessness. According to our questionnaire survey, more than half of the young people interviewed encounter economic crises on social media (8 respondents), but this makes them less concerned about their personal lives (4 respondents). At the same time, interviews

with teachers and youth workers reveal that young people are concerned about uncertain housing and livelihood difficulties. These can cause them anxiety.

### 3.2.2. Violent incidents

According to the results of our questionnaire survey, violent acts (e.g., accidents, street robbery, violent protests, riots, people dying etc.) are often presented to young people on social media (12 respondents). Cruelty to animals (9 respondents) and bullying (8 respondents) also appear relatively frequently among the content viewed. Outside of social media, young people are similarly concerned about these crises. The young people we surveyed are most concerned about bullying (10 respondents), violent acts (9 respondents), and animal cruelty (8 respondents).

### 3.2.3. Emigration

According to our desk research, emigration (Pillók – Székely 2022) for economic and/or political reasons is also among the crises seen in social media among young people. We found no evidence of this in our own research. However, other studies show that a significant proportion of young Hungarians plan to leave the country, with this figure reaching as high as 45 percent among Hungarian university students (Bodnár 2025). In addition to economic difficulties, the social climate in Hungary also plays a significant role among the reasons for emigration (Szilasi et al. 2024).

## 3.3 Global crises

### 3.3.1. Global pandemics

According to our desk research, negative news about viruses also appears prominently in social media. For example Covid-19 (Vaccaro-Witt et al. 2025; AlSumait et al. 2025), H1N1, bird-flu, foot-and-mouth disease virus – the latter caused serious problems in Hungary in 2024/2025. However, according to the results of our own questionnaire survey, the young people we interviewed (5 respondents) are less exposed to negative news about viruses, and the number of those who are concerned about this is also relatively low (5 respondents). This topic also appeared only minimally in interviews with teachers and youth workers.



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### 3.3.2. Climate crisis and natural disasters

Natural disasters such as forest fires (García et al. 2024), drought, record temperatures, heat waves, floods, severe storms, melting polar ice, earthquakes, and climate change issues are frequently featured on social media sites, and young people often encounter and worry about them. According to our questionnaire survey, the vast majority of young people surveyed (12 respondents) see content about natural disasters on social media. A significant proportion (10 respondents) also see content related to the climate crisis. The number of those concerned about these crises is slightly lower. Seven respondents are concerned about the climate crisis and five are concerned about natural disasters. At the same time, interviews with teachers and youth workers revealed that, in their experience, fear of climate change and anxiety about it are prominent among young people in Hungary.

### 3.3.3. Environmental and nature conservation crises

Nuclear accidents (Lau et al. 2024), oil tanker accidents, fish kills, garbage islands in the oceans, destruction of flora and fauna, species extinction, environmental degradation and animal cruelty are also among the frequently reported crisis topics in social media. According to our questionnaire survey, the majority of young people (8 respondents) see content related to environmental crises on social media, and roughly the same number (7 respondents) indicated that they are concerned about these issues. Interviews with teachers and youth workers also revealed that young people are concerned about environmental crises, but most notably about climate change.

### 3.3.4. Wars, humanitarian crises, migration

Wars, more recently the Russian-Ukrainian war (Lau et al. 2024), Middle East wars (Lau et al. 2024) and humanitarian crises (Kreutzer et al. 2025), refugee crises, famines are also frequently appearing crisis topics in social media. According to our questionnaire survey, wars appear very frequently on social media platforms visited by young people (13 respondents), but the proportion of those who are concerned about war in the real world, in their personal lives, is much smaller (6 respondents).

Interviews with teachers and youth workers also reveal that although young people encounter such content on social media, it does not concern them greatly. They are more concerned about climate change and personal problems (livelihood and housing issues).

The 2015 European refugee crisis was prominently featured in the Hungarian media, where the Hungarian government framed the issue in a way that suited its own interests and used it in its political campaign (Bernáth - Messing 2015; Bajomi-Lázár 2019). The refugee crisis was presented differently by the Hungarian and German media (Kenyeres – Szabó 2016), and the different media representations had different effects on Hungarians in Germany and Hungary (Feischmidt – Zakariás 2020). All this clearly shows how strongly the media's presentation of a crisis situation can influence people's thinking. Media reports on migration in Hungary have often been politicized, biased, and contain half-truths and falsehoods (Zakinszky Toma 2021). The migration crisis unfolding on the Polish-Belarusian border in 2021 also featured prominently in media reports (Pulai 2023).

## 4 Psychosocial Impacts on Young People

### 4. 1 Emotional responses

Information about crisis situations originating from social media (e.g., the COVID-19 crisis) negatively affects mental health: it triggers sadness, fear, disgust, and anger, which increase stress and anxiety (Vaccaro-Witt et al. 2025). During crises, excessive use of social media can lead to psychological stress, which ultimately negatively affects quality of life (Pahlevan Sharif et al. 2025). Although social media can also play a positive role during crises (e.g., maintaining online contact during Covid-related lockdowns), in many cases the same platform poses a threat. In the case of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, what was seen on social media caused distress, tension, and fear among young people. In the early stages, they themselves

felt as if they were in a war zone. They were confronted with horrific images/videos on Instagram and TikTok, in many cases uncensored images of dead bodies. This can lead to young people feeling afraid to engage with social media (Guld – Balázs 2022). Constant exposure to crisis situations can also cause emotional exhaustion (García et al. 2024). Media content about wars and humanitarian crises can also cause guilt in young people for several reasons: they are unable to provide financial support to the victims, they cannot do anything to stop the atrocities, deep down they are glad that the horrors are not happening to them, and finally, forced adaptation to the situation can also cause guilt (Guld – Balázs 2022).

According to our MENRE survey results, when asked “How does crisis-related content on social media affect you personally?” most young people reported emotional reactions. The most common reaction among the young people surveyed was a feeling of sadness (8 respondents). This was followed by anxiety or worry and a feeling of disappointment (6 respondents each).

