

<http://dx.doi.org/10.16926/pe.2025.18.17>

Karol MOTYL

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4203-6434>

Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, Poland

Iwona MURAWSKA

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9691-4311>

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland

Contact: k.motyl@ujd.edu.pl; imurawska@umk.pl

How to cite [jak cytować]: Motyl, K., & Murawska, I. (2025). High School Final Exam Blackmail as Part of Everyday School Life. Preliminary Research Report. *Podstawy Edukacji*, 18, 285–307.

High School Final Exam Blackmail as Part of Everyday School Life. Preliminary Research Report

Abstract

The aim of our text was to identify the forms of pressure experienced by high school graduates in connection with the final exams in the context of everyday school life. We conducted the research using a proprietary questionnaire, which was completed by 239 first-year students of pedagogy at selected Polish universities. The collected data indicate that the phenomenon of a high school final exam pressure affected 20% of respondents. Its two main manifestations are: focusing school life in the final year around the a high school final exam and exerting pressure on students to choose a high school final exam subjects in order to maintain the school's good image. The overall picture of the reported experiences of the final exams allowed for the identification of the highest form of pressure, i.e. the phenomenon of high school final exam blackmail, related to interference in students' choices. The research was preliminary in nature and may, therefore, serve as a basis for a further exploration of the phenomenon of a high school final exam blackmail.

Keywords: high school, final exams, everyday life, blackmail, pressure.

Introduction

The everyday educational reality of students in the final years of high schools and technical colleges means that all their thought is bent on a high school final exam, which not only marks a formal end of education at this stage, but also is

a significant determinant of the future educational and career opportunities. More and more frequently, however, it is possible to notice in the everyday work of school practices the aim of which is to exert pressure on students. This pressure in schools connected with rankings and achievements is sufficiently strong to make the remaining elements of educational reality seem marginal within the whole scope of undertaken activities. A high school final exam attains the status of the Holy Grail of teachers' expectations. A high school final exam, as the final, but also the central, moment in the life of the high school students, involves, at times, coercion and oppressive activities (Murawska, Motyl, 2025). A frequent element of everyday educational reality is, at times, exerting pressure on students in the aspect of declaring a choice of certain subjects to be taken in the course of high school exams. And, even though the preliminary declaration in relevance to a high school final exam is no longer required since the school year 2024/2025, the final one ought to be submitted by 7th February (Głos Nauczycielski, 2025). Taking under consideration that students are graded only until April, it does ultimately not solve the problem faced by them. It is our intention to look at the issue of the assessment of the level of pressure exerted by a high school final exam after the changes as the subject-matter of further research. It still is the case that students' choices concerning a high school final exam may be made under the pressure for the part of teachers, and the forms of pressure may differ a lot than what once was observable. Unfortunately, the pressure in question does not support students, nor strengthens their motivation (it does not result from their actual predispositions or interests), but rather serves the interests of school because it helps to ensure a high level of pass rate of a high school final exam, and, by that means, maintain the prestige of school and its position in rankings. Therefore, it allows an institution to maintain *status quo*, or potentially improve its standing. Such a 'pro-ranking' strategy of an institution restricts the autonomy of students, and may also exert a negative influence on their motivation and choice of the further road of development. In our view, it is necessary to become acquainted with, and to understand, the mechanisms of these practices so as not only to present the superficial character of students' freedom of choice, but also to be able to design in the future activities which will prevent such oppressive practices. Therefore, this article is an attempt to conduct the preliminary analysis of the phenomenon of a high school final exam blackmail as a modest contribution to further research into that element of the everyday reality of high school.

Theoretical foundations

Everyday reality is a part-and-parcel of our life and constitutes the background of the existence of each and every human being. However, what deter-

mines it, has a social and cultural profile. Such aspects of everyday reality like temporal dimension, repeatability and ensuring an orderly spatial arrangement provide the sense of settling in and security. Everyday reality is composed of the manners of communication, thinking, experiencing feelings and activities observed in the form of social practices, and it becomes a crucial realm of reflection, struggle between meanings and finding solutions in social-educational discourse; for that very reason, everyday life sees the occurrence of invisible, whereas exceptionally impactful, processes, which shape the future habits and individual profile of a single human being, and also their relations with the world (Kaufmann, 2004; Ćwikła, 2016).

The notion of everyday reality has more than one meaning, and it is difficult to define it in an unambiguous manner. It is possible to understand it in three different manners:

- everyday reality as determining that, what is ordinary and perceived in the categories of established organisational order;
- everyday reality as the reflection of that, what is typical, possible to perceive with one's eyes and tested empirically;
- everyday reality as parts of life connected with ordinariness, specificity and temporal-spatial vicinity, which result in restricting the activity of a single human being to their own milieu and aims at hand, which are ordinary, specific and usually repeatable (Waldenfels, 1993, pp. 105–107; Wysocka, Tomiczek, 2014).

Everyday reality in general is also relevant to that of school. In this context, it encompasses all situations which students experience each and every day (Ćwikła, 2016). Everyday life is marked by routine, habit and 'being self-evident', and also the mundaneness of its aspects, what is accepted by us without reflecting on, and without criticising it. The accompanying connection with a specific time, repeatability and ensuring an orderly spatial arrangement provides us with the sense of settling in and security. A typical manner of experiencing everyday life is habit (Sztompka, 2008).

Functioning of a human being in society boils down, first and foremost, to living in everyday reality, which is governed by standards, values, aims and tasks. Experiencing this everyday reality constitutes a foundation of constructing one's own view of the world. It ought to be indicated that, in reference to the subjects experiencing it, everyday reality concerns the principal educational milieus, among which one of the most important is school (Ferenz, 2003; Wysocka, Tomiczek, 2014).

Everyday educational reality is a complex and multi-dimensional one, analysed in the context of different problems and phenomena (Jakimiuk, 2021, p. 9). The 'shrouds of school life may fall' one after one, commencing from a broad systemic context, and proceeding ever deeper towards that what consti-

tutes the core of the functioning of a specific school and its everyday practices (Nalaskowski, 2017; Korzeniecka-Bondar, 2018). Therefore, it is possible to describe and research school in different aspects. In the opinion of Mirosław J. Szymański, it is possible to analyse this subject from the following perspectives:

- time and place: the perspective of the present, past and future, location, which decides about the content and profile of experiences;
- awareness and/or lack of reflection, which everyday reality ought to be subjected to;
- personal and/or institutional dimension: individual perspective seen in the light of one's own experiences, or institutional – meaning and the profile of an institution;
- routineness and/or innovativeness: patterns, repeated activities and events (Szymański, 2014, pp. 10–11).

