THE INTERNET ENVIRONMENT AS A SOURCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND A COPING RESOURCE FOR TEENAGERS

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Research Objectives

to reveal the ambiguity of the influence of the Internet environment on the content of problems experienced by adolescents, showing both the emergence of problematic concerns in connection with the use of the Internet and resources for coping with them

Research hypotheses

1. Digitalization of teenagers' lives is becoming one of the factors of the emergence of problematic concerns in connection with immersion in the Internet environment;
2. The Internet environment can be used by teenagers as a resource for solving psychological problems in various areas of life

Methods and Structure of the Research

Questionnaires

«Psychological problems of teenagers in real and virtual environments» L.A. Regush, E.V. Alekseeva, O.R. Veretina etc.

«Coping Strategy Indicator» by J. Amirkhan, modified to study online coping

Sample Description

Teenagers aged 13-17 years, students of general academic schools of St. Petersburg, all in all **566 schoolchildren**, (260 boys and 306 girls)

The study data was collected both on-line and off-line.

The group with **high severity of problems related to the Internet** environment (more than 3.4 points) was **89 people**;

with a low (less than 1.5 points) – **98 people**;

with an average (from 1.51 to 3.39 – average 2.45) – **379 people**

Comparative analysis of problem ratings of adolescents with different severity of Internet problems

	The group with high problem concern n=89		The group with average problem concern n=379		The group with low problem concern n=98		Statistics criteria Kraskel-Wallis (chi-squared, asymptotic significance)
Areas of problematic experiences	Mean St.Dev.	Rank	Mean St.Dev.	Rank	Mean St.Dev.	Rank	
1. Problems related to public and personal safety	3,64 1,02	2	3,45 0,89	1	2,84 1,18	1	29,31 p<0,001
2. Identity-related problems	3,21 1,09	5	2,71 0,90	3	1,97 0,96	3	72,78 p<0,001
3. Problems related to communication and peers	2,89 1,02	6	2,20 0,79	6	1,48 0,69	5	117,43 p<0,001
4. Problems in relationships with parents	3,13 1,10	4	2,30 0,83	5	1,64 0,88	4	110,61 p<0,001
5. Problems related to Internet immersion	3,98 0,46	1	2,43 0,53	4	1,16 0,17	6	390,87 p<0,001
6. Problems related to school	3,47 0,86	3	3,01 0,81	2	2,32 1,04	2	67,60 p<0,001
An integral indicator of problematic concern	3,39 0,59		2,69 0,51		1,90 0,52		207,41 p<0,001

Online coping strategies in groups of adolescents with different levels of Internet problematic concern, n=566

Online Coping Strategies	The group with high problem concern n=89		The group with average problem concern n=379		The group with low problem concern n=98		Statistics criteria Kraskel-Wallis (chi-squared, asymptotic significance)
	Mean St. deviation	Rank	Mean St. deviation	Rank	Mean St. deviation	Rank	
Problem solving	22,96 5,26	1-2	19,41 5,16	1	16,72 4,75	1	65,92 p<0,001
Search for social support	21,57 5,26	3	18,02 4,43	2	15,65 4,53	2	68,93 p<0,001
Avoidance	22,96 4,10	1-2	17,58 4,04	3	14,22 3,60	3	167,03 p<0,001

Correlations (Spearman correlation) of problem preoccupation and modes of online abuse in adolescents, n=566

The sphere of problematic experiences/ Online coping method	Problem solving	Search for social support	Avoidance
1. Problems related to public and personal safety	,222**	,275**	,214**
2. Identity-related problems	,197**	,247**	,464**
3. Problems related to communication and peers	,261**	,208**	,461**
4. Problems in relationships with parents	,283**	,247**	,427**
5. Problems related to Internet immersion	**,377****	**,346****	**,511****
6. Problems related to school	,215**	,260**	,396**
An integral indicator of problematic concern	,357**	,354**	**,584****

** - p≤0,01

Conclusions:

For risk group of teenagers the problematic concerns related to the Internet environment is a priority compared to all other problematic areas of life, which, according to our long-term research, are age-normative (public and personal safety, school, identity-related problems). In addition, teenagers in this group realize that the Internet is becoming an obstacle for their activities in real life.

At-risk adolescents, i.e. those with a high level of concern about the Internet environment, are focused on problem-solving and avoidance coping strategies. Teenagers who have a greater problem concern in the Internet environment compared to other areas of life are statistically more active in online coping.

The closest relationship has been established between the general index of problematic concern and the use of an avoidance strategy, which allows us to consider the Internet environment primarily as a resource for distracting from problems and relieving emotional tension.