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Humanitarian Security in Higher Education: Concept and Implementation

[Bezpieczeństwo humanitarne w szkolnictwie wyższym: koncepcja i realizacja]

Streszczenie: Autorzy badają kształtowanie i rozwój bezpieczeństwa humanitarne-
go w kontekście szkolnictwa wyższego, podkreślając jego krytyczną rolę w obliczu
szybkiej transformacji cyfrowej i pojawiających się wyzwań społecznych. Wskazują
na główne zagrożenia dla bezpieczeństwa humanitarne-
go – dezinformację, manipu-
lację algorytmiczną i przeciążenie poznawcze – i konieczność wspierania krytyczne-
go myślenia jako kluczowego narzędzia poznawczego do budowania odporności indy-
widualnej i zbiorowej. Badanie przedstawia triadyczny model edukacyjny oparty na
rozwoju kompetencji, integracji umiejętności korzystania z mediów i kształtowaniu
etycznych wytycznych w celu przeciwdziałania zagrożeniom informacyjnym. Ponadto
sytuuje szkolnictwo wyższe jako przestrzeń do kształtowania światopoglądu, reflek-
sji moralnej i integracji społecznej, ułatwiając kultywowanie świadomości bioetycz-
nej i różnorodności kulturowej. Uniwersytety są przedstawiane jako ważne instytucje,
które promują odporność humanitarną, odpowiedzialność moralną i dialog inkluzyw-
ny, działając zarówno jako centra wiedzy, jak i mobilizatorzy społeczni, szczególnie
w czasach kryzysu. Autorzy zwracają uwagę, że misja szkolnictwa wyższego wykracza
poza tradycyjny transfer wiedzy, wspierając odpowiedzialnych, krytycznie myślących
obywateli zdolnych do utrzymania wolności, godności i sprawiedliwości w złożonym
świecie. Praktyczne zalecenia obejmują integrację bezpieczeństwa humanitarne-
go z programami nauczania, rozszerzanie kompetencji bioetycznych, wzmacnianie auto-
nomii uniwersytetów i wzmacnianie współpracy międzynarodowej w celu zapewnienia
zrównoważonego rozwoju i pokoju.

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Summary: The article explores the formation and development of humanitarian security within the context of higher education, emphasizing its critical role amid rapid digital transformation and emerging societal challenges. It highlights the primary threats to humanitarian security—disinformation, algorithmic manipulation, and cognitive overload—and underscores the necessity of fostering critical thinking as a key cognitive tool to build individual and collective resilience. The study presents a triadic educational model based on competency development, media literacy integration, and ethical guideline formation to counteract information threats. Furthermore, it situates higher education as a space for worldview formation, moral reflection, and social integration, facilitating the cultivation of bioethical awareness and cultural diversity. Universities are portrayed as vital institutions that promote humanitarian resilience, moral responsibility, and inclusive dialogue, acting as both knowledge centers and social mobilizers, particularly in times of crisis. The article argues that higher education's mission transcends traditional knowledge transfer by fostering a responsible, critically thinking citizenry capable of sustaining freedom, dignity, and justice in a complex world. Practical recommendations include integrating humanitarian security into curricula, expanding bioethical competence, reinforcing university autonomy, and enhancing international cooperation to ensure sustainable development and peace.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo humanitarne, szkolnictwo wyższe, transformacja cyfrowa, media, zagrożenia informacyjne.

Keywords: humanitarian security, higher education, digital transformation, media literacy, information threats.

Introduction

The complex nature of the global ecological and humanitarian crises stimulates a significant increase in the attention of society and scientists to the problems of humanitarian security (Martin M., Owen T., 2014).

Humanitarian security is defined as a state of guaranteed protection of the individual, family and ethnic community, as well as their life goals, ideals, values, cultural traditions and way of life. It provides for stable, necessary and sufficient provision of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all individuals regardless of race, gender, language or religion. The central place in the concept of humanitarian security is occupied by the phenomenon of human life, which is considered as a form of existence of the individual in its physical, psycho-emotional and spiritual dimensions.