## 4.2 Cognitive effects

During times of crisis, excessive use of social media can lead to information overload and media fatigue (Pahlevan Sharif et al. 2025; Pang 2021), making it impossible for individuals to process the incoming information beyond a certain point. This can ultimately lead to emotional stress and social anxiety (Pang 2021), which has a negative impact on quality of life (Pahlevan Sharif et al. 2025). A cognitive response occurs when individuals begin to feel that social media is detached from reality, fail to see the connections, do not understand the logic behind certain events, and view social media content regulation as inconsistent (Guld – Balázs 2022).

At the same time, crises can also trigger positive cognitive responses. The increased value placed on health and healthy lifestyles, the importance of saving money, and efforts to eliminate waste can also have an important cognitive impact on crises (Boldizsár – Csendesné 2020). Protecting the environment and wildlife, and applying sustainable thinking can also be positive cognitive responses to crises. According to our MENRE survey results, less than half of the participants responded that they felt

better informed after viewing the crisis content and that they felt distrustful of political institutions and democratic processes (6 respondents for both statements). Only one-third of respondents (5 participants) felt that crisis content seen on social media helped them better understand what others were going through.

#### 4. 3 Behavioural changes

Continuous exposure to crisis situations can lead to a number of negative behavioral changes—which are, however, reversible. Such negative effects may include the development of unhealthy eating habits (Sher 2020; Rafael Pena et al. 2024), increased smoking and alcohol consumption (Rafael Pena et al. 2024), decreased physical activity (Rafael Pena et al. 2024; Papatriantafyllou et al. 2024), irregular sleep patterns and insomnia (Sher 2020; Rafael Pena et al. 2024), and may even lead to suicide (Sher 2020). Excessive use of social media and the internet can also have harmful consequences (Yang et al. 2021; Papatriantafyllou et al. 2024), including increased online aggression, body shaming, and cyberbullying (Lasisi 2023), as well as increased angry expressions, offensive speech, and hate speech (Hsu – Tsai 2022). During Covid, a clear link was found in China between excessive use of social media and psychiatric disorders (Zhong et al. 2020).

At the same time, crises can also trigger positive cognitive responses. These include the shaping of consciousness and the development of a positive outlook on life: during the COVID-19 crisis, this took the form of a shift towards slowing down, spending quality time with family and friends, focusing on relaxation, and appreciating the small things in life. War has the same effect on young people. War media content can also raise awareness of the transience of life, the value of simple everyday things, the importance of human relationships, and the importance of openness, patience, and acceptance towards others (Guld – Balázs 2022).

Based on our MENRE survey results, only three respondents said that crisis-related social media content motivated them to take action or get involved. In the questionnaire, we asked specifically “When you feel stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed because of crisis-related content on social media (e.g., about war,



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climate change, or inflation), what do you do to calm yourself or feel better?" The most frequently selected responses were " I go outside into nature (e.g. walking, gardening)" and "I listen to music" (9-9 respondents). This was followed by " I take care of myself (e.g. resting, eating well)" and "I try to think about things in a more positive way" (7-7 respondents). More than a third of participants engage in some form of physical activity or sport, or spend time with animals/pets (6-6 respondents for each). The least common responses were prayer and meditation, and looking for funny things (such as memes or videos). Based on their answers, the young people we surveyed choose individual coping strategies, go out into nature and listen to music, pay attention to themselves, and try to change their thinking in a positive direction. It is interesting how uncommon it is for them to spend time with friends and family (4 responses) or ask others for help (2 responses). This clearly points to a shift towards individual, even solitary, solutions. Teachers and youth workers should familiarize young people with effective social problem-solving strategies, as they may be less familiar with them.

#### 4.4 Social impacts

The information overload experienced on social media can cause social anxiety among young people (Pang 2021), which in some cases can lead to social isolation and limited access to vital information (Jones et al. 2021). In relation to the Russian-Ukrainian war, research in Hungary has shown that the war has increased feelings of isolation among young people and caused serious turmoil and a loss of trust in the future of humanity. They doubt that humanity is capable of solving the problems it faces through unity and cooperation. The content of the media coverage of the crises reinforces feelings of hopelessness and fear among young people, which ultimately encourages them to withdraw and turn away from society, developing a kind of escapist behavior (Guld – Balázs 2022). At the same time, it is a positive development that none of the respondents in our MENRE questionnaire survey indicated that the crisis content they saw on social media encouraged them to be alone.



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## 5 Youth Workers' Perceptions of Crisis Content on Social Media and Its Impact on Young People

During our MENRE research, we interviewed five teachers and youth workers, asking them questions on a total of eight topics.

According to their observations, the psychosocial situation of young people paints a sad picture. One respondent said they had never before encountered so many young people struggling with mental health issues. Several respondents emphasized that this trend has intensified since the Covid pandemic. One reason for this, according to them, is that communication has largely shifted to social media. Another reason may be that young people are more sensitive and open to social issues, better represent their own interests, and are increasingly articulating their own needs. Young people whose personalities are still developing find it difficult to cope with the negative content that floods them. According to one respondent, today's children are much more restless than they used to be, find it harder to concentrate, and are less persistent in completing tasks. They are often clumsier in fine motor activities as well. At the same time, they have a very strong attachment to the online world: they are often mentally present there, even when they should be doing something else. Their behavior and the dynamics of their development have been most influenced by their habituation to rapid stimuli and their constant digital presence. According to the respondents, the psychosocial development of young people has deteriorated overall, but there are individual differences. Some respond to crisis-related content with action, others are afraid, and still others deflect, deny, and try to ignore it. For example, by blocking such content. They tend to leave the solution and handling of crises situations to others.

All interviewees agreed that there is a connection between the consumption of crisis-related content on social media and the social and emotional well-being of young people. Global political conflicts and climate anxiety also determine the well-being of



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young people. Content about crises often floods students in an uncontrolled manner, causing them anxiety. They are much more burdened in this respect, receiving much more information about crises through social media than, for example, their parents or grandparents. Young people are not prepared to process news about global crises and do not have sufficient tools (either emotional or interpretative) for psychological processing. Many young people encounter crisis content at a very young age, often without any filtering. This can cause them to feel uncertainty, anxiety, or an exaggerated sense of doom. They are overwhelmed: they find it harder to relax, they are more impatient, and they switch between emotional states more quickly. The crisis content they see on social media places an additional emotional burden on them in an already stimulus-rich environment.

