RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION, VICTIMIZATION, AND CYBERBULLYING EXPOSURE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract. Social media is an integral part of modern life. Internet activity among young people has increased significantly in recent years. However, the extensive use of social media has led to addiction, which has caused numerous problems. This study aims to investigate the possible relationships between social media addiction, the occurrence of cyberbullying exposure, and the victimization of social media users in the Russian-speaking community. The study collected data through an online survey of 211 Slonim State Medical College students. The average age of participants: $M = 17.5$ (SD = 3.7). Addiction to social media was measured using the "ЗСС-15" questionnaire developed by V.P. Sheynov and A.S. Devitsyn. Victimization was measured using the "Adult Victimization Assessment Technique" developed by V.P. Sheynov. Smartphone addiction was measured using the short version of the "CAC-16" questionnaire developed by V.P. Sheynov. The study also assessed the exposure of individuals to cyberbullying using the approach of V.P. Sheynov.

This study includes a factor analysis: 1) a victimization questionnaire containing propensity factors for aggressive, self-destructive, addicted, careless, and risky behavior, as well as an integrative index of victimization (V.P. Sheinov); 2) a three-factor model of social network addiction: the psychological state of the network user, communication of the network user, and information (V.P. Sheinov). The authors found a correlation between social media addiction among college students and their susceptibility to cyberbullying, victimization, and smartphone addiction. The positive correlation between social media addiction and victimization is supported by the corresponding correlations between most factors that shape these complex constructs. These findings can be used to educate students about the dangers of excessive social media use.

Keywords: *social media addiction, cyberbullying, cyberbullying exposure, victimization, smartphone addiction, adolescents*

Introduction

Social networks are an integral part of modern life. Young people's participation in online activities, in particular, has increased noticeably. The popularity of social media has shifted much of interpersonal communication from the physical world to cyberspace. Much of this social media communication is positive, and anyone with Internet access can now connect with a large audience.

However, excessive use of social networks often leads to addiction, which causes a number of problems.

Thus, an analytical review of international studies shows "positive correlations between extensive use of social networks and depression, anxiety, stress, neuroticism, emotional problems, low self-esteem, cyber-victimization, physical health problems, mental disorders, loneliness, procrastination" [1, p. 607].

In the Russian-speaking community, "social media addiction was also found to be positively correlated with Internet addiction, stress, procrastination, and low self-control, and negatively correlated with self-esteem" [2, p. 566)].

In college students, a direct correlation was found between social media addiction and anxiety, depression, loneliness, extraversion, and dissatisfaction with life [3, p. 98].

Statistically significant factors associated with social media use were found in both genders. Positive correlations were associated with impulsivity and narcissism, and negative correlations with assertiveness [4, p. 83].

Theoretical analysis of the current problem

Social media is taking an increasingly large place in the daily lives of modern people, and many people now communicate online rather than in person. The use of social media is growing rapidly, and the number of social media users has already reached more than one-third of the world's population. This number is increasing by 10% annually. Since the coronavirus pandemic, people have been spending more and more time on social media and more and more time on their work and studies. For example, before the pandemic, most social media time was spent on Sundays (which is logical), and now, it is Tuesdays, including work and school hours.

Social media has a dramatic impact on people's lifestyles and psychology. Therefore, studying this phenomenon and its impact on all aspects of modern life is very important.

Research by international psychologists has shown that excessive use of social media leads to cyberbullying and victimization. Given the importance of these connections, we will study them in more detail to prepare the ground for our research aimed at possibly discovering similar connections in Russian-speaking society.

The connection between social media addiction and cyberbullying

The accessibility and widespread use of social media has led to new opportunities for online aggression that negatively affect online users. Online aggression has led to a significant number of social media users in different

countries becoming victims of cyberbullying. Indeed, certain users' anger, hatred, and bullying on social media platforms have become commonplace.

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, shame, or bully another person. While bullying itself is not a new problem, cyberbullying is a new phenomenon with similarities and differences to real-life bullying.

Cyberbullying takes many forms, from aggressive and threatening behavior to social stigma. It negatively affects overall well-being, which can be more severe for people focusing on social media connections.

J. Huang et al. conducted a study among college students in China. Participants were 20.43 ± 1.513 years old, ages 15 to 25 years. 64.32% of respondents reported having suffered from cyberbullying, and 25.98% reported having been bullied online by others during the semester. Gender roles, anxiety symptoms, Internet addiction, time spent playing video games, and violent game elements were associated with cyberbullying on social media. The authors found that social media cyberbullying is common among Chinese students [5].