Humanitarian security from a scientific point of view is an interdisciplinary category that encompasses the conceptual and practical provision of a dignified, safe and sustainable existence of a person as a biosocial being in conditions of threats that are not limited to military or political factors. It is focused on the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, the preservation of their physical, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual well-being.

The main characteristics of humanitarian security in scientific discourse:

- Human-centricity: the focus is not on the state or systems, but on the security of each individual person, their life, health, dignity, freedom and development.
- Multidisciplinary: includes knowledge from the fields of law, ethics (in particular bioethics), sociology, political science, psychology, medicine, ecology, etc.
- Broad understanding of threats: covers not only armed conflicts or disasters, but also social inequality, poverty, discrimination, environmental crises, lack of access to medicine, education, information, cultural heritage.
- Value orientation: humanitarian security is based on the ethical principles of respect for human dignity, justice, equality, tolerance and solidarity.
- Bioethical dimension: considers the problems of protecting life and health in connection with technological, medical and scientific progress, in particular in the field of genetics, transplantology, artificial intelligence, epidemics, etc. (Horban O., Martych R., 2024).

Despite the social relevance of the concept, its problematic aspect is the lack of a clear theoretical definition (Newman E., 2022). That is why scientific analysis of the concept of humanitarian security within specific social conditions is important. Higher education, as a component of social reality, is a sphere where special conditions for ensuring humanitarian security are formed. The authors of this article reflect on this aspect of social relations in modern society.

Presentation of the main research

The concept of humanitarian security has developed in the context of the transformation of the traditional security paradigm (state-centric) towards a more inclusive one – one that recognizes the primary importance of the person in global processes. It is actively used within the framework of UN programs (in particular UNDP), humanitarian law, modern political theory and applied social sciences.

According to modern research, humanitarian security is a concept that combines elements of social policy, human rights, international humanitarian law, bioethics, moral philosophy and global governance (Tadjbakhsh S., Chenoy A., 2007).

Let us consider the main sources covering the classic UN documents on humanitarian security and the modern academic approach to its conceptualization. One of the first documents related to humanitarian security is the United Nations Development Programme published in 1994,

“Human development report 1994: New dimensions of human security” (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). This report is a fundamental document that first conceptualizes the concept of “humanitarian security” as a new dimension of development. UNDP proposes to move from a military-political interpretation of security to a people-centered approach that includes economic, food, health, environmental, personal, political and community security. The document laid the foundation for further research on humanitarian security as a multidimensional category in global development.

An important link in the conceptualization of humanitarian security was the Report of the UN Secretary-General in 2012. This report of the UN Secretary-General summarized the definition of humanitarian security as “freedom from fear, freedom from want and the freedom to live in dignity”. The document specifies methodological approaches to assessing humanitarian security, emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary interaction and intersectoral coordination, and in defines humanitarian security as a tool for strengthening sustainable development, human rights and preventive diplomacy.

Humanitarian security as a scientific and social concept emerged in the middle of the last century and reflected a focus on human needs and rights (Kaldor M., 2007). In the same year, a conceptual monograph by Tadjbakhsh S. and Chenoy A. „Human security: Concepts and implications” was published, dedicated to the problems of humanitarian security. The monograph is a thorough academic study of the concept of humanitarian security in a global context. The authors analyze the evolution of the concept, its theoretical basis, practical application in political strategies and international programs. Special attention is paid to the criticism of traditional state-centrism in the field of security, as well as the analysis of humanitarian security in the context of global justice, peacemaking, bioethics, women’s rights and social policy. The book is a valuable source for interdisciplinary research in the field of international relations, security philosophy, and humanitarian law (Tadjbakhsh S., Chenoy A., 2007).

An important feature of this phenomenon are such components as comprehensive satisfaction of needs and absence of fear (Reinsberg B. et al., 2024; Hanlon R.J., Christie K., 2016) and the possibility of full human development (Stern M., Öjendal J., 2010). Systematic analysis of theoretical sources and information from various social institutions makes it possible to identify the following indicators of humanitarian security: absence of need, freedom from fear, possibility of obtaining education, adequate nutrition, access to drinking water, life expectancy, child mortality rate, number of murders, political terror, presence of military conflict, gender equality (Reinsberg B. et al., 2024). Humanitarian security

is closely related to ensuring key human rights and freedoms through the quality provision of educational, cultural, medical, information services and the system of individual values (Horban O. et al., 2024). At the same time, the main factors of its formation are upbringing, information environment, leisure, religion and interethnic relations.