Our interviewees mentioned almost the same crises that, in their experience, young people see on social media. These include: war, environmental disasters, natural disasters, and political incidents (protests, demonstrations). Climate change, economic instability, crises related to livelihoods and housing, identity crises, political radicalization, and political tensions also appear. They also see short videos related to epidemics, accidents, and various "dramatic" news stories. According to our interviewees, it is rare for them to discuss these topics with their teachers, but it does happen from time to time. This is especially true during starting periods of significant crisis (such as the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war).

Our interviewees encountered various social/emotional problems among young people during the crisis content seen on social media. Most of our interviewees mentioned anxiety. One of the triggers for this is the constant feeling of uncertainty caused by crises, which leads to anxiety—mainly due to the perceived uncertainty of the future. Postponing starting a family is also common due to the perceived danger of the world and the uncertainty of the future. According to one interviewee's experience, the idea of "zero extinction" is also emerging among young people. Hidden aggression also occurs. It is also characteristic that young people find it difficult to "switch off" because social media is constantly present in their lives, constantly bombarding them with content. A feeling of helplessness also arises when



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young people feel that they have no influence on events. This can easily lead to demotivation in learning and planning for the future. Constant negative content and comparing one's own life with others can lead to self-esteem issues and even depression. One interviewee has observed that young people are inexplicably tense, restless, and uncertain. In his opinion, the disturbing events seen on social media may contribute to this constant anxiety. They lose their composure more quickly, are more sensitive to conflict, and sometimes find it more difficult to adjust from one situation to another.

According to our interviewees, young people are most concerned about the effects of climate change. News reports on this topic influence not only their mood, but also their goals, decisions, and even their general attitude toward life. Concerns about livelihood and housing also arise due to the uncertain future.

The teachers and youth workers we interviewed suggested several coping strategies. One of them recommended individual anxiety relief, developing emotional awareness and self-knowledge, and using relaxation techniques. Several mentioned the need for real, offline experiences, personal conversations with peers, building social relationships, and joining supportive communities (e.g., sports, arts, hobbies, religious communities). The more offline experiences they have, the easier it is for them to let go of the anxiety that the online world often imposes on them. One interviewee reported that being close to other people, connecting with others, and "real life" always calms young people down. At the same time, if the situation is serious, young people need to seek professional help. One of our interviewees suggested that young people should step out of their comfort zone to experience how they can handle unexpected situations and thereby increase their self-confidence. Some emphasized the role of political action and the importance of public engagement: finding others with similar interests and acting together. In their experience, joint action improves mental health and reduces isolation. Several of our interviewees mentioned that young people should limit their exposure to crisis content on social media. It is important for them to be aware of how the media works

and the role of algorithms in recommending such content. In other words, media literacy is also necessary to cope with the situation.

The experts we interviewed were less able to mention strategies for preventing lasting negative effects. They mentioned strongly limiting crisis content, emphasizing that factual content is less problematic, but biased content is undesirable. It can also be effective to "teach" the algorithm to recommend positive content to young people. However, this also requires media awareness. Some suggested keeping an emotion diary, practicing autogenic training and mindfulness exercises, playing sports, and engaging in open personal communication. According to the experience of one of our interviewees, a short walk, a little crafting, personal conversation, or any simple, everyday activity can also be effective. It is also important to introduce offline habits that take you away from the screen, such as playing games together, having dinner together, or doing a little exercise. Anything that brings young people back to the present and breaks them out of the social media spiral.

In the interview, we also asked about the positive effects of social media. According to our interviewees, these could be: direct communication with acquaintances, friends, and family members. A sense of community with others, obtaining practical and useful information. Creating community cohesion, strengthening solidarity, and forming supportive communities. Opportunities to connect with others who share similar values or are experiencing similar difficulties. Some mentioned that social media democratizes the expression of opinions, as young people can also make their voices heard and share their thoughts and initiatives. It can also provide reassurance in crisis situations, as they can check on their friends and family members at any time to see if everyone is okay. It gives them the feeling that they are not alone and that there is someone with whom they can share their feelings. Social media can also help young people laugh through funny videos, memes, or short playful content. Social media also provides useful ideas and tips on how to help others and get involved in charitable initiatives. Social media can provide useful information in uncertain situations. Some pointed out that there is social media content specifically dedicated to dealing with crises, presenting positive examples and strategies.

## 6 Best practice educational offerings

### 6.1 Formal and informal training opportunities with the participation of teachers and youth workers

In Hungary, the improving of media awareness is not a compulsory part of the core curriculum in schools. However, it is offered as an optional subject within the framework of the subject "Motion Picture and Media Culture." The topic also appears in the subjects "Hungarian language and literature" and "visual culture." There are also secondary schools with a media focus, where the improving of media awareness is also emphasized.

Teachers can raise awareness among young people about the appropriate use of social media in various crisis situations and develop a critical attitude towards social media content within the framework of school lessons. Knowledge transfer can take place within the framework of subjects related to various crisis situations (e.g., in history class in relation to war), but also in a separate subject focusing exclusively on media awareness. Knowledge transfer can also take place during school lessons and/or after-school activities with the involvement of youth workers. Both teachers and youth workers can use gamification methods for effective knowledge transfer, complemented by the benefits offered by artificial intelligence.

Example: teachers' work can be supported by lesson plans that include media awareness activities broken down into individual lessons. Such lesson plans can be found on several Hungarian websites (e.g., [buvosvolgy.hu](http://buvosvolgy.hu)) and have also been published in books, such as Gergő Fegyverneki's *Digi dili*. The analysis of media content related to the topic to be covered (e.g., films) can also be part of the lesson plan. Self-awareness exercises can also be included in activities led by teachers or youth workers. During these sessions, young people share their own positive and negative experiences, reactions, coping strategies, and best practices related to crisis situations they have seen on social media.

Project-based methods are also possible: in this case, students are required to carry out a pre-defined project during practical sessions led by teachers or youth workers.

