

TOOLS FOR INCREASING SAFETY AWARENESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

There comes a time in the life of every family when their child becomes an adult and sets out to put themselves to a great test: undertaking further studies in higher education institutions. But can we really use the word adult for these youngsters? Seen from a teacher's point of view, we surely cannot: we see them every day, and it is obvious that they are still very much children. And if we think deeper, we can understand it, we too were once freshmen. When parents let their children go out into a world that is yet unknown to them, the most important concern is their safety. Security consciousness is appearing in many places in higher education. Getting to the school, living in hostels, the rent, the whole environment, the list is endless. But we should mention something that has become an integral part of the new world, which is freedom, and the lack of parental control. Many simply cannot handle this and get carried away, some people just can't say no to a friend's invitation. And there is yet another serious source of danger; the Internet. Social media pages, email accounts, video sharing channels, etc. that keep appearing and refreshing. All are potential sources of attack, and if we don't have sufficient means of protection, youngsters can easily fall prey.

Keywords: *security consciousness, education, higher education, living together, internet.*

1. Introduction: or why is security consciousness important in an institution for higher education

If we take a piece of printed material and read a couple of lines; or just turn on the television and watch a news programme: What do we read? What do we see? They are loaded with recent negative events happening in our surroundings. Unfortunately, these influence our everyday lives and change our sense and consciousness of security. Security consciousness can be defined in a psychological sense which shows us the sensation. This sensation can be defined and developed to a great extent with conscious education. But how can it appear in higher education? We know that several thousands of students turn up on a campus each day. Aulas are areas of reception for groups of larger count, classrooms offer lecture facilities for smaller groups. The sense of security consciousness is important for students and lecturing staff, since they spend most of their days

in the institution. If we mean to maintain this sense, the presence and provision of the necessary assets is essential. But what are these assets in an educational institution? It is important that these are visible and easy to spot, since what we perceive with our eyes can provide a registered and conscious sense. These days when fires are everyday things all around the country, a fire protection system is indispensable in a premises capable of hosting large numbers of people. I am a manager of a complete educational building – at which I am also a teacher – where there is multilevel fire protection system configured. Knowing the system works 100% fills me with the same feeling of security, as I can consider the people in the building as being safe. An important factor besides this is the presence of the continuous reception service which also provides a reassuring sense of consciousness. With appropriate communication tools we signal the escape paths and the list of action we need to take in case of a crisis. We are continuously providing

our colleagues (and if necessary – such as in the case of workshop sessions, use of labs, etc. –, the students, too) with training in fire and accident safety. We must also be watchful to comply with the requirements of current legal regulations. Protection of the personal data of the students and workers, too, is important [1]. And so we arrive at the crucial point where we must mention one of the most dynamically evolving sectors of our age, the world of the Internet. The operation of a higher education institution in our rushing world with no connection to the World Wide Web is inconceivable. Not having an appropriate defence system is an enormous irresponsibility. An interesting fact: based on a survey, a great part of the population does not use antivirus programs or firewalls. Imagine, when making purchases over the internet, how much of our data can be obtained with just a couple of clicks.

2. Protection of property and persons in a higher education hostel

The peculiarities of our fast-moving world are observable in higher education, too. As mentioned previously, today's higher education system is not really equipped to establish community life, so the institution of the hostel plays an important role in the everyday life of education. Community life is of crucial importance for today's university students, and as leaders, we see it as a necessity for our students. We are therefore convinced that besides its social function, a hostel also has educational purposes, too. In line with today's requirements, there are more and more hostels

present in higher education that are equipped with all modern conveniences. This can create an atmosphere of consciousness of security, but for us, those using the facilities can be further sources of danger. In part, they are their own masters and so the cleaning of their living space – including that of all appliances e.g. fridge – is their own responsibility. There is no need to go into details what this entails. To avoid the partial ceasing of all hygiene, we do regular monthly room checks, somewhat increasing the security consciousness for students – parents – and last but not least for ourselves, at least concerning cleanliness. After building the hostel we spent years fighting the unintended reception of so-called “external” persons, and we must also mention uninvited guests, too. Our institution was, unfortunately, scene to more than one crime committed by sneaking thieves. This, of course, has negatively influenced the sense of security of our students, and we knew that this situation cannot continue and we had to take a step in this matter. We deployed a two-way turnstile entry system. Since then the entry and staying of unauthorized persons have stopped entirely and thefts from students have come to an end, too. We carry out student satisfaction surveys in the hostel every two or three years. In the figures below, the sense of security of our students can be observed before and after the deployment of the turnstile system (Figure 1. and Figure 2.).

Besides the mentioned system there are countless tools to help maintain the consciousness of security, such as the complete fire protection system of the building (smoke sensors, fire alarms,

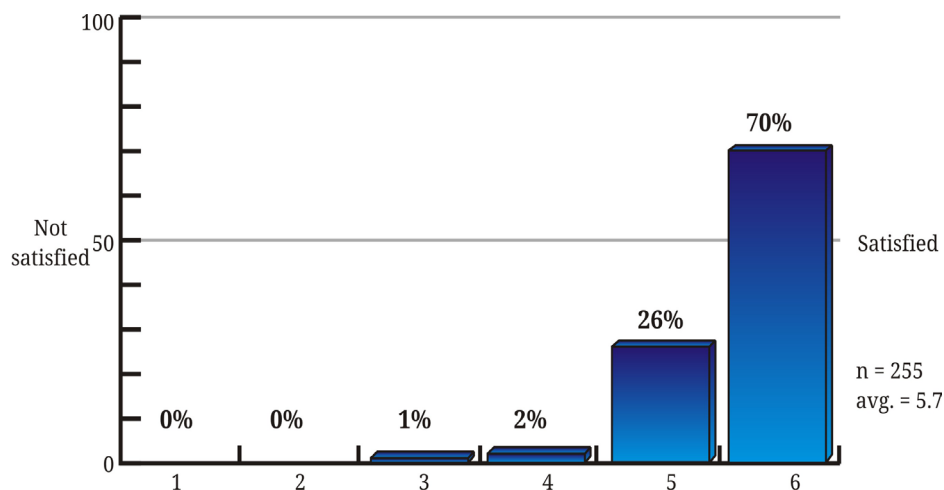


Figure 1. Consciousness of security before (2014)