The formation and development of humanitarian security in higher education is directly caused by the rapid digital transformation of society, which, along with the opening of new opportunities, generates significant threats. Among the most significant threats to humanitarian security, we highlight the following: the spread of disinformation, algorithmic manipulation and cognitive overload, which necessitates their scientific analysis and the development of systemic countermeasures. In this context, critical thinking acquires the status of a key cognitive tool for ensuring the resistance of both individual and collective consciousness.

Modern educational transformation is based on three key principles:

- transition from knowledge to competencies;
- integration of media literacy;
- formation of ethical guidelines.

This triune model, according to experts, is the basis for countering information threats (Androshchuk A., Maluga O., 2024). Unlike traditional models that mainly focused on the transmission of knowledge, current educational strategies increasingly give priority to the development of analytical abilities. They emphasize the ability to self-reflect, critically evaluate and verify information flows. Education appears not only as a means of intellectual development, but also as a key tool for countering manipulative practices, disinformation, and cognitive overload, which are key threats to humanitarian security. It should also be noted that the formation of critical thinking in the educational process is inextricably linked with the upbringing of a morally responsible personality (Luchaninova O.P., 2024). The ethical component of curricula is of paramount importance in the context of building a society resistant to information threats. Today, more than ever before, there is an urgent need to cultivate such fundamental values as intellectual honesty, tolerance for diverse points of view, and awareness of the potential consequences of one's own information actions. It is also important to develop responsibility for the dissemination and interpretation of knowledge. As a result, we can argue that educational institutions must form a strong ethical platform for interaction with the information environment. Such a platform should serve as a reliable barrier to the spread of destructive content and provide a basis for constructive and balanced public dialogue. The authors of the article believe that critical thinking cannot be reduced to purely abstract cognitive skills. It finds its practical embodiment in specific actions and behavioral models

(Horban O., Fedjuk V., 2021). Media literacy training involves the formation of a set of competencies that include the ability to deeply analyze information sources and recognize various manipulative techniques. It also involves understanding the algorithmic nature of the functioning of social networks and their powerful influence on the processes of perception and interpretation of information. The use of practical exercises, such as thorough data verification, conducting high-quality content analysis and consideration of real cases of information threats, is an effective means of internalizing theoretical knowledge.

Thus, in the conditions of the digital revolution, education performs a dual and complementary mission. While preserving its traditional role as a fundamental instrument for the transfer of knowledge and cultural heritage, it is simultaneously transformed into a leading mechanism for ensuring humanitarian security. By developing critical thinking, education not only creates a reliable shield to protect society from the destructive impact of information threats. It also contributes to the formation of an active, conscious and psychologically stable personality, capable of effectively resisting manipulation, making balanced and responsible decisions, and actively contributing to the construction of a humane society based on the unshakable principles of freedom, dignity and mutual respect.

Analysis of modern research shows that the issue of national security cannot be considered outside the sphere of education (Panfilov O.Yu., Savchenko O.O., 2021). Optimal organization of the educational process ensures effective fight against poverty, spread of diseases, threats of military nature (Al-Rodhan N.R.F., 2007). The formation of elements of humanitarian security in the context of teaching higher school disciplines is promising (Allison J., 2017). The problem of modern higher education is orientation only on the labor market, while attention to personal development is decreasing (Kromydas T., 2017). In addition, an insufficient number of empirical studies have been recorded in this direction. Such considerations determine the relevance of studying the role of higher education in the formation of humanitarian security. The worldview function of higher education is manifested in its ability to form a holistic vision of man, the world and society, which is based on universal ethical principles. This is the formation of an anthropocentric approach to solving global problems, where the value of human life is considered as an unshakable foundation of any transformations. The educational process is designed not only to arm the student with knowledge, but also to educate a responsible citizen of the world, able to think critically, reflect on the meanings of existence and act in accordance with the principles of goodness, justice and dignity.