An example of project methods can be found in Gergő Fegyverneki's book *Digi dili*. Examples include shooting a short film, designing a board game or flash mob, or creating posters and photos. (Fegyverneki 2023). These could focus on crisis situations appearing in social media and their psychological effects. The book "Media Detective – Let's Debunk Fake News!" published by the HAHA Association (Kenyeres 2018) also contains ideas for teachers on the topic of media awareness.

School events, such as professional days and student council days (Fegyverneki 2023), can also incorporate the impact of crisis situations on social media, around which teachers, youth workers, or other professionals can organize various activities for students.

Another example is the interactive media awareness lectures organized by the HAHA Association in disadvantaged communities as part of the "Media Detective Road Show." During the "Media Detective for Young People" EU-project, teaching materials were developed in English, Hungarian, Romanian, and Slovak, which are available on the [mediadetektiv.hu](http://mediadetektiv.hu) website.

## 6.2 Gamification + AI

Raise awareness among young people about the risks of using social media in crisis situations through playful activities (e.g., escape rooms, quizzes, board games, role-playing games). Teach them in a playful way to recognize the differences between reliable and unreliable sources, the emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and social effects of crisis content on social media, and familiarize them with ways to prevent negative effects and mitigate those that have already occurred. Another important goal of playful activities may be to raise awareness of positive coping strategies. Knowledge can be acquired through personal discovery in a playful way, which contributes to deeper memorization of information. Playful forms include the use of artificial intelligence-based platforms, virtual reality, and various simulation games.

The use of these new and attractive technologies for educational purposes generates greater commitment and enthusiasm among young people.

A specific example is the escape room created by the HAHA Association, which is based on the theme of fake news. Young people must recognize fake news and other types of false information in order to obtain the information needed to find the combination of numbers required to escape the room.

Gergő Fegyverneki's book *Digi dili* also contains specific suggestions for teachers on how to address various topics in a playful way. (Fegyverneki 2023).

### 6.3 Social media campaigns, science communication

Launching social media campaigns on topics related to specific crisis situations, involving experts and young people. The aim is to provide accurate, scientifically sound, useful and helpful content in place of the inaccurate, misleading and false information that sometimes appears on social media during crisis situations. This could be a page on environmental protection and climate change that continuously refutes false information on the subject, where possible in a way that meets the needs of young people (e.g. in short videos), in an easily understandable, youthful style, with useful links and other information to help provide accurate information and reassure people in crisis situations.

Specific examples: In Hungary, several websites and social media pages are dedicated to promoting conscious and critical attitudes towards social media. These include [urbanlegends.hu](http://urbanlegends.hu), [alhirvadasz.hu](http://alhirvadasz.hu), and the Facebook page *Médiamanipuláció* (Media Manipulation). The HAHA Association's "Médiadetektív" website also features educational videos, fake news quizzes, and a fake news database at [mediadetektiv.hu](http://mediadetektiv.hu).

### 6.4 Individual consultations, advice

Organization of free counseling sessions for young people in crisis situations, with the involvement of youth workers and mental health professionals. During these

sessions, the focus is on providing individual, personal, and tailored assistance to mitigate the negative effects of crisis situations.

## 6.5 Methodological and educational online and offline materials for teachers and students

Books designed to develop awareness and critical thinking among teachers and students regarding the information spreading in the digital world.

A specific example is Gergő Fegyverneki's book *Digi dili*, which contains practical information, methodological guidelines, and detailed lesson plans for developing media awareness among young people and protecting them from online dangers. The book "Média Detektív – Buktassuk le az álhíreket!" (Media Detective – Let's Debunk Fake News!) published by the HAHA Association (Kenyeres 2018) also contains ideas for teachers on the topic of media awareness.

Several websites offer specific teaching materials and lesson plans for teachers to develop media awareness among students. Such websites include [buvosvolgy.hu](http://buvosvolgy.hu), [ideaalapitvany.hu](http://ideaalapitvany.hu), and [alhirvadasz.hu](http://alhirvadasz.hu). The HAHA Association's "Media Detective" website also offers lesson plans, educational videos, quizzes, and a fake news database at [mediadetektiv.hu](http://mediadetektiv.hu).

## 6.6. Dramatization and digital storytelling

During dramatization, students can act out different scenes related to the use of social media in crises. This can be supplemented with digital storytelling techniques, where digital tools are also used to illustrate the topic. They can act out scenes, make short films or even comics about them. This solution can also be combined with the project method. (Fegyverneki 2023).

## 6.7. Teaching studios, teaching media workshops

The most significant teaching studio and teaching media workshop in Hungary is the Búvösvölgy Media Literacy Center, which operates as a national network with a presence in several large cities and the capital.

The Televele Media Education Workshop Association focuses on media education for young children. It helps parents and educators develop their media literacy through classes, workshops, and publications.

National media studios, such as the Hungarian state media, organize studio and editorial visits, and some local television stations also offer this opportunity (e.g., Debrecen Television). These professionally guided studio and editorial office visits provide an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how the media works and to develop a critical sense of media content.

## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Key findings of the report

Key findings of the desk research

According to research, social media plays a significant role in the lives of young people in Hungary, who spend an average of four hours a day on social media. The most frequently used platforms are TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram. Excessive use of social media is more common among girls, which may be related to the fact that only 53 percent of girls said they feel good about themselves. Body image issues are also more common among girls. One-fifth of young people in Hungary are dissatisfied with their lives. The most important problems include an uncertain future, financial difficulties, and a lack of life goals, which rank in the top three.

Due to their high exposure to social media, they also encounter crisis situations that have a negative impact on their mental health, causing fear, anxiety, depression, and negative perceptions among them. However, they also have positive coping strategies, such as connecting with nature, spending time with pets, physical activity, and spending quality time with friends and family members.

According to previous research on the relationship between social media and young people, this age group is particularly vulnerable to the dangers of social media because at this age, the opinions of others, including peers, matter a lot. Thus,



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negative feedback can generate stronger emotional responses among them than among older age groups.

Social media news about crisis situations also generate negative emotions in young people, which increase stress, anxiety, depression, and information overload. Overall, these can lead to withdrawal, a narrowing of social behaviour, and increased isolation. The negative effects of social media posts related to crisis situations particularly affect young people, especially girls, making them the most vulnerable target group.

