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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY RATES

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the influence of social networks on the level of juvenile delinquency. The study analyses both positive and negative aspects of teenagers' use of social networks. The main focus is on how social networks can contribute to the spread of antisocial behaviour and the formation of criminal communities, as well as their role in crime prevention and support for positive initiatives. The main risk factors are identified, such as the influence of negative communities, insufficient parental control and low levels of digital literacy. The article offers recommendations to reduce the negative impact of social media, including strengthening content control, improving digital literacy and using social media for educational programmes. An integrated approach to solving this problem can help reduce juvenile delinquency.

Key words: social media, crime, juveniles, risk factors, prevention, digital literacy.

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Әлеуметтік медианың кәмелетке толмағандар арасындағы қылмыс деңгейіне әсері

Аннотация

Мақала әлеуметтік медианың кәмелетке толмағандар арасындағы қылмыс деңгейіне әсерін зерттеуге арналған. Зерттеу жасөспірімдердің әлеуметтік медианы пайдалануының оң және теріс жақтарын талдайды. Әлеуметтік медианың қоғамға қарсы мінез-құлықты таратуға және қылмыстық қауымдастықтарды қалыптастыруға қалай ықпал ететініне, сондай-ақ олардың қылмыстың алдын алудағы және оң бастамаларды қолдаудағы рөліне назар аударылады. Теріс қауымдастықтардың әсері, ата-ана бақылауының жеткіліксіздігі және цифрлық сауаттылықтың төмен деңгейі сияқты негізгі қауіп факторлары анықталды. Мақалада мазмұнды бақылауды күшейту, цифрлық сауаттылықты арттыру және білім беру бағдарламалары үшін әлеуметтік медианы пайдалануды қамтитын әлеуметтік медианың теріс әсерін азайту бойынша ұсыныстар берілген. Бұл мәселені шешудің кешенді тәсілі кәмелетке толмағандар арасындағы қылмыс деңгейінің төмендеуіне ықпал етуі мүмкін.

Түйінді сөздер: әлеуметтік медиа, қылмыс, кәмелетке толмағандар, қауіп факторлары, алдын алу, цифрлық сауаттылық.

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Влияние социальных сетей на уровень преступности среди несовершеннолетних

Аннотация

Статья посвящена изучению влияния социальных сетей на уровень преступности среди несовершеннолетних. В исследовании анализируются как положительные, так и отрицательные аспекты использования подростками социальных сетей. Основное внимание уделяется тому, как социальные сети могут способствовать распространению антисоциального поведения и формированию криминальных сообществ, а также их роли в профилактике преступности и поддержке позитивных инициатив. Выявлены основные факторы риска, такие как влияние негативных сообществ, недостаточный родительский контроль и низкий уровень цифровой

грамотности. В статье предложены рекомендации по снижению негативного влияния социальных сетей, включающие усиление контроля за контентом, повышение цифровой грамотности и использование социальных сетей для просветительских программ. Комплексный подход к решению этой проблемы может способствовать снижению уровня преступности среди несовершеннолетних.

Ключевые слова: социальные сети, преступность, несовершеннолетние, факторы риска, профилактика, цифровая грамотность.

Social networks have nowadays firmly entered our lives and occupy a special place among the most visited Internet resources. The main purpose of our research is to identify the negative impact of social networks on children and adolescents. Juvenile delinquency has attracted and continues to attract attention for many years, and given the development of social networks, delinquency among this category of persons is increasing.

There is every reason to believe that social networks represent a new significant phenomenon not only in the network space, but also in the modern society as a whole. This position is determined by many circumstances, the most important of which are the possibility of self-realisation for a large number of people, the possibility of active influence on public opinion, special conditions for the participation of social networks in the life of modern society, in the formation of news flow, as well as the creation of unique works - literary, visual, audiovisual.

From the position of criminology, it is important that social networks are not only used for socially useful activities in various spheres, but also for committing socially dangerous acts [1]. First of all, we can highlight the dissemination of socially dangerous information, network aggression (cyberbullying), fraud, identity theft, collection of information by criminals about potential victims of planned criminal offences and other, in addition, special criminal communities that carry out criminal activities on a permanent basis are created in social networks (hackers, pornography distributors, fraudsters, etc.) [2]. Based on the previously described, we set the tasks:

- Identify negative aspects that may affect children and adolescents using social media;
- Provide recommendations aimed at preventing and reducing the negative impact of social networks on children and adolescents.