Factors contributing to susceptibility to cyberbullying were found. In a K. Kırcaburun et al. survey, 44% of 344 university students exhibited at least one behavior associated with cyberbullying. Furthermore, cyberbullies showed higher scores in problematic social media use, childhood depression and emotional trauma, and lower self-esteem. The analysis showed that after adjusting for gender and age, childhood emotional trauma was directly or indirectly associated with cyberbullying, and depression was directly associated with problematic social media use [6].

S. Jain & S. Agrawal's empirical study among 365 social media users found a correlation between social media addiction and exposure to cyberbullying and corresponding gender differences [7].

A.L. Giordano, E.A. Prosek, and J.C. Watson describe a cross-sectional study that surveyed a national U.S. sample of 428 teenagers. Results showed that higher levels of addiction to social media, more hours spent online, and self-identification as male were strong predictors of cyberbullying. Accordingly, individuals who spend more time on social media show signs of addiction, and male users are more likely to engage in cyberbullying [8].

A study by G.W. Giumetti & R.M. Kowalski identified several potential predictors of cyberbullying on social media, including controversial postings, time spent on social media, and personality characteristics. In addition, the authors focus on the potential negative well-being consequences associated with cyberbullying on social media, including psychological distress, lower life satisfaction, and suicidal ideation [9].

In the article by K. Kırcaburun et al., two studies are described: The first involved 804 high school students (48% girls, average age 16.2 years), and the second involved 760 university students (60% women, average age 21.5 years). The results showed that problematic social media use and cyberbullying (more common among high school students) were directly related. In addition, the analysis showed that younger age was a significant factor in predicting problematic social media use and cyberbullying among university students but not among high school students. In both samples, depression was a direct

predictor of problematic social media use and an indirect predictor of cyberbullying. However, most of these relationships were relatively loose [10].

In a study by E. Yildirim, C. Çalici & B. Erdoğan, the sample consisted of 198 Turkish university students aged 18–25. 65% of the participants were female, and 35% were male. Cyberbullying and cyber victimization were positively correlated with anxiety, depression, somatization, hostility, impulsivity, and Internet addiction. At the same time, cyberbullying was negatively correlated with empathy. From this, the authors concluded that cyberbullying and cyber victimization go "hand in hand": both variables show similar correlations with the same psychological aspects [11].

Cyberbullying in the workplace is a widespread phenomenon that has a negative impact on employee well-being. This was shown in a study by A. Oksanen et al. using a sample of employees in five Finnish expert organizations (N = 563) and a representative sample of Finnish employees (N = 1817). The monthly prevalence of cyberbullying victimization at work was 13% in expert organizations and 17% among Finnish workers. The victims were young, active users of social media. They reported more severe psychological distress, exhaustion, and technostress than other respondents [12].

Empirical data from 1,003 adults who had been cyberbullied, according to a study by P.B. Lowry, J. Zhang & C. Wang, led the authors to conclude that heavy social network use combined with anonymity promoted cyberbullying in social networks, which contributed to the prevalence of cyberbullying [13].

One hundred female students from a university in Malaysia participated in a study conducted by N. Hazlyna using an online survey. The results showed that female students are exposed to cyberbullying on social networks. The author explained this by the fact that female students use social media daily, are not confident, and are sensitive to words on social media [14].

A study conducted by K. Kircaburun, P.K. Jonason, and M.D. Griffiths, with 761 participants, found that cyberbullying fully supported the association between problematic social media use and Machiavellianism in both the overall sample and male participants [15].

V.W. Craig et al. conducted a meta-analysis using data from the 2017–2018 "Health Behavior in School-aged Children" international study, which included adolescents aged 11–15 years (n = 180919) from 42 countries. Results showed that problematic social media use was strongly and consistently associated with victimization and cyberbullying. The stratified analysis revealed that problematic social media use was associated with cyber victimization in 45% of the countries studied and with cyberbullying in 86%. The study also found that the amount of time adolescents spent problematically using social media and interacting with strangers online was directly related to cyberbullying. Therefore, problematic social media use is the strongest and most consistent risk factor for cyberbullying [16].

Relationship between social media addiction and cyber victimization

An alarming number of youth between the ages of 11 and 14 are reportedly affected by cyberbullying, bullying through computer technology or online

platforms. Moreover, the online environment creates new opportunities for criminal activity and deviant behavior, according to a study by E. Marttila, A. Koivula & P. Räsänen based on data from nationally representative surveys conducted in Finland in 2017 and 2019. The authors found that problematic social media use is strongly associated with cybercrime victimization and that an increase in problematic social media use increases the risk of victimization. Moreover, problematic social media use, along with several other factors, significantly affects victimization [17].