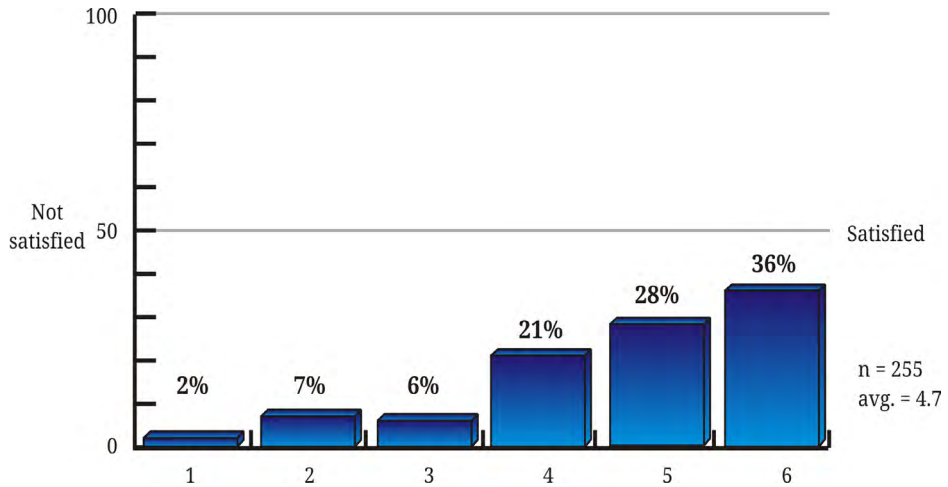


Figure 2. Consciousness of security after (2017)

fire hydrants, fire-retardant doors), the presence of which suggests protection. This is also helped by the non-stop reception service. We must also mention that a sense of security necessary for everyday life must also be maintained, because the service can only operate on a maximum level. This we can achieve by the constant presence of a maintenance crew who can instantly solve emerging problems. The elements of the technical building system are revised in accordance with legal requirements and it is appropriately monitored. We consider our task to maintain or even increase a consciousness of security for our students, besides providing their social provision – meaning a service of accommodation.

3. Norms and attitudes of coexistence

During our lives the process of cohabitation and collaboration is inevitable. If we just think about how we share a machine at our workplace, or, taking another approach, we can use an office together with several colleagues. In the course of our higher education studies this is of great significance for picking up and forming the right kind of socialization. The different workshop sessions, group problem solving tasks can be of help in this, but the most characteristic situation is still living together in a hostel. This has a community building effect, since we all know that the so-called student circles of old, which played a decisive part in the recent (and not so recent) past, are not present anymore in today's higher education system. It is almost the only scene that has remained to enable forming relationship capital and education for community life. Living together has its rules. I

could bring another example of my own, since as an institution manager I have vast experience in this field, especially considering that I myself was a hostel student for 9 years. Today's world differs a lot from the one we ourselves have been socializing in. Today the education of foreign students is a common thing, that has a strategic benefit for the universities, but unfortunately, I'm not sure we are prepared for this. Students arriving from third-world countries have customs, attitudes and norms widely different from what we Europeans are used to. Of course, it is easy to say they are the ones coming to us, they should accept what is here. This can be true, but only from a legal point of view. We are the ones who must teach them the rules of living together, but our first task should be to create an environment that is appropriate for their culture and provide human resources with the required professional and language skills [2]. The consciousness of security must be increased for each and every student. Here the solution should be looked for in cooperation and creation and acceptance of common norms.

Slightly changing the interpretation of the results [3] of the researches of Timmons (2003) we can arrive at the following:

- Commitment and perseverance: this helps to get over obstacles and includes the willingness to make sacrifices, too.
- Creativity and adaptation skills: shows the individual creativity and richness of ideas; it's the capability to grasp uncommon ideas and possibilities.
- Tolerance of risk, ambiguity and uncertainty: a tolerance of controversial situations.

- Striving for perfection: setting an own system of standards, keeping an eye on quality.
- Sticking to success, possibility: shows how much one can identify; continuous attention.
- Leadership: a willingness to build a team, trust, wanting to get the most out of others.

These are attitudes to be acquired and then applied, and only after that is our tolerance towards students of other cultures likely to change. This is of course not just our task, it is waiting for them, too. There is a great amount of work ahead concerning the future. We must be prepared that more and more students will arrive from all around the world, and we'll have to provide them with the appropriate infrastructure, accommodation, and on top of all that, to maintain their sense of security will also be our task.

4. Conclusions

We have tried to bring examples and provide some insight into the security consciousness present in higher education institutions. We have

made it visible that the presence of pedagogy is indeed necessary for university hostels. The presence of consciousness of security is increasingly important today, therefore it bears central significance in the field of higher education, too. There are many factors that can influence this in this environment, but our task is to maintain this in our students' consciousness. Our further aim is to even increase this consciousness and to provide the necessary infrastructure and human resources at all times.

References

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