Everyday educational reality is determined by the course of activities in time, rhythm of rituals, time of breaks and classes. According to the words of Maria Dudzikowa, 'owing to the rules and patterns of common-sense thinking, the world of everyday issues becomes orderly for a single human being, who are then able to cope with it in an orderly manner' (Dudzikowa, 2007, p. 234).¹ Everyday reality is also natural (real) and virtual territory of hesitation between settling in, making oneself acquainted with places and activities and uncertainty, strangeness and unexpected phenomena, between trust and a lack of trust, between becoming accustomed and routine and innovative approach (Dudzikowa, Czerepaniak-Walczyk, 2010, p.11). Everyday reality, including educational as well, is discussed by Sławomir Krzychała as 'a mosaic of correlations, diversified degree of involvement, changing roles, expectations, determinants and activities, which together constitute the experience of (everyday) life' (Krzychała, 2007, p.35). It consists of simple, ordinary activities, not requiring too much of attention and effort, but, as well as of those, of those which demand struggling to cope in a changing reality, and also the space of diversified correlations and influences (Krzychała, 2007).

In the context of such correlations and influences, it is possible to analyse one of the elements of everyday educational reality, namely, a high school final exam pressure, which may also assume a form of a high school final exam blackmail. This notion was described by us as an element of the oppressive culture of school. While an attempt is made to identify the levels of the educational pressure of a high school final exam, it ought to be stated that blackmail is its ultimate form, which, as it was ascertained, is the one most frequently applied towards students who have experienced different forms of pressure. It may come in the form of threatening that one will not be allowed to take a high school final

¹ All translations into English of the original texts are the authors' own translations.

exam, or will receive a lower grade. It ought to be added that not only is oppressive culture a permanent ingredient of everyday educational reality, but also the axis of the functioning of educational institutions. What we are looking at here, is a clear and imposed message, which indicates that the autonomous choice of a student will be connected with a severe punishment, most frequently being denied promotion to the next year. Such activities contradict the idea of the autonomy and subjectivity of a student, and also emancipation, indicate, in turn, the pattern of activity in which what matters is solely the prestige and renown of a school, achieved and maintained, in that case, at the expense of students (Motyl, Murawska, 2025).

A high school final exam blackmail stems from the policy of a school concerning the measurement of learning outcomes achieved by students. Permanent testing of their knowledge, and measuring their abilities with the application of grades, frequently becomes a nightmare for students, and such practices, creating a feeling of danger in everyday educational reality, are a source of stress and shame (Groenwald, 2015). Everything is regarded in terms of score, everything is assessed, and the results thus measured are later used to calculate mean grades and draw up the lists of the best students within every class...and that of the laziest as well. Accounting students on virtually each and every activity frequently reaches the level of absurd exaggeration (Jaskulska, 2009). Knowledge is not an autotelic value, but a unit of measurement and a currency. From the point of view of reflection dedicated to the consequences of 'hypertrophy' of measurement procedures in social life, the reactions of young people are a *sui generis* fruit of critical theory understood in ordinary terms; they discover this element of everyday educational reality, deconstruct it and develop its counterpoint (Kalinowska, 2022).

Method

The subject-matter of the conducted research was that of experiences connected with choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam, and also with, related to that, activities of teachers in the context of the oppressive culture of school with pressure on different forms in which it occurs (including a high school final exam blackmail). The aim was to discover, describe and attempt to explain the forms of such oppressive activities of a school (in particular, in the context of choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam). By means of the analysis and interpretation of the received results, we are looking for answers to the three research questions:

- How do female and male graduates assess everyday educational reality in the final year of high school?

- What experiences connected with choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam are those of female and male graduates?
- To what degree did the individuals participating in the research experience a high school final exam pressure?

The research the results of which are presented herein was a pilot one, and it served reaching the purpose of investigating the experiences of a high school final exam amongst the students of the first years of pedagogical majors. The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee. The data were collected by means of a survey, composed of between ten and twenty questions, close-ended and open-ended. It was dispatched to the lecturers of pedagogical majors at universities in Toruń, Częstochowa, Olsztyn, Warsaw, Łódź, Katowice, Opole, Kielce, and also Szczecin (according to accessibility criterion), with a request to forward it online to the female and male students of the first years of B.A. studies, or uniform M.A. studies, namely, to people who have started their first year of tertiary education, on the assumption that they did it directly after passing a high school final exam). It shows the preliminary vision of the experiences of students taking a high school final exam from tertiary education institutions in half of Polish provinces. Such a group made it possible to research experiences amongst the latest high school final exam-takers one year after it. The choice of a research sample does not allow, however, to formulate generalised conclusions applicable to the population as a whole whereas it indicates the need of further research and opens the gate towards broader-scale exploration. The survey was returned by 239 individuals, 196 of whom took a high school final exam in 2024. We decided to take under consideration also first-year students who declared having passed a high school final exam in 2023 and 2022 (43 individuals). First and foremost, we were interested in experiences connected with choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam, and also in the relevant activities of teachers.

Analysis and interpretation of the results of the research

A high school final exam pressure is a phenomenon which does not affect each and every student; however, is it a noticeable element of everyday educational reality. In the case of the question about personal experiences ('Did you experience pressure for the part of teachers or school authorities while choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam?'), 77.4% of the respondents answered that they had not, which may suggest that the majority of graduates had no experience with educational pressure connected with a high school final exam, or did not notice it, treating the pressure in question as a normal aspect of educational reality. In spite of that, many a graduate (every

fifth) declare that problem of the pressure related to a high school final exam may occur in school, even though it is not a phenomenon affecting each and every high school final exam taker. The question concerning the occurrence of the said phenomenon in the milieu ('Did anyone in your school experience the negative consequences of their choices related to a high school final exam?') also shows that approximately 20% respondents know someone who experienced such a situation, what also may prove the presence of such form of pressure or oppression in the everyday life of a school. Detailed results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
High school final exam pressure in figures

	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Do you think that the high school attended by you resorted to practices intended to force students to choose specific subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam?	44	18.4%	195	81.6%
Did you experience pressure for the part of teachers or school authorities while choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam?	54	22.6%	185	77.4%
Were there unwritten rules concerning the choice of subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam in your school?	30	12.6%	209	87.4%
Did anyone in your school experience the negative consequences of the choice of subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam?	46	19.2%	193	80.8%

Own elaboration.

