

USE OF GADGETS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS BY ADOLESCENTS OF DIFFERENT GENDERS: GIRLS AS A RISK GROUP

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Abstract: Relevance. The use of social media and gadgets may help to explain gender differences in adolescents' subjective well-being, in particular, the lower well-being of adolescent girls, especially declining in the last decade (e.g., Twenge & Martin, 2020). The purpose of the study was to examine the specificity of girls' social media use as a possible source of their lower well-being. Research Methods and Sample. The study was conducted on a sample of 5635 Russian high school students ($M=16.81$, $SD=0.68$, 41% boys). Social media dependence was measured with the Bergen scale (Andreassen et al., 2016, Kornienko et al., 2023) (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.77$). The frequency of daily use of social media and gadgets on the watch and motives for social media use were also measured. To assess subjective well-being (SWB), questions assessing usual well-being and the level of happiness over the past day and two non-verbal scales characterizing attitudes towards school and life were used. Main results. Social media dependence and SWB aggregate score showed an inverse correlation ($r=-0.19$; $p\leq 0.001$). ANOVA results confirmed that increasing time spent on social media and gadgets had a negative impact on SWB, but well-being only decreased when the time exceeded 3 hours per day, which is consistent with past research (Bruggeman et al., 2019). In order to examine the associations of these measures with SWB while controlling for gender, a path model was constructed in which time spent on social media predicted social media dependence and SWB, and time spent on gadgets predicted only SWB, with all of these variables and factors dependent on gender. Evaluation of this model confirmed its excellent fit to the data: $\chi^2=68.33$; $df=14$; $p\leq 0.001$; CFI=0.993; TLI=0.985; RMSEA=0.026. It follows from the obtained model that girls spend significantly more time on social networks and gadgets, they have more pronounced dependence on social media and

this indirectly (along with the direct effect) leads to a decrease in their SWB. Conclusion. The obtained results correlate with foreign data showing how the use of social media and gadgets affects the SWB of adolescents of different genders. The findings have important practical implications, allowing a better understanding of the factors linking the use of social media, gadgets and subjective well-being of adolescent girls.

Keywords: gadgets, social media, social networks

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