This topic is very relevant today, because since the emergence of such a resource as the Internet, aggressive behaviour among teenagers has become frequent, from which negative consequences can arise not only in the virtual but also in the real world.

It is quite evident that the social environment of social media not only does not hinder, but in many cases contributes to the criminogenic influence on juveniles.

Naturally, the peculiarities of this type of crime were subject to separate consideration:

- 1) Theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of this type of crime;
- 2) specificity of its manifestations;
- 3) age-related characteristics;
- 4) Properties and characteristics of the personality of juvenile offenders;
- 5) A set of causes and conditions, the main factors influencing juvenile delinquency;
- 6) peculiarities and characteristics of existing public relations, one of the participants of which are persons of minor age (public relations to be protected);
- 7) The specifics of the measures implemented and the main actors involved in the prevention of juvenile delinquency;
- 8) other significant characteristics of juvenile delinquency, reflecting important data in terms of criminological knowledge of the type of crime in question [3].

Social networks started their active development in the 90s of the last century. Today they unite millions of users despite their gender, age, education and nationality. Since the Internet gives an opportunity to different people: acquaintances to keep in touch, and strangers to establish contact by interests. But in all this cycle, a person may not notice how virtual life can notice real life.

If we consider the term 'social network', the history of its origin goes back to 1954, even before the emergence of the Internet space and social networks. The term was coined by James Barnes, a sociologist from the Manchester

School. At the time, such a phenomenon, was, interpreted as follows: «A social network is a social structure consisting of a group of nodes, which are social objects and social relationships between them» [4].

To understand the mechanism of criminogenic influence, it is important to highlight some criminologically significant features of social networks. These include:

- support from a section of users with socially dangerous attitudes;
- impaired mechanisms for determining positive behaviour;
- impact on the mental state of social network users (especially minors).

Research internationally has revealed the negative impact of: social media on children's psyche.

Today, when discussing the peculiarities of modern juvenile delinquency, E.E. Panfilov, in the context of the study of criminalisation of minors, identified and described in his dissertation research: 'The mass spread of criminal subculture in the youth environment, the inclusion of teenagers in destructive Internet communities that influence the development of persistent antisocial attitudes in minors, often leading to the commission of crimes, acquires a new criminological sound.

The introduction of information and communication technologies into all spheres of modern human life can be traced in its scale. This spread has a significant impact on the social adaptation of all categories of citizens, and the significant role of such technologies is seen in the process of socialisation, personality formation and development of minors.

It should be said that against the background of the possibilities of the Internet space, as one of the main modern institutions of personal socialisation, the negative impact of the Internet on minors (psychological well-being, emotional stability, as well as the formation of illegal, criminogenic views and attitudes, the chosen model of behaviour) is increasing many times over. In this context, it should be pointed out that the risks associated with the use of Internet space, in particular social networks for the involvement of minors in extremist organisations are of particular concern.

It follows that we can identify the main

threats that underage users may face on social networks.

Firstly, it is the threat of familiarisation with negative information (negative information includes information that threatens physical and psychological development, as well as information that promotes a type of criminal subculture and (or) is prohibited for dissemination).

Secondly, there is the threat of cyberbullying against minors, as well as the use of personal information posted on social networks for criminal purposes. Cyberbullying is defined as harassment using information communication technologies, in most cases systematic and (or) combined with real or imaginary threats that cause the victim to feel threatened or anxious.

The emergence of cyberbullying also includes sexual harassment. Social networks provide paedophiles with unique conditions for finding victims, allowing them to observe children for any length of time and anonymously, without attracting the attention of others, to study the details of their lives, interests and character traits.

Another problem arises. Many parents grew up without pages on VK, Facebook, or Instagram. Or it is simply not clear how these sites can press on the psyche of children.

Parents should be responsible for their children's safety, including information security. In many countries, security experts are asking social media administrations to strengthen their information security. This concern did not arise out of nothing, but due to the fact that users post personal information there, which can be used by anyone, including criminals.