Answering YES / NO could be complemented by replying to an open-ended question in the survey. Answers YES to the question 'Do you think that the high school attended by you resorted to practices intended to force students to choose specific subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam?' were accompanied by many comments, indicating various forms of activities for the part of teachers or educational authorities which may be identified as the form of pressure exerted on a high school final exam takers in connection with their choices. The analysis of these answers makes it possible to categorise practices influencing the choice relevant to high school final exams as follows:

1. Pressure on choice

It is exerted by persuading, or forcing, to choose specific subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam. A high school final exam taker is specifically recommended on the choice of a specific subject:

'An individual who was 'forced' to take a high school final exam failed Polish'; 'Teachers chose what subject you were to choose for a written exam'; 'I wanted to take an extended syllabus in English for a written exam, but our English teacher choose who could, and who couldn't, do that'; '[...] the whole class were told not to take an extended syllabus for a high school final exam in Chemistry'; 'As I studied 3 subjects with extended syllabi, the teacher of these subjects required us to take an extended syllabus for a high school final exam in them'; 'My teacher of Polish kept repeating that it was why we had chosen Humanities-oriented class, and she couldn't imagine we might not take an extended syllabus for a high school final exam in this subject'

2. Pressure of not allowing to take a high school final exam

It is based on threatening not to allow to take a high school final exam by means of refusing to give a positive grade or lowering a grade:

'I was poor at an extended English syllabus, and my teacher said that if I chose an extended syllabus for my high school final exam, I would fail'; 'Threatening not to allow to take a high school final exam, setting so many extra tasks to those who chose extended English syllabus that they decided to resign because of the tiredness caused by learning it'; 'My schoolmate wasn't not as good as others at English, and the teacher said that if he chose it for a high school final exam, he would fail. He had to choose German instead'; They threatened to make it difficult for you to pass of you chose a specific subject with an extended syllabus for a high school final exam'; 'In a Mathematics- and Geography-oriented class, it was required to take these subjects' extended syllabi for high school final exam, or face a risk of not receiving a positive grade on that subject'.

3. Pressure of undermining self-confidence

Mocking, discouraging and lowering self-assessment, resorting to emotional techniques, in order to discourage a student from choosing a specific subject:

'I was oppressed by my Maths teacher so I gave up taking this subject's extended syllabus for a high school final exam'; 'The point was to take no extended syllabi 'because you won't manage'; 'Teacher's words that there was nothing wrong with work on a building site so you can give up on taking a high school final exam'; 'I wanted to take 2 subjects, and my class teacher was trying to persuade me it was too much work and I'd better focus on one'.

4. Pressure of results

Controlling choices and intervening in the decisions of students in order to minimise the risk of lowering mean of grades for specific subjects in a high school final exam:

'If the mock high school final exam brought disappointing results, the head conducted 1-1 talks with each and every student whose result was below 40%, and the students left her room crying'; 'Some of the teachers, and also the head, cared very much about good results of a high school final exam; for that very reason, some of the teachers threatened that students might receive a negative end-of-the-year grade, were very strict and questioned one's choice of subjects at every opportunity (a student ought to take only the subjects which had been taught as extended)'; 'In some cases, the head cares too much about ranking, and that results in students feeling pressure and creates so-called 'rat race' in school'; 'The head is very much concerned with the results and percent of passed

high school final exams, and, this results in pressure on students to do their best in a high school final exam; if someone performed badly at a mock exam, they were suggested not to take a high school final exam in May so as not to lower percentage pass rate of a high school final exam in this institution’.

On the basis of the descriptions of the experiences of students who admitted to have experienced pressure and blackmail in various forms for the part of teachers or school authorities while choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam, it is possible to categorise them into the following groups:

- 1. Experiences of negative treatment and exclusion:** students feel they are worse treated, marginalised or rejected because of the choice of specific subjects; they begin to feel they are treated unjustly and that they are deprived of their right to make an independent choice.

Example responses: ‘As of a school with extended syllabi in Biology and English, its priority was a high level, therefore, less than brilliant students wanting to take a high school final exam in these subjects were treated worse’; ‘My acquaintance was treated in an outrageous manner when school prevented her from choosing Philosophy to be taken in the course of a high school final exam. The teachers looked down on her, and also commented on each and every decision of her’; ‘I felt bad about that, as one treated worse than others. Why couldn’t I try?’; ‘I understood that treating us the way they did was an abuse of teachers’ authority’; ‘Treating students as if they couldn’t cope’; ‘[...] if someone didn’t decide to take her subject, they were treated much worse’; ‘I was oppressed by my Maths teacher so I gave up taking this subject’s extended syllabus for a high school final exam’; ‘I wanted to take an extended Geography’s syllabus for my high school final exam subject whereas my teacher threatened to give me a negative grade if I did that’.

- 2. Experiences of lower self-assessment, emotional disorders, chronic stress and overload:** the pressure and criticism of teachers results in reducing self-esteem, which manifests in, among others, anxiety disorders, the feeling of helplessness and lack of trust in one’s own abilities; students describe the state of chronic stress and emotional strain, resulting from repeated pressure, being set extra tasks and threatening with consequences; many feel overloaded, which makes it difficult for them to learn effectively and make independent decisions.

Example responses: ‘My teacher of Polish always gave me a negative grade for my essays, and kept saying to me I wouldn’t pass; I was preparing to a high school final exam in Polish with not too much of effort and attention as I knew this subject was easy for me, however, because of the grades and comments of my teacher of Polish I felt that my self-assessment suffered a lot; it resulted in downright anxiety disorders, but I passed a high school final exam in Polish with the result above 70%, and, as far my teacher of Polish goes, I hope never to see her again’; ‘Resorting to all and every kind of manipulation and psychological abuse so as NOT take a given subject in a high school final exam’; ‘a lot of stress and pressure ending in the cases of losing consciousness and receiving lower grades’; ‘I took a one-year break because I felt exhausted’; ‘If the mock high school

final exam brought disappointing results, the head conducted 1-1 talks with each and every student whose result was below 40%, and the students left her room crying’.