By forming the ability to think critically, reflect morally and think globally, higher education contributes to the fact that graduates become

not only specialists, but also conscious citizens of the world. The worldview component of education is based on humanistic philosophy, which orients the individual to a meaningful understanding of his place in the world, readiness for empathy and intercultural communication.

Today, the university is not only a „knowledge factory”. It performs an integrative function: it combines different cultural, ethnic, worldview traditions in a common academic space. Thanks to this, it promotes inclusion, dialogue, tolerance – values without which a sustainable society is impossible (Horban, O., Protsenko, O., 2022). The university also acts as a mediator between the state, civil society and the global world, generating knowledge for policy in the areas of health care, sustainable development, human rights, climate ethics.

From a philosophical point of view, higher education is a space for the formation of a worldview as an open, dynamic system of meanings, focused on understanding the existential challenges of modernity. It is university education, as Karl Jaspers pointed out, that is the meeting place of science and spirit, where the search for truth takes place not only within the framework of disciplinary knowledge, but also in the inner moral experience of the individual. In the context of humanitarian security, this means that the educational process should be filled with content that contributes to the growth of the individual’s ability to self-knowledge, empathy, and awareness of responsibility for a common future. Bioethical discourse in higher education plays a particularly important role in this context (Horban O., Martych R., 2022). It forms value orientations regarding the dignity of human life, the limits of scientific intervention in human nature, and the acceptability of medical and biotechnological solutions (Horban O., Martych R., 2023). In this aspect, higher education acts as a safeguard against dehumanising tendencies, contributing to the preservation of ethical sensitivity in the conditions of technological progress. In addition, higher education performs the function of social integration. In pluralistic societies, universities have the mission of creating an inclusive space where representatives of different cultures, traditions, religions and identities can interact. This is especially relevant in conditions of threats of radicalisation, polarisation and social disintegration. The spread of the ideals of academic freedom, open dialogue, and tolerance is an integral element of humanitarian security.

From a practical point of view, higher education acts as a generator of knowledge and competencies necessary for the formation of institutional mechanisms for the protection of humanitarian security. In particular, we are talking about the training of specialists in the field of social protection, international law, human rights, ethics, psychology, medicine, ecology, IT security, etc. It is in universities that an intellectual resource is formed

that allows us to formulate and implement human development strategies aimed at reducing vulnerability and increasing the resilience of societies to internal and external threats.

The modern world is increasingly characterized by the terms „instability”, „uncertainty”, „traumatism”. In such conditions, education ceases to be just a channel for transferring knowledge – it acquires the function of social and ideological resistance to dehumanization, loss of identity, moral relativism (Bauman Z., 2001). We define this resistance as humanitarian resistance – the ability to preserve the value and cultural foundations of human existence in the context of external and internal threats. The educational environment, in particular the environment of higher education, acts as a space for the formation of such resistance, due to the presence of components of educational interaction that contribute to the preservation and development of the humanitarian potential of society. Humanitarian resistance is not only the ability of an individual to adapt to difficult conditions, but also to maintain the ability to moral judgment, empathy, and understanding one’s own existence. Unlike physical or socio-economic resilience, humanitarian resilience is anthropocentric and worldview-based in nature – it is associated with the protection of human dignity, human rights, and the spiritual life of the individual (UNESCO, 2021).

It is a necessary prerequisite for overcoming humanitarian crises, especially in conditions of war, information aggression, environmental disasters, or moral collapse of institutions. As experience shows, one of the key areas for the formation of this quality is education.

The educational environment as a factor of humanitarian resilience, formed in the following areas:

1. The educational environment as a value space. True education is not reduced to the mechanical accumulation of knowledge, but includes the formation of value and semantic orientations (Nussbaum M.C., 2010). The educational environment is a space where humanistic and democratic principles are internalized: respect for others, recognition of dignity, freedom of thought, justice (Biesta G., 2006; Federowicz M., Terepyshchy S., 2023). In this sense, humanitarian resistance is formed through educational practices that promote awareness of subjectivity, moral autonomy and civic responsibility.
2. The defining role of critical thinking. Critical thinking is a key tool for countering manipulation, ideological pressure and fake information. Higher education institutions that cultivate the development of critical thinking become centers of epistemic resistance – resistance to simplified truths, intellectual apathy, dogmatism.