At the same time, social media also offers coping strategies in times of crisis, such as personal communication with acquaintances and friends, supportive and positive posts, and useful and reliable information, while also providing entertainment through humorous content, for example.

Personal crises affecting individuals include loss of social status, the FOMO phenomenon, various anxieties (e.g., due to the climate crisis or an uncertain future), and addictions. Social crises include economic crises, violent events, and emigration. Global crises include pandemics, climate and environmental crises, natural disasters, wars, and humanitarian crises.

All of these trigger negative emotional and cognitive responses in young people, in which disturbing images and videos seen on social media, as well as fake news and the uncertainty they create, play a major role. The negative effects can manifest themselves in the development of harmful habits (such as addictions) and, ultimately, in changes in social relationships (such as withdrawal). At the same time, there are also examples of positive effects, with crises often encouraging young people to change their way of thinking, appreciate the small joys of life, and seek out nature, and a greater appreciation of personal relationships can also be observed among them.

There are several ways to reduce the negative effects of crisis situations seen in social media: these include the work of teachers and youth workers in schools, extracurricular activities, gamification, the use of artificial intelligence-based solutions,

personalized counseling, social media campaigns, methodological and educational online and offline materials, dramatization, digital storytelling and visit teaching studios.

#### Key findings of the field research

To complement the desk research, empirical data through surveys and interviews were also collected. The 15 young people we surveyed mostly use Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube among social media platforms. They spend 1-4 hours a day using these platforms. According to the survey results, they consume crisis content for less than 10 minutes a day or between 10 and 30 minutes on social media. According to their own admissions, such content most often makes them feel sad, but disappointment, anxiety, and worry are also common. The young people surveyed are most afraid of personal crises such as bullying at school and violent incidents. The majority of respondents are also concerned about mental health, environmental crises, and cruelty to animals. At the same time, the vast majority of respondents are optimistic about the future and hope that things will get better. According to their own statements, coping strategies for crises are dominated by nature walks and listening to music.

According to interviews with teachers and youth workers, the mental health of young people has clearly deteriorated in recent years, which some experts attribute to the Covid lockdowns. According to the interviewees' experiences, young people encounter various crisis-related content on social media, which has a clearly negative impact on their mental health. The most frequently reported crisis content was related to climate change. The crises seen on social media primarily cause anxiety among young people, more and more of whom are worried about the future. As a result, many are considering postponing starting a family. According to the experts interviewed, the most effective coping strategy for young people facing crisis content online may be to disconnect from the online world, engage in offline activities, and nurture personal relationships. Consciously limiting such content, even through "teaching" algorithms, can be effective in warding off negative mental effects.

## 7.2 Critical Reflections on the Report

### Critical reflection on the desk research

Previous research has not focused specifically on the mental, cognitive, and physical effects of social media content about crisis situations on young people, so there is a need for country-specific research of this kind. It is also important to explore what situations young people actually experience as crises on social media. These may vary from country to country, so comparative research would be important. There is also a lack of research exploring differences between young people of different ages, social status, and cultural backgrounds. To date, little research has been conducted comparing the impact of crises in social media on young people across countries. It would also be important to explore, in a country-specific comparison, what coping strategies young people use in practice in crisis situations and what differences there may be between countries. In Hungary, it would be important to place greater emphasis on media literacy education in schools, in a form that is accessible and playful for young people.

### Critical reflection on the field research

The surveys and interviews provide meaningful exploratory insights into how Hungarian young people experience crisis-related content on social media. However, several methodological limitations, most notably the small sample size, the reliance on self-reported data, and the limited diversity of perspectives, require cautious interpretation. The survey included only 15 young participants, and five interviews were conducted with teachers and youth workers. While these data offer valuable indications, the small sample limits the generalizability of the findings, which should therefore be viewed as exploratory rather than representative of the broader youth population.

Furthermore, the information collected on social media usage and exposure to crisis-related content is based entirely on self-reporting. Adolescents often under- or overestimate their screen time, and without objective usage data, the accuracy of

these estimates remains uncertain. Social desirability bias may also have shaped the way participants described their coping strategies.

It is noteworthy that the young people surveyed and the teachers and youth workers interviewed see the situation differently on several points. The young people surveyed are less concerned about economic and livelihood issues, while the teachers and professionals interviewed reported that, in their experience, these crises and climate change are of greatest concern to young people. However, based on the questionnaire responses, most respondents were afraid of bullying at school. The most striking difference was in the coping strategies related to crisis content. According to teachers and youth workers, offline activities and maintaining personal relationships would be the most effective ways to combat mental health problems caused by crises, while the young people we surveyed are the least likely to use these strategies. This suggests that young people either do not believe these strategies to be effective or are unfamiliar with them, and therefore need to be introduced to them by professionals. It would definitely be important to conduct the research on a larger sample size in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the effects of crisis content on social media on young people's mental health and effective coping strategies.

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## Appendix

### I. Analysis and key results of the surveys

Number of respondents: 15

#### 1. Personal information

##### Age:

Age	Number of respondents
17	1
19	6
20	1
22	5
23	1
24	1

##### Gender:

Gender	Number of respondents
Male	2
Female	13

##### Where do you live?

Type of residence	Number of respondents
in rural region	7
in a city	8
in a capital	0

#### 2. How often do you use social media platforms?

Platform	Never	A few times a week	1-2 hours a day	3-4 hours a day	More than 4 hours a day



Facebook	1	6	8	0	0
TikTok	2	1	5	6	1
Instagram	0	0	7	7	1
X	13	1	1	0	0
YouTube	3	1	7	2	2
Other, namely	8	2	5	0	0

### 3. What crises do you see most often on social media?

Type of crisis	Number of respondents
Personal crisis stories (e.g. illness, trauma, loss)	13
Mental Health-Related Issues (e.g. Depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, ADHD)	12
Bullying (e.g., school bullying, abuse, hate speech)	8
Wars and armed conflicts (e.g., Russia-Ukraine, Middle East)	13
Climate crisis (e.g., drought, record temperatures, heat waves, floods, severe storms, forest fires, melting polar ice)	10
Environmental issues (e.g., plastic waste in rivers and oceans)	8
Natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, hurricanes, pandemics)	12
Animal cruelty	9
Violent acts (e.g., accidents, street robbery, violent protests, riots, people dying etc.)	12
Economic crisis (e.g., inflation, stock market crash, financial uncertainty)	8
Migration and refugee situations	8
Political instability (e.g., elections, corruption, polarisation)	12
Pandemics	5