3. **Experiences of the loss of self-confidence and restricting aspirations:** pressure influences the doubts of students concerning their competences and chances of educational success; that may result in resigning from dreamt-out studies or changing life plans under the influence of pressure.

Example responses: ‘Teachers [...] reminded students about the fact that a high school final exam was coming, and commented skeptically on their competences. One could hear subtle remarks on the need to work harder and on finding a specific choice strange’; ‘A high school final exam pressure resulted in me doubting my chances entering the tertiary education institution I had chosen’; ‘I remember very skeptical comments addressed at my classmate, when, while attending a Humanities-oriented class, she chose Maths’; ‘These were rather negative experiences. I wanted to take extended Polish’s syllabus in a high school final exam, and my teacher of that subject was of the opinion that no one would receive more than 20% for that’; ‘No one exerted pressure on us, apart from the teacher of English, who didn’t want to do material for an extended syllabus for a high school final exam with us, as she thought we’d barely be able to pass a basic one’.

4. **Experiences of resigning from independent activities:** students make decisions they are forced to make under pressure for the part of school, resigning from making independent ones concerning subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam; they accept choices imposed by school and take a high school final exam on subjects chosen by teachers; they relent to pressure and engage in activities frequently connected with various negative consequences.

Example responses: ‘I wasn’t able to study the major I wanted because, feeling a high school final exam pressure, I took the written one in fewer subjects than I wanted’; ‘One boy wanted to take Geography, and the teacher didn’t let him’; ‘I was attending a school of visual arts, and was obliged to take a high school final exam in the extended History of Art’s syllabus; each and every student had to choose it’; ‘I could [...] choose another subject to be taken in the course of a high school final exam, and study a different major, but I know they wouldn’t let me take these exams’.

5. **Experiences of opposing blackmail and ‘revenge’ of school:** a student, in spite of resistance and pressure for the part of teachers or educational authorities, decides to oppose imposed restrictions concerning the choice of subjects for a high school final exam; they take independent and conscious decisions in spite of the lack of support, and, frequently, downright active hostility for the part of teachers or head; such a student is left to their own devices, frequently learning and preparing without an adequate help of school, which increases difficulties in meeting educational requirements and results in frustration; such activities manifest the attitude of resistance against oppressive and unethical educational practices, and are also an attempt to maintain personal autonomy in the conditions of systemic pressure and control.

Example responses: 'I didn't study extended Polish's syllabus, but I wanted to take it in a high school final exam; many teachers refused to help me'; 'Head forced me to resign from a high school final exam in Philosophy because I didn't want to have consultations (extra classes) with him because his behaviour was sexist, and I had a tutor, anyway'; 'When I decide to take extended Maths' syllabus, the teacher deliberately assessed me unfairly lowly, and said that only when I withdrew my declaration concerning a high school final exam, my grades would improve'; 'I wasn't a bad student, however, I chose to take Biology in the course of a high school final exam (even though it wasn't compulsory), and the teacher didn't help or support us, therefore, I had to prepare on my own (which discouraged many from taking this subject)'.

- 6. Experience of feeling being intimidated and the lack of autonomy:** students feel controlled and restricted, having no possibility to take free choices; the ambience of intimidation prevents from expressing individual preferences and is conducive to feeling helpless.

Example responses: 'Unpleasant, it was; they made it difficult for us to make independent decisions, manipulating us'; 'The lack of support, intimidating so as to make sure the statistics look good'; 'I think it's good to see to ambience. Assume that it is good preparation and not intimidation that is an aim'; 'Discouraging from seeing a high school final exam as one for 'mediocre students', 'if one of the less brilliant students declares to take a high school final exam, I will make sure they won't get a positive grade for my subject', 'if you want to pass, you must give up on a high school final exam', 'if you want to take a high school final exam, you must master the material on your own'. Lowering self-assessment in order to make one resign from a high school final exam, treating more leniently students declaring that they won't take a high school final exam'; 'threatening that if one does not resign from a given subject, they won't be allowed to take a high school final exam; unpleasant comments in general'.

- 7. Experiences of contrasting positive character – feeling of improvement in new conditions:** after leaving school and entering a tertiary education institution, students notice a positive change of the ambience; lecturers are less imposing, giving more autonomy and creating a more pleasant milieu for learning.

Example responses: 'Tertiary education appeals to me much more, and I don't feel a negative attitude and pressure for the part of lecturers; the ambience is also better – we are treated like free and adult human beings; in spite of all, I have more time to myself now when I've entered a tertiary education institution because there are no homework assignments and pressure to dedicate my entire free time to studying to a high school final exam'; 'I noticed difference and the level of material, but also in attitude to assignment papers and student'; 'I noticed that the approach of a teacher/lecturer makes a big difference for acquiring information. At a tertiary education institution, I experienced a more friendly ambience and an interesting material presentation; 'The ambience at a tertiary education institution is much more pleasant; the teachers aren't as imposing as those from high school'.

- 8. Experiences of reflection and critical assessment of past experiences seen in the light of the knowledge acquired in the course of studying a pedagogical major:** from the perspective of time, students notice numerous errors

and irregularities in teachers' behaviour and the educational system; there arises the awareness of the necessity of changes and a more ethical approach to students.

Example responses: 'I started to notice errors, and also unwelcome behaviours, of teachers, which, unfortunately, were common'; 'Now, I simply can see more errors made by teachers and school authorities'; 'I can see even more errors of my educators'; 'I know what errors were made by my teachers and what ought not to have taken place in such institutions, and yet they were made'; 'I started to notice how many errors were made by my teachers, and how many situations should not have occurred'.