A study by D.V.S. Kaloeti et al. included 456 children between the ages of 11 and 13 years from nine different elementary schools. The study found that all subjects were active on social media and that bullying, victimization, and gender roles were significant predictors of anxiety in elementary school-aged children. Girls were found to be more affected by anxiety than boys. In addition, boys were more likely than girls to be affected by physical abuse, while girls were more likely to suffer from panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety, and social anxiety [18].

M.A. Peláez-Fernández et al. studied a sample of 1,211 high school students (657 girls, 554 boys aged 12 to 18 years, mean age = 13.74). A correlational analysis revealed significant associations between their cyber victimization and their problematic use of social media and smartphones [19].

In a study by H. Sampasa-Kanyinga & H.A. Hamilton, the sample consisted of 5126 respondents aged 11 to 20 years, of which 48% were girls, and the mean age was 15.2 ± 1.9 years. After accounting for age, gender, ethnicity, subjective socioeconomic status, and parental education, the researchers found a correlation between social media use and psychological distress, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. Furthermore, cyberbullying victimization mediated the relationship between social media use, psychological distress, and suicide attempts. These findings suggest that addressing cyberbullying victimization and problematic social media use among adolescents could potentially help reduce the risk of mental health problems [20].

The study by M. Erdoğdu and M. Koçyiğit aimed to investigate the extent of cyber victimization among social media users. The researchers collected online test data from 390 Generation Z respondents. The results of the study showed significant correlations at the $p = 0.01$ and $p = 0.05$ levels between the sub-parameters of social media use (communication, information gathering, sharing, following, and leisure use) and the sub-parameters of cyber victimization (cyber harassment, fraud, deception, and obtaining personal information, and virtual fighting and fear). These findings suggest that certain patterns of social media use may increase the risk of cyber victimization [21].

An article by S. Kim et al. based on a study of 316 sixth graders in a public high school in the Midwestern United States showed that problematic social media use was associated with higher levels of cyber-victimization [22].

In the study by C.T. Barry, S.M. Briggs & C.L. Sidoti, the sample consisted of 428 respondents (214 teens aged 14 to 17 years and parent pairs) from the United States. The subjects tended to experience a variety of psychosocial

difficulties in their online interactions. The teenagers' reported victimization was related to their loneliness and lower self-esteem. In addition, social media aggression and victimization were related to self-perception and adjustment to circumstances: Adolescents who reported aggression and victimization on social media were more likely to be rated poorly adjusted by their parents [23]. The above findings are of interest both theoretically and practically. However, there are no similar psychological studies in Russia. Therefore, conducting corresponding studies in the Russian-speaking society seems obvious to investigate the existence of similar correlations. In this case, working hypotheses could be assumptions about the existence of similar correlations.

The correlations found between the problematic use of social media and cyberbullying show that it is a serious problem. Therefore, it is important to try to prevent cyberbullying. To this end, a cyberbullying vulnerability questionnaire was developed to raise social media users' awareness of the risk of becoming a victim of cyberbullying.

Thus, this study aims to determine the perceived relationships between social media addiction in the Russian-speaking community and social media users' victimization and vulnerability to cyberbullying.

Research Methods

Study participants and data collection

Data for the study were collected through an online survey of 211 Slonim State Medical College students. The sample included 181 young women and 30 young men who were second-year medical students (qualification: "Feldsher midwife. Ambulatory and polyclinic care") and "Nursing" Age data of the subjects: $M = 17.5$, $SD = 3.7$.

Methods used

The degree of addiction to social networks was measured with the "3CC-15" questionnaire [24], the degree of victimization was assessed with the Adult Victimization Assessment technique [25], and smartphone addiction was measured with the short version of the "CAC-16" smartphone addiction questionnaire [26]. In addition, the questionnaire "Assessment of the Degree of Insecurity of Individuals Towards Cyberbullying" was used [27]. This study includes factor structures: 1) a victimization questionnaire containing tendency factors for aggressive, self-destructive, dependent, inarticulate, and risky behaviors, as well as an integrative indicator of victimization [25]; 2) a three-factor model of social network addiction with the factors "psychological state" of the network user, "communication" of the network user, and "information" (information acquisition) [28, p. 145].

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS-22 software. The level of statistical significance $p \leq 0.05$ was accepted.