### 4. What are the crises that concern you most?

Type of crisis	Number of respondents
Personal crisis stories (e.g. illness, trauma, loss)	5



Mental Health-Related Issues (e.g. Depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, ADHD)	8
Bullying (e.g., school bullying, abuse, hate speech)	10
Wars and armed conflicts (e.g., Russia-Ukraine, Middle East)	6
Climate crisis (e.g., drought, record temperatures, heat waves, floods, severe storms, forest fires, melting polar ice)	7
Environmental issues (e.g., plastic waste in rivers and oceans)	8
Natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, hurricanes, pandemics)	5
Animal cruelty	8
Violent acts (e.g., accidents, street robbery, violent protests, riots, people dying etc.)	9
Economic crisis (e.g., inflation, stock market crash, financial uncertainty)	4
Migration and refugee situations	5
Political instability (e.g., elections, corruption, polarisation)	5
Pandemics	5
Other, namely:	

## 5. What are your reasons for engaging with crisis-related content on social media?

Reasons	Number of respondents
To stay informed about what is happening in the world.	10
Because it affects my own life or future.	8
To better understand complex issues.	2
Because people in my social circle talk about it.	2
To feel connected to others who are affected.	3
To learn how to take action or help.	5
Because it touches me emotionally.	8
Out of curiosity.	8
Because it is shared frequently in my feed.	3
I don't actively engage – it just appears.	6
Other:	0



6. What do you think, how much time do you spend watching or reading crisis-related content on social media per day?

Time	Number of respondents
Less than 10 minutes	5
10–30 minutes	5
30 minutes to 1 hour	2
1–2 hours	0
More than 2 hours	0
I don't know / I never thought about it	3

7. How does crisis-related content on social media affect you personally?

Answer	Number of respondents
It makes me feel anxious or worried.	6
It makes me feel disappointed.	6
It makes me feel sad.	8
It makes me feel overwhelmed.	1
It makes me feel guilty.	0
It makes me feel more informed.	6
It makes me feel angry or frustrated.	5
It motivates me to take action or get involved.	3
It helps me understand what others are going through.	5
It makes me feel powerless or hopeless.	4
It makes me distrust political institutions or democratic processes.	6
It makes me feel I want to be on my own.	0
I don't care about the content.	1

8. How do you feel about your own future?

Answer	Number of respondents
I feel uncertain or confused about the future	4
I feel hopeful that things will get better.	9
I feel motivated to be part of a solution.	1
I feel powerless and that I can't make a difference.	0
I don't think much about the future.	0



Things are going in a very bad direction.	0
Things are going in a bad direction.	1
Things are going in a good direction.	0
Things are going in a very good direction.	0

**9. When you feel stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed because of crisis-related content on social media (e.g. about war, climate change, or inflation), what do you do to calm yourself or feel better?**

Answer	Number of respondents
I take care of myself (e.g. resting, eating well).	7
I talk to someone or ask for help.	2
I pray or meditate.	1
I try to find something funny (e.g. memes or videos).	1
I try to think about things in a more positive way.	7
I move my body or do sports.	6
I spend time with animals or pets.	6
I go outside into nature (e.g. walking, gardening).	9
I listen to music.	9
I watch movies or TV shows.	5
I spend time with friends or family.	4
Others, namely:	



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## II. Protocol of the interviews

### Interview 1

#### Phone-based interview

**1. From your perspective: How has the psychosocial development of young people changed over time?**

**Answer:** I have been working in secondary schools for 25 years. Currently, I feel that I have never encountered so many young people struggling with mental health issues. This trend has become particularly pronounced since the COVID-19 pandemic.

**2. In your opinion, is there a connection between consuming crisis-related content on social media and the social and emotional well-being of today's adolescents?**

**Answer:** I haven't given this question much thought yet, but in my opinion, there may be such a connection. The current global political conflicts and climate anxiety certainly influence the mood of young people.

**3. Based on your experience: What types of crisis-related content do young people consume on social media? Have adolescents ever shared such content with you or talked to you about it?**

**Answer:** Natural disasters, reports from war zones, political incidents (protests, demonstrations).

**4. From your perspective: What social or emotional problems do you observe in young people in connection with crisis-related content on social media?**



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**Answer:** Anxiety, feelings of uncertainty, hidden aggression.

**5. Based on your experience, how do crisis-related social media contents influence young people's worries and their outlook on the future?**

**Answer:** Most of the time, I hear about the effects of climate change. I think that's what most people are concerned about.

**6. Which coping strategies would you recommend to adolescents who experience stress or anxiety due to crisis-related content?**

**Answer:** Individual anxiety relief, talking to peers, and in extreme cases, professional help.

**7. Which strategies do you know or recommend to interrupt or better regulate the exposure to constantly negative content?**

**Answer:** I cannot mention any specific strategies. It would simply be best to severely restrict this type of content (stating facts is fine, but biased content is problematic).

**8. From your perspective: What positive effects can social media have in times of crisis?**

**Answer:** Direct communication with acquaintances, friends, family members; sense of community with others; acquisition of practical and useful information.

## **Interview 2**

### **Phone-based interview**



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**1. From your perspective: How has the psychosocial development of young people changed over time?**

**Answer:** Nowadays, it is not enough for a high school teacher to simply impart subject knowledge. Supporting students' psychosocial development, being empathetic, being sensitive to mental health issues, and understanding the effects of the digital space are all part of the daily routine. At the same time, young people are more sensitive and open to social issues, and they are better at representing their own interests and articulating their needs.

**2. In your opinion, is there a connection between consuming crisis-related content on social media and the social and emotional well-being of today's adolescents?**

**Answer:** Social media constantly broadcasts the world's crises: wars, climate change, economic instability, epidemics, political tensions, etc. This content often floods students uncontrollably and causes them anxiety. Today's young people are not prepared to process news about global crises and do not have sufficient tools (either emotional or interpretative) for psychological processing.