The above-mentioned experiences indicate the influence of such activities like pressure, blackmail, intimidating, mocking, or even mental bullying in various forms, on students' choices of education and career, their mental well-being, sense of autonomy, and also agency. The analysed answers unambiguously show that these oppressive phenomena, involving teachers and school authorities, are not individual incidents, but a major problem in part of the institutions in question. Such activities may come in the form of, commonly existing, adopting informal rules in force in the final year of a high school, concerning, in particular, the choice of subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam. These unwritten rules may significantly restrict students' autonomy in terms of making decisions relevant to a high school final exam. On the one hand, they may result from the organisational and formal requirements, but, on the other one, they frequently lead to negative emotions, reducing development opportunities, and also stress, lowered self-assessment and the feeling of being treated unfairly. They may also serve the aim of protecting school image and its position in rankings, which is frequently more important than students' individual needs. On the basis of the descriptions from the respondents concerning informal rules of the choice of subjects for a high school final exam, it is possible to draw up a certain catalogue of them. The most common of the unwritten rules of that kind include:

1. **Selecting students on the basis of skills and learning outcomes** – students seen as less successful or receiving lower grades are frequently discouraged or prevented from choosing certain subjects seen by school as more difficult in terms of a high school final exam. It also happens that a student is required to 'meet special requirements' (e.g., related to assessment), so as to be allowed to choose a given subject with the exam in question in mind.
2. **Pressure on 'less brilliant' students exerted to make them resign from an extended subject syllabus** – the students seen as 'less brilliant', regardless of their aspirations, are encouraged or even forced to resign from an extended syllabus for a high school final exam. A tool used to enforce this rule is frequent informal talks and messages, threats, orders, and also humiliating.

3. **Connection between the choice of subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam and the learning outcomes of the schools** – informal rules may order students to choose such subjects which guarantee good results of a high school final exam, what is of importance from the perspective of school's position in rankings. In the case of less successful students (in order to ensure that the school enjoys a good ranking position in the aspect of pass rate), the two above-described rules are applied.
4. **Obligation to choose subjects in accordance with a class orientation** – students are obliged, or persistently persuaded, to choose subjects (including extended syllabi) closely connected with a class orientation (e.g. a student of Humanities-oriented class ought to take an extended syllabi for a high school final exam in the Polish language and history, and not in Biology, Chemistry or Maths). Breaking this informal rule by students results in unfavourable treatment or other sanctions.
5. **Applying sanctions involving impact on thinking and emotions** – resorting to such forms of pressure as blackmail (e.g. threatening that a grade will be lowered), threatening (e.g. not to allow to take a high school final exam, giving a negative grade (mid-year or end-year one) for the subject chosen to be taken in the course of a high school final exam subject), malicious comments, offending students and undermining their self-esteem.
6. **The unwritten contract 'certificate without a high school final exam'** – a secret agreement by the virtue of which school (represented by teachers or head) imposes on a student a condition of resigning from taking a high school final exam in exchange for positive grades in all subjects and a certificate of completing education in high school; such a student can take a high school final exam, but no sooner than a year from that time. Such practices, even though very infrequent, restrict student's autonomy, reduce their self-esteem, the feeling of agency and restrict their right to decide about own education and further development road on their own.

Table 2
Educational determinants relevant to a high school final exam

	Definitely do not agree		Do not agree		Hard to say		Agree		Definitely agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
My high school was a place where I felt good	23	9.6%	26	10.9%	40	16.7%	96	40.2%	54	22.6%
I could count on my teachers when I needed them	27	11.3%	24	10.0%	59	24.7%	82	34.3%	47	19.7%
In the final year, teachers reminded me each and every day that a high school final exam was coming	5	2.1%	16	6.7%	17	7.1%	53	22.2%	148	61.9%

Table 2 (cont.)

	Definitely do not agree		Do not agree		Hard to say		Agree		Definitely agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In the final year, I was provided with suitable emotional support	55	23.0%	61	25.5%	64	26.8%	43	18.0%	16	6.7%
In high school, I became acquainted with the techniques of effective and rapid learning	89	37.2%	72	30.1%	51	21.3%	20	8.4%	7	2.9%
Subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam were treated as priority by the faculty	15	6.3%	21	8.8%	27	11.3%	85	35.6%	91	38.1%
Subjects not to be taken in the course of a high school final exam were neglected by the faculty	54	22.6%	82	34.3%	63	26.4%	25	10.5%	15	6.3%
I felt pressure for the part of teachers or school authorities while choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam	86	36.0%	62	25.9%	25	10.5%	34	14.2%	32	13.4%

Own elaboration.

In the context of graduates' educational experiences, we can see school in a positive and negative light at the same time. On the one hand, more than 60% respondents declared that they felt good in their school whereas more than 84% of them said that teachers each and every day reminded them about a coming high school final exam. It is possible to see this result as a manifestation of a daily pressure exerted on a high school final exam takers and the fact that a high school final exam, or rather its results, are a priority for educational institutions. In spite of the high expectations of schools relevant to results, students were seldom provided with emotional support; nor were they made acquainted with the techniques of effective learning. It may show a school as a place which still does not adopt a comprehensive approach to acquiring knowledge, and also abilities; nor does it notice the connection between students' well-being or ability to learn and successes. Nearly 74% of the respondents claimed that subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam were treated as a priority by the faculty, whilst, at the same time, they did not feel that the other ones were neglected. Most of the individuals taking part in the research did not feel or identify a pressure concerning the choice of subjects for a high school final exam, what may indicate a relative freedom of making this choice by most of the respondents. However, more than ¼ of graduates completing the survey declared to be feeling pressure or blackmail for the part of teachers

or school authorities, which is a significant signal indicating that this problem exists and matters.

In order to obtain more detailed information concerning the analysis of connections between the statements in the survey, the analyses of Spearman's rho correlation ($p < 0.05$) was conducted in the scope of the collected data, which allows us to formulate the following observations:

- experiencing pressure for the part of teachers or school authorities while choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam shows a low negative correlation with the feeling that students could, in time of need, count on teachers (-0.36), with the feeling that, in the final year, they were provided with a suitable emotional support (-0.35), with seeing by students school as a place where they felt good (-0.30), and also with becoming acquainted with the techniques of effective and rapid learning (-0.25);
- experiencing pressure for the part of teachers or school authorities while choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam shows a low negative correlation with seeing school as a place where students feel good (-0.27), with the feeling of being provided with a suitable emotional support in the final year (-0.30), and also experiencing help and support for the part of teachers (-0.28). Interestingly, the experienced pressure shows a moderate positive correlation with experiencing oppressive activities while choosing subjects to be taken for the course of a high school final exam (0.55), and also a low positive one with being reminded each and every day by teachers in the final year about a coming high school final exam (0.31).
- high positive correlation was recorded in the case of providing students with emotional support, and also the feeling of being supported and assisted by teachers (0.71), which may confirm the importance of teachers for building well-being, and also undisturbed emotional functioning, in the final year;
- high correlation is also that between seeing school as a place in which students feel good and it being possible for students to count on their teachers in time of need (0.60).
- low negative correlation in the case of being reminded each and every day in the final year about a coming high school final exam and ensuring suitable support before a high school final exam (-0.33), and also students' becoming acquainted with the techniques of effective / rapid learning (-0.20).