Results and discussion

Inspection of the initial data for agreement of the samples with the normal distribution according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion has shown that the distributions of all samples deviate significantly from the normal distribution.

Therefore, we search for the expected correlations using Kendall correlations, which reveal both linear and nonlinear relationships.

The found correlations of social network dependence are shown in Table. 1–7.

Kendall's correlations between social media addiction and personality traits of its users (total sample of male and female)

	Insecurity due to cyberbullying	Victimization	Smartphone addiction
Correlation coefficient	**0.423**	**0.220**	**0.443**
Relevance	0.000	0.000	0.000

Table 1 shows a positive correlation between social media addiction and insecurity due to cyberbullying, victimization, and smartphone addiction in the pooled sample.

The correlations found in the pooled sample may not be present in the subsamples that comprise it. Therefore, we calculate the correlations of smartphone addiction separately for the subsamples of women and men.

Kendall's correlations between social media addiction and personality traits of users (female).

	Insecurity due to cyberbullying	Victimization	Smartphone addiction
Correlation coefficient	**0.415**	**0.195**	**0.440**
Relevance	0.000	0.000	0.000

Table 2 shows that in the girls' sample, social media addiction is positively correlated with insecurity due to cyberbullying, victimization, and smartphone addiction.

Kendall's correlations between social media addiction and personality traits of its users (male)

	Insecurity due to cyberbullying	Victimization	Smartphone addiction
Correlation coefficient	**0.524**	**0.361**	**0.439**
Relevance	0.000	0.007	0.001

Table 3 shows that in the male sample, social media addiction is positively associated with insecurity from cyberbullying, victimization, and smartphone addiction.

Thus, there is a directly proportional relationship between social media dependence and insecurity due to cyberbullying, victimization, and smartphone addiction in both females and males.

The patterns of social media dependence found in this study are consistent with the findings of international researchers regarding 1) victimization [17–23]

and 2) insecurity due to cyberbullying, which indicate a relationship between social media dependence and cyberbullying [5–16].

The demonstrated positive correlation between social media addiction and smartphone addiction is also reflected in the results previously obtained abroad and in Russian-speaking societies [1, p. 697; 2, p. 566].

Since the correlations found relate to both men and women, they can be further examined on a combined sample. This offers the additional advantage of a higher statistical significance of the results, which is given by the large size of the sample studied.

Factor models of the personality traits studied allow for a more in-depth examination of a number of the relationships found. For example, table 4 shows the result of the study of the relationship between addiction to social media and the victimization components of the users of these media.

Table 4

Kendall's correlations between social media addiction and victimization components of users (total sample)

	Behavioral styles					Total victimization
	aggressive	self-destroying	dependent	uncritical	risky	
Mental state	**0.282**^{**}	–0.010	**0.223**^{**}	**0.243**^{**}	**0.170**^{**}	**0.280****
Communication	0.046	–0.059	**0.164**^{**}	0.037	0.010	0.062
Information	**0.157**^{**}	–0.051	**0.115**[*]	0.063	0.051	**0.134****
Social media addiction	**0.220**^{**}	–0.039	**0.211**^{**}	**0.168**^{**}	**0.127**[*]	**0.220****

Note. The following notations are used in Tables 4–7: ** – Correlation (two-sided) is significant at the 0.01 level, * – Correlation (two-sided) is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 shows that the positive correlation between social media dependence and victimization is due to the mutual positive correlations between a number of factors that make up these complex constructs. This effect is best illustrated by the strongest correlations between the psychological factor of social media addiction and the components of victimization (in descending order): the tendency to engage in aggressive, non-critical, dependent, and risky behavior. This seems quite understandable, as such behaviors do indeed contribute to the victimization of individuals.

The "information" and "communication" factors play a lesser role in these relationships in social media addiction.

The relationship between social media addiction and the components of victimization is consistent with our previous finding that victimization is positively associated with incompetent, dependent, and aggressive behaviors [29, p. 150].

Examining whether the correlations observed in Table 4 vary between male and female participants is important. Tables 5 and 6 show the results of this analysis.