**3. Based on your experience: What types of crisis-related content do young people consume on social media? Have adolescents ever shared such content with you or talked to you about it?**

**Answer:** During lessons, they ask the most questions about wars, climate change, economic instability, epidemics, and political tensions. These topics must be discussed; none of them should be taboo or trivialized.

**4. From your perspective: What social or emotional problems do you observe in young people in connection with crisis-related content on social media?**



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**Answer:** The constant stream of negative news and crisis reports creates a feeling of constant uncertainty and causes anxiety among adolescents. Students find it difficult to "switch off" – social media is a non-stop presence in their lives. They often feel that they have no influence on events, which can easily lead to a lack of motivation in their studies and future planning. Constant negative content and comparing their own lives with others can cause self-esteem issues and even depression.

**5. Based on your experience, how do crisis-related social media contents influence young people's worries and their outlook on the future?**

**Answer:** Crisis content appearing on social media has a significant impact on young people's concerns and outlook on the future, often to such an extent that it influences not only their mood, but also their goals, decisions, and even their general attitude towards life.

**6. Which coping strategies would you recommend to adolescents who experience stress or anxiety due to crisis-related content?**

**Answer:** Developing emotional awareness and self-knowledge would be the primary goal. Learning relaxation techniques is also an important task.

**7. Which strategies do you know or recommend to interrupt or better regulate the exposure to constantly negative content?**

**Answer:** Emotional diary, autogenic training, mindfulness, sports activities, open communication.

**8. From your perspective: What positive effects can social media have in times of crisis?**



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**Answer:** It can provide an opportunity for community cooperation and strengthening solidarity. Social media gives us the opportunity to connect with others who share similar values or are experiencing similar difficulties. This can help in providing and receiving emotional support. Social media democratizes the expression of opinion, allowing young people to make their voices heard and share their thoughts and initiatives.

### **Interview 3.**

#### **Personal interview**

#### **1. From your perspective: How has the psychosocial development of young people changed over time?**

**Answer:** I am not a practicing teacher, but I regularly hold craft, media awareness, and other activities for groups of children. Based on this, I see that children today are often more restless, have more difficulty maintaining their attention, and are less persistent in completing tasks. They are often clumsier in fine motor activities, while their attachment to the online world is very strong: they are often mentally present there, even when they should be doing something else. I feel that their behavior and the dynamics of their development have been most influenced by their exposure to rapid stimuli and their constant digital presence.

#### **2. In your opinion, is there a connection between consuming crisis-related content on social media and the social and emotional well-being of today's adolescents?**

**Answer:** In my work with groups of children, I have noticed that young people's emotional state can be affected by content related to crises, conflicts, and disturbing events circulating on social media. Many of them encounter such information at a very early age, often without any filtering. I see that this can cause uncertainty, anxiety, or an excessive sense of doom, even if they are not always able to put it into



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words. In social situations, it is sometimes noticeable that they are overwhelmed: they find it harder to relax, are more impatient, and switch between emotional states more quickly. Although not all young people react this way, overall it seems that the crisis content they see on social media places an additional burden on them in an already stimulating environment.

**3. Based on your experience: What types of crisis-related content do young people consume on social media? Have adolescents ever shared such content with you or talked to you about it?**

**Answer:** Based on my own experience, young people often encounter content that deals with some kind of crisis, conflict, or disturbing event, but they don't usually talk to me about it directly. They did not share such content with me during the sessions, nor did they ask me about it. Indirect signs—such as their half-spoken sentences or reactions—suggest that they encounter short videos related to wars, natural disasters, accidents, or various "dramatic" news stories. These are usually fast-paced, emotionally charged pieces of content that seem to have a big impact on them, even if they don't talk about it openly.

**4. From your perspective: What social or emotional problems do you observe in young people in connection with crisis-related content on social media?**

**Answer:** In my experience, children basically love everyday, tangible situations and can be easily involved in anything that is personal, playful, or creative—the younger they are, the more so. For this reason, the impact of crisis content seen on social media is not always immediately apparent. However, in the background, they sometimes feel a kind of inexplicable tension or uncertainty. They are more easily upset, more sensitive to conflict, and sometimes find it more difficult to switch from one situation to another. It seems that the disturbing events seen on social media—even if they are not talked about—may contribute to the slight, constant unease that



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sometimes appears in them. This is more noticeable in moods, fluctuations in attention, and small behavioral details than in explicit statements.

**5. Based on your experience, how do crisis-related social media contents influence young people's worries and their outlook on the future?**

**Answer:** I don't spend enough time with them, and we don't have deep enough conversations for me to really be able to assess this. They don't talk about their fears for the future during the sessions, and I don't see any clear signs that the crisis content they see on social media is strongly influencing their outlook.

**6. Which coping strategies would you recommend to adolescents who experience stress or anxiety due to crisis-related content?**

**Answer:** I see that children really come alive when they are doing real, tangible things: creating, moving, playing, or simply being with others. At times like these, they function completely differently—they are calmer, happier, and much more themselves. Personal presence and direct attention also matter a great deal. When someone is really there with them, listening to them, laughing with them, asking them questions, the tension visibly dissipates. It seems to me that the more real, offline experiences they have, the easier it is for them to let go of the anxiety that the online world often places on them. Closeness, connection, and "real life" always calm them down.

**7. Which strategies do you know or recommend to interrupt or better regulate the exposure to constantly negative content?**

**Answer:** It can help a lot to break the online rhythm from time to time. A short walk, a craft activity, a conversation, or any simple, everyday activity is enough to break the cycle of negative content. I also think it's important to have "switches": situations or habits that automatically take us away from the screen. For example, playing a game



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together, having dinner, doing some exercise, or anything that brings us back to the present. I believe that personal relationships, attention, and offline experiences calm people down much faster than any online content. When these are present, it is easier to let go of negative videos and news.