Simultaneously, the results indicate the imperfections of emotional support, training students in the scope of the techniques of effective / rapid learning, and also concerning coping with stress in the crucial period, constituted by the final year of a high school.

Conclusions

The aim of our article was to attempt to identify forms of pressure experienced by a high school final exam takers in connection with this exam, connected, in particular, with choosing subjects in the course of a high school final exam in the context of everyday educational reality. In this context, it is possible to ascertain that, owing to the conducted preliminary research, we were able to identify the phenomenon of a high school final exam blackmail as an element of everyday educational reality.

Analysing the collected empirical data, we were trying to address the three following research questions: How do graduates assess everyday educational reality in the final year of a high school? What are their experiences connected with choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam?, and also: To what degree did participants in the research experience a high school final exam pressure? Graduates assess everyday educational reality in the final year of a high school differently, however, a large part of this group indicates a high priority assigned to a high school final exam in the final year of high school, regardless, whether they claimed to have experienced any forms of a high school final exam pressure or not. Interestingly, being reminded (about the exam in question) every day is not perceived by most of them as a form of pressure. Time spent in educational reality, even though focused on the exam, seems to be rather favourably recalled by graduates (more than 60% of the respondents declared that they felt good in school, and 54% that they could count on their teachers in time of need). Simultaneously, they were unlikely to receive psychological or methodological help. Experiences in the scope of choosing subjects to be taken in the course of a high school final exam are more diversified within the study group. Participants in the research experienced a noticeable high school final exam pressure. Every fifth of students experienced such practices, which influenced both decisions, the feeling of self-esteem or possibilities of further education. Some of the practices of an identified high school final exam blackmail give rise to a lot of concern, and are manifestations of breaking student rights, which ought not to take place.

Experiencing a high school final exam blackmail may negatively influence autonomy, agency, and also well-being, in the crucial moment of education. Such practices result in the feeling of unfair treatment, and also the restricted possibilities of choice in accordance with the individual predispositions and interests of a student. Our research was complemented by analysing answers to the open questions, which made it possible to categorise different tactics of influence choices relevant to a high school final exam (pressure on choice, pressure of not allowing to take a high school final exam, pressure of undermining self-confidence and pressure of results), types of experiences connected with a high

school final exam pressure, and also a catalogue of informal rules concerning the choice of subjects to be taken in the exam in question. The catalogue of those pressures includes a broad scope of behaviours that can be identified as blackmail.

Moreover, the analysis of ascertained correlations shows that experiencing pressure for the part of teachers or school authorities while choosing subjects to be taken in a high school final exam occurs together with the feeling of the lack of emotional support and help for the part of teachers, and also deteriorated mood, of students in school, and with the feeling of being less acquainted with the techniques of effective learning. Moreover, this pressure is connected with experiencing oppressive activities while choosing subjects and being frequently reminded that a high school final exam is coming. A significant correlation also occurs between providing students with emotional support and the feeling that, in time of need, they can count on teachers' help, which emphasises a major role of teachers in ensuring students' well-being. In addition, feeling that school is a place where students feel good, is connected with the feeling that teachers' support is available. Finally, being frequently reminded about a high school final exam is connected with the feeling of smaller support and being less acquainted with the techniques of effective learning. While interpreting these results, it is possible to ascertain that pressure and being excessively reminded about the exam may lower the subjective feeling of support and comfort experienced by students, whereas emotional support for the part of teachers and possibility to obtain their help are crucial for students' good mood and emotional functioning in the context of the exams.

In the light of the result of the research, a high school final exam blackmail is a complex social and educational phenomenon (cf. Murawska, Motyl, 2025). It is possible to understand it as a set of informal oppressive practices and mechanisms of pressure applied by teachers or educational authorities to force high school students to choose given subjects in the course of a high school final exam. A high school final exam blackmail combines official rules in school and informal practices of pressure, which negatively impact students' freedom of choice and their mental well-being. It concerns specific forms of activities (suggesting the choice, threats, lowering grades, mocking and discouraging, forcing to resign), subjective experiences connected with pressure (feeling of intimidation, lowered self-assessment, anxiety disorders, stress, psychological overload, discouraging from following personal aspirations, restricting further educational and career opportunities, resigning from dream-out majors or choosing another direction of education under pressure, and also feeling of unfair treatment and discrimination), and also the profile of blackmail mechanism (informal rule and hidden mechanism of control, not referred to in official regulations; connection with the interest of school in terms of maintaining a high position in rankings;

using the hierarchy of authorities and the status of teachers/head; lack of transparency and legal protection).

Discussion

In the course of the library search conducted in Polish and foreign sources (Google Scholar, EBSCO, SCOPUS, ReseartGate, Academia.edu, and the repositories of Polish universities), no research into the phenomenon of a high school final exam blackmail on a similar scale was found. The subject was only raised superficially in the media (Gazeta Wyborcza 2024, Polskie Radio 2024, Dead Statutes' Society 2022), even though inspiration for these investigations was numerous discussion with tertiary education institutions' attendees concerning their experiences. Due to that fact, discussion about the results of research is difficult, and only possible in the form of our reflections based on conducted explorations. We are aware of the fact that the aim of our research was to diagnose a phenomenon that we find interesting in everyday educational reality of high schools; for that very reason, in the future, thorough exploration of this problem ought to be conducted.