Mankind, throughout the history of its development, has passed through several stages, which can be described as «information revolutions»:

- 1) the emergence of writing;
- 2) the age of printing;
- 3) remote delivery of information (telegraph, telephone, broadcasting);
- 4) formation of the Internet space, online social environment and, as a consequence, global information networks.

With the emergence and development of the Internet space, online environment, social

networks - all mankind has faced a new, previously non-existent problem: the formation of social ties, for which it has become irrelevant where an individual is located territorially, geographical location, social ties do not have territorial boundaries, are not controlled, it is possible and anonymous dissemination of information of various content.

There are various groups on social media presenting suicide as a 'fun' game for teenagers with undertones of some mysticism, so-called ARGs (ARG – Alternative Reality Gaming) [5].

The teenager's psyche is not stable enough, so virtual networks develop 'internet addiction', which is a psychological disease.

«Man is a social being, his life and development are impossible without communication and interaction with people». The phenomenon of social networks has long been of interest to researchers, representatives of different branches of science: lawyers, economists, sociologists, teachers, psychologists, philosophers, culturologists.

Exposure to risks has a negative impact on the still-forming system of life values and guidelines of minors, causing them to react in the form of emotional and psychological feelings, which can lead to the formation of criminogenic attitudes about the possibility and priority of illegal behaviour. It is quite possible that social networks can be used to purposefully involve adolescents in criminal activity.

Internet addiction is a very serious psychological disorder, it is poorly amenable to treatment, and subsequently serves as a cause of inferiority complexes.

The possibility of information management in social networks, which is capable of changing the mass, group and individual consciousness, imposing a person's will and reprogramming his behaviour. The essence of information management is the delivery of 'specially created semantic messages in the form of texts, video and audio series, designed for perception by consciousness, processing by thinking and emotional response' from the control object in order to select the line of behaviour desired by the control subject. Information management is actively used in social networks (for example, in the field of marketing to promote certain goods),

and, as practice shows, not always within the legal framework (recruitment of young people by extremists to commit terrorist acts, organisation of mass riots).

We need to remember that the internet and social media is just a reflection of our real life, not a separate world.

Let us summarise the identified negative aspects affecting children and adolescents using social networks:

- Information security and the responsibility of parents themselves for the information provided by their children on social networks;

- Groups promoting extremism, suicide, drugs and homosexuality;

- Internet addiction as a psychological disorder hypertrophied desire to show off ('a life of likes'): spending long periods of time in chat rooms, posting obscene photos of oneself, extreme selfies while roofing, hooking, basejumping, ropejumping and other life-threatening situations.

Analysis of the literature shows that social networks can also have a certain impact on the mental health of individuals. For people, especially young people, the network environment sometimes seems even more adequate than the real world. And the large amount of negative information that a user encounters in a social network can lead to negative consequences associated with information overload, with the contradiction between huge amounts of information and limited possibilities of its perception and processing, with Internet addiction, as well as to various mental disorders up to uncontrolled aggression [6].

Thus, the criminogenic influence of social networks on minors is associated with the presence of threats in social networks, which can be divided into content (presence of negative information) and communication (cyberbullying, use of personal information for illegal purposes). The situation is aggravated by the fact that, in the vast majority of cases, parents are not aware that their child is subjected to criminogenic influence, which may consist of:

- committing unlawful acts against a minor;
- Formation of criminogenic attitudes in juveniles;

- socially dangerous behaviour of a minor.

This lack of awareness on the part of parents makes it impossible to stop criminogenic influence at its earliest stage. Of course, it is impossible and wrong to isolate young people from using social networks. There is a need to find ways to neutralise the criminogenic influence of social networks on underage users. Countering the spread of negative information on social networks is a new type of activity for law enforcement agencies, and to increase its effectiveness it is necessary to combine the efforts of many ministries and departments. The family should not remain aloof from the problem at hand: the interested participation of adults who are able to give an objective assessment of incoming information and filter it will make it possible to properly orientate a minor user in information flows. The state should define strict criteria for the permissibility of posting certain types of information on social networks and develop working mechanisms for restricting access to certain pages of social networks for different age categories of users. A special role in this process belongs to criminological research, which should result in a new concept of crime prevention in social networks, providing law enforcement practice with scientifically substantiated recommendations.