Humanitarian resistance requires cognitive mobility: the ability to analyze information, question, seek truth in dialogue – and this is what a healthy educational environment provides.

3. Cultural diversity and inclusion. The educational environment – especially in higher education – is designed to reflect and support cultural diversity. Inclusivity, openness to different experiences and narratives strengthens humanitarian resistance, as it forms tolerance, an understanding of otherness as a value, not a threat.

University culture acts as an environment of humanitarian resilience. The educational space of the university manifests itself not only as a place of knowledge transfer, but as a complex socio-cultural construct in which the formation of the personality, its socialization, the formation of moral and ethical orientations and value systems takes place. The university is an institutional space in which the model of an open, pluralistic, democratic society is represented, based on the principles of respect for human dignity, freedom of thought, tolerance and cultural diversity.

In this sense, a higher educational institution acts as a kind of laboratory space for the formation of humanitarian resilience – that is, the ability of the individual and the academic community to resist dehumanizing processes, such as the militarization of thinking, utilitarianism of knowledge, moral relativism. The socialization mechanisms of higher education should be oriented towards the development of civic activity, a culture of discussion, empathy and responsibility – such values that underlie a democratic system and humanitarian security.

In addition, the university infrastructure should include elements of targeted institutional support for humanitarian resilience. This includes a developed policy of psychosocial assistance, support for the mental health of students and teachers, inclusion programs, and anti-crisis strategies for responding to social or political turbulence. All these areas are not only tools of social protection, but also components of cultural and moral resistance, which make the university a guarantor of humanitarian security (Horban O. et al., 2022).

Thus, the university should be considered as a space not only for academic learning, but also as a key institution for the formation of humanitarian subjectivity – the ability to meaningful, responsible and morally sustainable existence in the world.

A higher education institution can also be considered as a space for humanitarian mobilization. In conditions of military aggression, destruction of state institutions or moral degradation, universities can and should play the role of a humanitarian headquarters. It is not only about humanitarian aid, but also about preserving humanitarian discourse, cultivating ideas about a free person, freedom, dignity, a worthy future.

Universities are carriers of a living tradition of humanism. Their autonomy, scientific criticism, educational pluralism are mechanisms for supporting the ideological balance of society. Where university culture as an environment of humanitarian resilience weakens, a vacuum arises, which is filled by radicalism, pseudoscience, or cultural conformism.

Conclusions

An educational environment based on a university culture of humanitarian security plays a strategic role in shaping humanitarian resistance. Such an environment acts not only as a channel of knowledge, but also as a space of meanings, moral orientation, critical self-reflection, and cultural continuity. The university as an institution is capable not only of training specialists, but also of nurturing a person as a subject of humanity. This is its true mission in the conditions of crisis in modern times.

Strengthening humanitarian security in higher education can include several practical steps, including:

- Integration of humanitarian security into educational programs: it is advisable to develop courses that combine knowledge of human rights, bioethics, ecology, and security in an interdisciplinary format.
- Development of bioethical competence: universities should include bioethical training not only for doctors, but also for students of other specialties (technology, law, education).
- Strengthening university autonomy: the independence of higher education institutions is an important condition for the formation of a free intellectual environment for the development of humanitarian security.
- Support for critical thinking and philosophical education: stimulating the humanitarian component in higher education contributes to the development of moral reflection and civic maturity.
- International cooperation in the field of humanitarian education: universities should participate in global educational platforms that promote the spread of the values of peace, human rights and sustainable development.

Higher education in modern conditions appears as a strategic institutional guarantor of humanitarian security. It performs not only educational and scientific functions, but also ideological, ethical, cultural and integrative. By developing the ability for critical thinking, moral reflection, and responsible social action, universities contribute not only to the preservation of individual freedom, but also to the establishment of the

principles of dignity, justice, and solidarity – the foundations on which a humanitarianly secure society is built.

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