It ought to be indicated that the research was participated in by 266 individuals, among whom data qualified for the analysis were obtained from 239 female and male respondents. The criterion of inclusion was taking a high school final exam no later than in 2022. What also matters is the fact that the research was conducted in half of Polish provinces. Taking under consideration the number of researched individuals in a sample, and also the size of the territory on which the studied schools were located, we think that they are sufficient for the needs of preliminary analyses. However, a thorough exploration of the phenomenon of a high school final exam blackmail requires research conducted on a broader scale and providing the possibility of formulating generalised conclusions on a population in the future. The analyses were conducted on the basis of data obtained from female and male first-year students of pedagogical majors (pedagogy, special pedagogy, pre-school pedagogy and early-school pedagogy), and may not be generalised or treated as reflecting the state of the matters in an entire population. In this aspect, we find it necessary to broaden the study group by including students of other majors in order to describe and explain the phenomenon of a high school final exam blackmail in more detail. Nor is it possible to differentiate the obtained results in reference to an independent variable constituted by sex because the research was participated in by a group of males in the number making the analyses of this type impossible. That constitutes a challenge not only to our research because of women's being a majority of pedagogical majors students. It is required to conduct research on a sample

which will balance the number of both sexes so as to look at the phenomenon of educational blackmail in females' and males' opinions.

Obsession with controlling students' knowledge and measuring not only their workload, but also capacities or personality traits, builds a negative ambience of school based on fear, competing and rivalry (Kalinowska, 2022; Adrjan, 2011; Ostaszewski, 2012; Przewłocka, 2015). Categorising students in accordance with the scale assessments results in treating them as less important than grades, and in school's activity being dictated by tests results and rankings (Kalinowska, 2022; Sauder, Espeland 2009). Results of the final exams both after primary school and the secondary alike are extremely important in the world of education, which results in many a benefit, but also in significant losses and damage (Kalinowska, 2022; Sitek 2014). In order to prepare students to perform the best they can during an exam, primary school is frequently converted into a preparatory course for the eighth-grader exam, and a high school serves reaching the same aim in relation to a high school final exam. Apart from that, on the basis of the best schools rankings, institutions compete with each other for a position in the educational market, which does not necessarily raise the level of education and learning outcomes (Kalinowska, 2022; Bukowski, Kobus 2018), whereas students, in the course of their school time, compete only for grades and the best results of a high school final exam (Kalinowska, 2022).

Recommendations for educational practice

Even though most students do not feel, notice or experience a high school final exam blackmail, every fifth one of graduates declares to have encountered such oppressive activities. The results of the research indicate the need to conduct further explorations and monitoring that phenomenon. It is recommendable to conduct broad-scope quantitative research, and also more in-depth qualitative research, so as to understand the contexts and mechanisms of the functioning of that type of pressure forms in school. It is also advised to implement preventive and educational activities in school, which may make students, teachers, school authorities, and also parents, aware of the problem of blackmail and pressure, its causes, forms and results. What is recommendable as well is the top-bottom implementation of activities which would eliminate such practices.

Developing detailed recommendations is not easy due to the complexity of the researched phenomenon. Still, on the basis of the results of our research, we will attempt to develop a set of such recommendations. In the scope of school activity and teachers' work, an important element might be introducing clear and transparent rules of choosing subjects for a high school final exam respecting the autonomy of students and eliminating pressure or blackmail. An-

other possibility would be to conduct a series of trainings and workshops for teachers on the topic of communication, techniques of effective and rapid learning, professional ethics, psychological support and diagnosing discrimination in behaviour. That could be complemented by developing a psychological support system in schools, with access to professional education and career advisors, and also psychologists. Finally, and perhaps as the most difficult measure, at least in our own opinion, focus of school might be shifted from excessive concentration on prestige and position in rankings on the development of the competences and well-being of students.

Amongst recommendations for students and parents, there are, first and foremost, organising activities on the techniques of effective and rapid learning, and also coping with a high school final exam stress. Apart from that, we suggest conducting classes on human rights and student rights, and also correct practices of choosing subjects to be taken in a high school final exam, which will aim at promoting conscious educational choices in accordance with students' interests and predispositions, and not solely resulting from the pressure of the milieu. It is also important to strengthen support systems helping student and not located in school, principally, in the milieu of family. If parents are expected to provide support and help, they ought to be aware what problems, dilemmas and frustrations students in the final year of a high school encounter, and also what irregularities and oppressive activities are possible in that period in everyday educational reality.

At the meta level, from the point of view of the entire educational system, it seems for us to be important to significantly restrict the role of rankings as the principal indicator of effectiveness and quality of school-based education. Complementary activities may include drawing up regulations counteracting oppressive practices in schools, and also developing the system of monitoring such phenomena. Apart from that, it seems important to support building a friendly ambience of school as well as promoting the culture of respect, autonomy, individual approach to a student and the well-being of all involved in the process of education (including teachers and heads).

References

- Adrian, B. (2011). *Kultura szkoły. W poszukiwaniu nieuchwytnego*. Kraków: Impuls.
- Bukowski, P., & Kobus, M. (2018). The Treat of Competition and Public School Performance: Evidence from Poland. *Economics of Educational Review*, 67, 14–24.
- Ćwikła, E. (2016). Codzienność szkolna ukryta za rytuałem oceniania. In: I. Adamek, & J. Bałachowicz (eds.), *Pomiędzy dwiema edukacjami. Dziecko/uczeń*