Based on all of the above, let us make some recommendations aimed at preventing and reducing the impact of the negative influence of social networks on children and adolescents:

- Create a separate profile for your child on the computer and set up access rights using the Windows 'parental' control feature;
- Monitor the child's time spent on the computer using various software tools;
- Identify times when the child can access social networking sites from the home computer;
- Check the child's computer activity history once a week;
- limit the child's social media registration to one or two accounts;
- create an account to «make friends» with your child in a social network and at least once a week from your account check your child's page for inappropriate photos, posts, phrases (this will allow you to get to know your child's interests: favourite music, films, books,

etc.);

- Limit the number of communities a child can join to ten, of which five can be chosen by the child (this streamlines the «newsfeed» and fills it with useful content by at least half);

- Be sure to familiarise yourself with Microsoft's recommendations for safe use of social networking sites by children.

Analysing the negative impact of social networks on juvenile crime rates:

1. access to negative content: social media can be a source of access to negative and destructive content such as violence, drugs, alcohol and pornography. This content can have a negative impact on adolescents' mental and emotional well-being, encouraging them to engage in aggression or irrational behaviour.

2. Digital communication with criminal elements: Social media provide a platform for communication, including with criminal elements. Adolescents may be exposed to unwanted influences, falling under the influence of criminals who may persuade them to engage in illegal activities such as theft, drugs or gangsterism.

3. Influence of popular trends and challenging behaviours: Social media can contribute to the spread of dangerous trends and challenging behaviours among minors. For example, participating in dangerous Challenges or copying negative behaviours displayed by other users can lead to injuries or inappropriate behaviour.

4. Cyberbullying: Social networks are also a platform for cyberbullying, which can lead to psychological problems in adolescents and, in some cases, even suicide. Online bullying can be anonymous and can spread faster and more widely than in real life.

Considering these aspects, it is clear that social media can have a significant negative impact on juvenile delinquency and appropriate precautionary and regulatory measures are required.

In this paper, a study of the impact of social networks on juvenile delinquency was conducted. The analysis of the presented data allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- Social media plays an important role in the lives of adolescents by providing a platform for them to socialise, share information and create social connections;

- However, social media can also have a negative impact on minors by encouraging access to negative content, digital communication with criminal elements, the spread of dangerous trends and cyberbullying;

- To combat the negative consequences of adolescents' use of social networks, measures need to be taken both at the level of educating society about safe online behaviour and at the level of developing effective regulation and control over the content;

- Further research in this area is needed to better understand the impact of social media on juvenile delinquency and to develop measures to minimise the negative effects.

In general, despite the positive aspects that social media provide, it is necessary to recognise their potential risks and take appropriate measures to protect minors from the harmful effects of their use.

Social media has a significant impact on minors, and often this impact can be negative:

1. Mental health:

- anxiety and depression: constantly comparing oneself to other users can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety and depression;

- FOMO (fear of missing out): feeling like you're missing out on something important if you don't keep up to date on social media can lead to constant stress and anxiety.

2. Cyberbullying:

- anonymous attacks: social media are often used for bullying and harassment, which can cause serious psychological problems for victims;

- spreading false information: spreading rumours and slander on social media can damage reputations and lead to isolation.

3. Sleep disturbance:

- Insomnia: using gadgets before bed reduces the quality and duration of sleep due to exposure to blue light and emotional arousal from the content;

- Day displacement: constant use of social media can lead to disrupted daily routines and less time spent sleeping.

4. Dependence:

- loss of time: proportionally a lot of time is spent on social media, which distracts from studies, hobbies and real social interactions;

- Compulsive behaviour: frequent checking of social media notifications and

updates can escalate into compulsive behaviour.

5. Social isolation:

- superficial relationships: virtual interactions can replace deep personal interactions, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and social isolation;

- reduced social skills: limited real-life interactions can have a negative impact on the development of social skills and the ability to build relationships in real life.

6. Impact on self-esteem and body image:

- Idealised images: filtered and edited photographs can create unrealistic standards of beauty, which can negatively affect adolescents' self-esteem;

- Eating disorders: the constant striving to conform to an idealised image can lead to the development of anorexia, bulimia and other eating disorders..

These examples show that while social media can be useful tools for communication and information, their use also carries a number of risks, especially for minors.

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