#### **8. From your perspective: What positive effects can social media have in times of crisis?**

**Answer:** For many children, it really means a lot to be able to check on their friends and family members at any time and be sure that everyone is okay. This makes them feel that they are not alone and that there is someone with whom they can share their feelings, even if only in a short message. I often see that social media also helps them laugh: funny videos, memes, or short playful content can easily lift their spirits, and when this happens, you can see the relaxed smiles and lighter atmosphere. Sometimes children get ideas and tips from social media on how they can help others or get involved in a charitable initiative. And, of course, there are those who quickly find useful information that helps them stay informed and feel better in uncertain situations.

### **Interview 4.**

#### **Personal interview**

#### **1. From your perspective: How has the psychosocial development of young people changed over time?**

**Answer:** Young people (aged 16-25) begin to build their identity at this stage of their lives: who are they, where is their place in the world? What are their goals? What do they want to be? In my opinion, the crises portrayed in the media (environmental disasters, wars, etc.) contribute to this in such a way that some people try to incorporate this information and deal with it in some way (e.g., they become environmentalists or choose a profession that can protect them in a crisis situation,



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such as doctor or engineer). Others, however, are filled with fear by this situation and live (apparently) as if these dangers did not exist. They are almost unaware of them (that there is a war going on next door) and completely distance themselves from these events. In my opinion, these young people cannot develop psychosocially in this way. They do not make plans. It is as if they live in a world where everything is fine, so there is no need to do anything. They also shirk responsibility. Solving crises/problems is the task of adults, the state, and everyone else. They do not develop a sense of responsibility, independent decision-making skills, or planning skills.

**2. In your opinion, is there a connection between consuming crisis-related content on social media and the social and emotional well-being of today's adolescents?**

**Answer:** In my opinion, there is a connection. I understand that, for example, during the COVID period, the number of young people registering for/admitted to youth psychiatric wards multiplied. Specifically, the number of young people with eating disorders. During the COVID period, "life" took place even more online. Young people consumed even more social media. Unsurprisingly, this caused anxiety for many of them. Even as adults, it is difficult to cope with the negative news that floods us from the media, so how much more so for a young person whose personality is still developing. They have less experience of how to cope with crises.

**3. Based on your experience: What types of crisis-related content do young people consume on social media? Have adolescents ever shared such content with you or talked to you about it?**

**Answer:** TikTok videos about war events and environmental disasters.



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**4. From your perspective: What social or emotional problems do you observe in young people in connection with crisis-related content on social media?**

**Answer:** In my opinion, many young people are postponing starting a family because they don't want to bring children into such a dangerous world. And, of course, there are those who completely remove these problems from their lives; if they see this kind of content, they simply block it, thus avoiding the anxiety it would cause.

**5. Based on your experience, how do crisis-related social media contents influence young people's worries and their outlook on the future?**

**Answer:** Yes, it clearly has an impact on having children. Many people decide that it is not safe to start a family.

**6. Which coping strategies would you recommend to adolescents who experience stress or anxiety due to crisis-related content?**

**Answer:** Developing their social skills, finding constructive youth communities (these can be sports, arts, other hobby groups, or even religious communities). Stepping out of their comfort zone to experience how they can handle unexpected situations and increase their self-confidence as a result.

**7. Which strategies do you know or recommend to interrupt or better regulate the exposure to constantly negative content?**

**Answer:** Participation in programs that help recognize fake news. Banning the TikTok channel. Limiting daily time spent on other social media sites. Learning and applying relaxation techniques.

**8. From your perspective: What positive effects can social media have in times of crisis?**



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**Answer:** Programs and podcasts that deal with coping with crises and share positive examples and strategies can be helpful. Messenger groups and communication help maintain social relationships, keep in touch with friends who are physically distant, and share information (which can also be supportive) within groups of friends.

## **Interview 5.**

### **Phone-based interview**

**1. From your perspective: How has the psychosocial development of young people changed over time?**

**Answer:** I see deterioration in many people. But we are ahead in many areas (e.g., mental health is a more accepted and treated area).

**2. In your opinion, is there a connection between consuming crisis-related content on social media and the social and emotional well-being of today's adolescents?**

**Answer:** There is definitely a connection. It can certainly increase anxiety. Climate crisis, livelihood, housing. Students say they feel much more burdened because they receive much more information through social media than their parents or grandparents, for example.

**3. Based on your experience: What types of crisis-related content do young people consume on social media? Have adolescents ever shared such content with you or talked to you about it?**

**Answer:** Many different topics are covered. The climate crisis, housing and livelihood issues, wealth inequality, identity conflicts, and fascism. The Russian-Ukrainian war and the Palestinian situation are also featured. Natural disasters and floods.



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**4. From your perspective: What social or emotional problems do you observe in young people in connection with crisis-related content on social media?**

**Answer:** Anxiety is the most common. The lack of predictability about the future, anti-humanism (zero extinction), relative indifference, disillusionment, anxiety about an uncertain future.

**5. Based on your experience, how do crisis-related social media contents influence young people's worries and their outlook on the future?**

**Answer:** Anxiety, uncertainty about the future, worrying about the future.

**6. Which coping strategies would you recommend to adolescents who experience stress or anxiety due to crisis-related content?**

**Answer:** Political action and activism can also be a solution. They need to find people with similar interests and take action. On the one hand, this helps their mental health, reduces their isolation, and increases their sense of agency. On the other hand, some of their anxieties are indeed based on reality, and this must also be recognized. One solution may be to limit such content and focus on the more tangible aspects of life.

**7. Which strategies do you know or recommend to interrupt or better regulate the exposure to constantly negative content?**

**Answer:** I am not very familiar with such strategies. Perhaps content restriction, profile deletion, and positioning the algorithm for more positive content could be a longer-term strategy for this.

**8. From your perspective: What positive effects can social media have in times of crisis?**

**Answer:** During lockdown, it helped reduce isolation. At the same time, the algorithm's confirmation bias can lead to a distorted perception of reality. Some people recognize this, and their critical thinking skills are strengthened as a result. But I fear that the majority, especially those under the age of 18, are not prepared for this. It would be important to help and inform those affected and to launch assistance and support programs. At the same time, the positive effect of social media is that it provides a kind of cohesive force, a feeling of "I am not alone."



# MENRE

Strengthening the mental resilience  
of youth in dealing with crises  
presented on social media

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