- wobec czasu zmiany (pp. 101–116). Łódź: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSP w Łodzi.
- Głos Nauczycielski (2025). *CKE: Do 7 lutego tegoroczni maturzyści muszą złożyć deklaracje przystąpienia do egzaminu*. <https://glos.pl/cke-do-7-lutego-tegoroczni-maturzysci-musza-zlozyc-deklaracje-przystapienia-do-egzaminu>, [access: 11.08.2025].
- Dudzikowa, M. (2007). Uczyć się od idola. O istotnym źródle wiedzy potocznej uczniów. In: M. Dudzikowa, & M. Czerepaniak-Walczak (eds.), *Wychowanie. Pojęcia, procesy, konteksty*. Vol. 2 (pp. 101–102). Gdańsk: GWP.
- Dudzikowa, M., & Czerepaniak-Walczak, M. (2010). Codzienność w szkole. Szkoła w codzienności. In: M. Dudzikowa, & M. Czerepaniak-Walczak (eds.), *Wychowanie. Pojęcia, procesy, konteksty*. Vol. 5 (pp. 9–25). Gdańsk: GWP.
- Ferenz, K. (2003). Szkoła w świecie codzienności dziecka. *Rocznik Lubuski*, 29(2), 15–27.
- Groenwald, M. (2015). O wstydzie w sytuacjach oceniania szkolnego i konsekwencjach doświadczania go przez uczniów. *Colloquium Wydziału Nauk Humanistycznych i Społecznych*, 1(17), 63–82.
- Jakimiuk, B. (2021). Preferowana i rzeczywista codzienność szkolna w perspektywie uczniów, *Studia Edukacyjne*, 61, 7–26; <https://doi.org/10.14746/se.2021.61.1>.
- Jaskulska, S. (2009). *Ocena zachowania w doświadczeniu gimnazjalistów*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.
- Kalinowska, K. (2022). Bezmiar miar i praktyki niewymierności. Kilka refleksji na marginesie badań bezsensu w szkole. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 66, 149–170; <https://doi.org/10.35757/KiS.2022.66.1.7>.
- Kaufmann, J.-C. (2004). *Ego. Socjologia jednostki. Inna wizja człowieka i konstrukcji podmiotu*. Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Konarzewski, K. (1999). Komu jest potrzebna diagnostyka oświatowa? In: B. Niemierko, & B. Machowska (eds.), *Diagnoza edukacyjna. Oczekiwania, problemy, przykłady* (pp. 29–37). Legnica: ODESiP.
- Gazeta Wyborcza (2024). *Koniec z tzw. szantażem maturalnym. MEN wprowadziło zmiany*. <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,31356776,koniec-z-tzw-szantazem-maturalnym-men-wprowadzilo-zmiany.html> [access: 11.08.2025].
- Korzeniecka-Bondar, A. (2018). Badanie codziennego czasu szkolnego nauczycieli – namysł nad własną praktyką badań fenomenograficznych, *Rocznik Pedagogiczny*, 41, 213–225.
- Krzychała, S. (2007). *Projekty życia. Młodzież w perspektywie badań rekonstrukcyjnych*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo DSW.
- Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej (2024). *Maturzyści! Koniec presji! Macie więcej czasu na złożenie deklaracji maturalnej*. <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/>

- maturzysci-koniec-presji-macie-wiecej-czasu-na-zlozenie-deklaracji-maturalnej, [access: 5.08.2025].
- Murawska, I., & Motyl, K. (2025). Szantaż maturalny jako cicha codzienność ostatnich roczników szkół ponadpodstawowych. Transmisja kultury (o)presji a wolność wyboru ucznia. *Studia Paedagogica Ignatiana*, 28(3), 185–199; <https://doi.org/10.12775/SPI.2025.3.009>
- Nalaskowski, A. (2017). *Szkoła Laboratorium. Od działań autorskich do pedagogii źródeł*, Kraków-Warszawa: Impuls.
- Stowarzyszenie Umarłych Statutów (2022). *Niedopuszczenie do matury? To szkolna patologia*. <https://umarlestatuty.pl/2022/01/25/niedopuszczenie-do-matury-to-szkolna-patologia/> [access: 11.08.2025].
- Ostaszewski, K. (2012). Pojęcie klimatu szkoły w badaniach zachowań ryzykownych młodzieży. *Edukacja*, 4(120), 22–38.
- Przewłocka, J. (2015). *Klimat szkoły i jego znaczenie dla funkcjonowania uczniów w szkole. Raport o stanie badań*. Warszawa: Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych.
- Sauder, M., & Espeland, W. N. (2009). The Discipline of Rankings: Tight Coupling and Organizational Change. *American Sociological Review*, 74, 63–82; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400104>.
- Sitek, M. (2014). Miejsce egzaminów zewnętrznych w systemach edukacyjnych i polityce edukacyjnej. In: R. Dolata, & M. Sitek (eds.), *Raport o stanie edukacji 2014* (pp. 11–30). Warszawa: Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych.
- Polskie Radio 24 (2024). *Koniec "szantażu maturalnego"? Ministerstwo podjęło decyzję*. <https://polskieradio24.pl/artukul/3432040,koniec-szantażu-maturalnego-ministerstwo-podjęło-decyzję> [access: 11.08.2025].
- Sztompka, P. (2008). Życie codzienne – temat najnowszej socjologii. In: P. Sztompka, & M. Bogunia-Borowska (ed.), *Socjologia codzienności* (pp. 15–52). Kraków: Znak.
- Szymański, M. J. (2014). Problematyka codzienności w badaniach społecznych i pedagogicznych. In: E. Bochno, I. Nowosad, & M. Szymański (eds.), *Codziennosc szkoły. Uczeń* (pp. 17–28). Kraków: Impuls.
- Waldenfels, B. (1993). Pogardzana doxa. Husserl i trwający kryzys zachodniego rozumu. In: Z. Krasnodębski, & K. Nellen (eds.), *Świat przeżywany: fenomenologia i nauki społeczne* (pp. 105–127), Warszawa: PiW.
- Wysocka, E., & Tomiczek, K. (2014). Szkoła jako środowisko życia i codzienność ucznia – analiza teoretyczna i empiryczne egzemplifikacje percepcji i sposobu wartościowania szkoły przez uczniów. *Przegląd Pedagogiczny*, 1, 169–188.

Szantaż maturalny jako element szkolnej codzienności. Raport z badań wstępnych

Streszczenie

Celem naszego tekstu była identyfikacja form presji doświadczanych przez maturzystów w związku z egzaminem dojrzałości w kontekście szkolnej codzienności. Badania przeprowadziliśmy z wykorzystaniem autorskiego kwestionariusza ankiety, który wypełniło 239 osób – studentek i studentów pierwszego roku kierunków pedagogicznych na wybranych polskich uczelniach. Zebrane dane wskazują, że badane zjawisko presji maturalnej dotknęło 20% respondentów. Dwoma głównymi jego przejawami są: skoncentrowanie życia szkolnego w ostatniej klasie wokół egzaminu dojrzałości oraz wywieranie presji na uczniach w kwestii wyboru przedmiotów maturalnych w celu uzyskania dobrego wizerunku szkoły. Całokształt deklarowanych doświadczeń maturalnych pozwolił na identyfikację najwyższej formy presji, czyli szantażu maturalnego, związanego z ingerencją w wybory uczniów. Badania miały charakter wstępny, w związku z tym mogą stanowić podstawę do dalszych eksploracji zjawiska szantażu maturalnego.

Słowa kluczowe: szkoła średnia, matura, codzienność, szantaż, presja.