Table 5

Kendall's correlations between social media addiction and victimization components of users (female)

	Behavioral styles					Total victimization
	aggressive	self-destroying	dependent	uncritical	risky	
Mental state	**0.260**[**]	–0.037	**0.232**[**]	**0.247**[**]	**0.159**[**]	**0.260**[**]
Communication	0.052	–0.105	**0.155**[**]	0.024	0.012	0.045
Information	**0.150**[**]	–0.066	**0.126**[*]	0.059	0.033	**0.121**[*]
Social media addiction	**0.208**[**]	–0.075	**0.218**[**]	**0.161**[**]	**0.114**[*]	**0.195**[**]

Table 6

Kendall correlations between addiction to social media and victimization components of its users (males)

	Behavioral styles					Total victimization
	aggressive	self-destroying	dependent	uncritical	risky	
Mental state	**0.408**[**]	0.100	**0.177**[*]	**0.194**[*]	**0.171**[*]	**0.366**[**]
Communication	0.077	**0.251**[*]	**0.205**[*]	0.127	0.025	**0.222**[*]
Information	**0.173**[**]	–0.048	0.062	0.095	0.109	**0.173**[*]
Social media addiction	**0.316**[**]	0.131	**0.192**[**]	**0.226**[**]	**0.196**[**]	**0.361**[**]

Tables 5 and 6 show that the associations between social media addiction factors and victimization components found in the overall sample occurred in both males and females.

The following table shows the associations between cyberbullying insecurity and victimization components in all samples studied.

Table 7

Kendall's correlations between cyberbullying insecurity and the victimization components (males)

	Behavioral styles					Total victimization
	aggressive	self-destroying	dependent	uncritical	risky	
Total sample	**0.331**[**]	**0.112**[*]	**0.311**[**]	**0.336**[**]	**0.254**[**]	**0.398**[**]
Women	**0.323**[**]	0.096	**0.321**[**]	**0.348**[**]	**0.256**[**]	**0.391**[**]
Men	**0.358**[**]	**0.163**[*]	**0.269**[**]	**0.247**[*]	**0.171**[*]	**0.390**[**]

Table 7 shows that the positive correlation between cyberbullying insecurity and victimization among males, females, and all students is generally due to the positive correlations among all components of victimization.

Conclusion

The study's findings suggest that students more addicted to social media are also more prone to cyberbullying, victimization, and smartphone addiction. These findings are consistent with previous studies by international researchers.

When examining gender differences, a positive correlation was found between cyberbullying insecurity and victimization among girls, boys, and all students in general, driven by positive correlations among all components of victimization.

Overall, these findings have practical implications for educating students about the potential risks associated with excessive social media use.

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ВЗАИМОСВЯЗИ ЗАВИСИМОСТИ УЧАЩИХСЯ КОЛЛЕДЖА ОТ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ С ВИКТИМИЗАЦИЕЙ И НЕЗАЩИЩЕННОСТЬЮ ОТ КИБЕРБУЛЛИНГА

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Аннотация. Социальные сети – важная составляющая современной жизни. При этом значительно возросла активность молодежи в Сети. Однако чрезмерное увлечение социальными сетями привело многих к попаданию в зависимость от них, что создало многочисленные проблемы. Целью данного исследования является обнаружение в русскоязычной среде предполагаемых связей зависимости от социальных сетей с незащищенностью от кибербуллинга и виктимизацией пользователей социальных сетей. Данные для исследования были собраны посредством онлайн-опроса 211 учащихся Слонимского государственного медицинского колледжа. Показатели возраста испытуемых: M = 17,5, SD = 3,7. Зависимость от социальных сетей измерялась опросником ЗСС-15 (авторы В.П. Шейнов, А.С. Девицын), виктимизация – Методикой оценки степени виктимизации взрослого индивида (автор В.П. Шейнов), зависимость от смартфона – короткой версией САС-16 опросника зависимости от смартфона (В.П. Шейнов), незащищенности индивидов от кибербуллинга» (В.П. Шейнов).

В данном исследовании задействованы факторные структуры: 1) опросника виктимизации, содержащего факторы склонности к агрессивному, саморазрушающему, зависимому, некртитчному и рисковому стилям поведения, а также интегративный показатель виктимизации (В.П. Шейнов); 2) трехфакторная модель зависимости от социальных сетей с факторами: «Психологическое состояние» пользователя сети, «Коммуникация» пользователя сети и «Информация» (В.П. Шейнов). В статье установлено, что зависимость от социальных сетей девушек и юношей положительно связана с их незащищенностью от кибербуллинга, виктимизацией и зависимостью от смартфона. Положительная связь зависимости от социальных сетей с виктимизацией реализуется за счет взаимных положительных связей между большинством факторов, формирующих эти сложные конструкты. Практическое значение полученных результатов состоит в возможности использовать их в разъяснении учащимся и студентам опасностей чрезмерного увлечения социальными сетями.

Ключевые слова: *зависимость от социальных сети, незащищенность от кибербуллинга, виктимизация, зависимость от смартфона, факторы, девушки, юноши*

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