



PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES TO COUNTER THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE BEHAVIOR OF SCHOOL STUDENTS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Abduvaliyeva Mumtozxon Asilbekovna

PhD in Social Sciences, Associate Professor

Department of Social Work, NUUZ

abduvalievamumtozxon@gmail.com

Yunusova Nozliya To'liqin qizi

Master's Student, Social Work Program, NUUZ

YunusovaNozliya@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20019999>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 24th April 2026

Accepted: 29th April 2026

Online: 30th April 2026

KEYWORDS

Cyberbullying, aggression, social isolation, deviant behavior, psychological dependence, online safety, destructive behavior.

ABSTRACT

This article examines approaches employed in foreign countries to mitigate the negative impact of social media on the behavior of school students. It analyzes the influence of harmful content disseminated through social media, cyberbullying, and the psychological pressure of the virtual environment on students' behavior. In addition, the study explores preventive measures implemented in various countries, including the enhancement of digital literacy, strengthening parental and pedagogical supervision, the development of psychological services within school environments, and mechanisms for ensuring a safe online environment. The article also presents the conclusions of international experts regarding the role of social media platforms in the formation of deviant behavior among adolescents. The study concludes with recommendations for applying foreign methodologies aimed at improving students' media literacy.

Introduction. In recent years, the rapid development of digital technologies and social media has had a significant impact on the daily lives of school-aged children as well as on their socialization processes. While the Internet and social media expand opportunities for students to access information, communicate, and express themselves, they also generate a range of negative consequences. In particular, cyberbullying, virtual aggression, social

isolation, and various forms of deviant and destructive behavior have emerged as pressing challenges for modern educational systems, adversely affecting the well-being of young people. Although there is still limited reliable evidence on whether digital technologies, including social media, directly cause mental health problems among children and adolescents, a consistent association between internet use and mental well-being has been observed. Over the past



decade, adolescents worldwide have experienced a decline in mental health, which is often linked to excessive use of social media platforms.

Research Methodology. This study employs a comprehensive approach aimed at examining the impact of social media on the behavior of school students, as well as analyzing international preventive practices. The research is based on a scientific-theoretical analysis, through which relevant academic literature, international reports, and statistical data on the issue were systematically reviewed. A comparative (cross-national) analysis was conducted to examine and contrast advanced practices from the United Kingdom, Australia, Singapore, South Korea, and Türkiye.

A systems-based approach was applied to conceptualize the influence of social media as a multifactorial socio-psychological process. In addition, content analysis was utilized to identify harmful online content and to explore the mechanisms through which it affects adolescents' behavior. The empirical foundation of the study consists of data from international organizations and documented foreign experiences.

Discussion. Findings from a UNICEF survey indicate that misinformation on social media is perceived by young people as one of the primary sources of stress. For example, a survey conducted among youth in Bangladesh identified "the prevalence of false news and information on social media" as one of the most significant stressors [1]. According to UNESCO, misinformation and extremist content circulating on social media may

contribute to the acceleration of radicalization processes among young people. However, UNESCO also emphasizes that there is no conclusive evidence to support the claim that social media directly causes violent behavior [2]. Furthermore, UNICEF research highlights that algorithmic mechanisms of social media platforms tend to draw young users deeper into destructive information environments. This dynamic limits adolescents' ability to critically select information, confining them within specific negative narratives and behavioral models. As a result, deviant behavior may gradually become normalized, leading to the erosion of established social norms in the minds of young people. According to UNICEF's perspective, a destructive information environment affects not only individuals' psychological well-being but also undermines their legal awareness, social responsibility, and civic engagement. In the long term, these processes may contribute to a decline in social trust, an increase in conflicts, and broader threats to social stability. Therefore, this issue is increasingly recognized as a matter of global social security [3].

Australia's education system comprises 13 years of compulsory schooling, and in recent years, regulating young people's use of social media has become a key priority of public policy. The expansion of the digital environment—particularly the rise of cyberbullying, psychological pressure, and exposure to harmful content among children and adolescents—has prompted the government to adopt stringent measures in this area. Consequently, comprehensive strategies and legal



mechanisms have been developed. Australia has established an institutional framework for ensuring online safety, within which the eSafety Commissioner plays a central role. This body is authorized to protect children and adolescents in the online environment, ensure the rapid removal of harmful content, and address cases of cyberbullying. This approach is regarded as a modern governance model aimed at safeguarding the psychological well-being of young people.

In addition, Australia has enacted legislation designed to protect children from the negative consequences of social media use, ranging from addictive behaviors to online harassment. Preventive measures are also widely implemented within the education system, including digital safety education in schools, the promotion of responsible internet use, the strengthening of parental and teacher supervision, and programs aimed at supporting students' mental health. As of December 10, 2025, Australia introduced the world's first comprehensive ban on social media use for children under the age of 16 [4]. This law represents a pioneering and stringent legal measure in the field of youth online safety and has encouraged other countries to consider similar regulatory approaches. The significance of this legislative reform lies in its restriction of access to social media platforms, combined with strict age verification requirements and substantial civil penalties for non-compliant providers.

Overall, Australia's experience demonstrates that the impact of social media on students' behavior is complex

and multifaceted. The 2024 legislation introducing age-based restrictions and mandatory age verification mechanisms represents an innovative step toward enhancing online safety for young people. Therefore, strengthening cooperation among educational institutions, government bodies, and parents is essential for effectively monitoring this process and mitigating its negative effects. The measures implemented in Australia contribute positively to improving both the mental well-being and online safety of youth.

According to recent data from the **United Kingdom**, one in six adolescents aged 7–16 and one in four aged 17–19 experience mental health problems, representing a significant increase compared to 2017, when the figures were one in nine and one in ten, respectively [5]. Notably, 48% of individuals with mental health conditions reported experiencing initial symptoms before the age of 18 [6]. This rise in mental health issues has adverse implications not only for individuals but also for society and the economy as a whole. Many researchers and practitioners suggest that this trend is at least partially associated with the increased use of social media among adolescents, which has become an integral part of their daily lives, fundamentally transforming how they live, learn, and interact. It is reported that 93% of individuals aged 12–17 now have a social media profile. In response to growing concerns, there has been a notable increase in scientific research examining the relationship between social media use and adolescent mental health. These findings indicate that the



influence of social media on school students' behavior is a pressing global issue.

The education system in the United Kingdom is highly developed and emphasizes not only academic achievement but also behavioral development, social responsibility, and digital culture. Compulsory education typically spans from ages 5 to 16 and is divided into primary (ages 5–11) and secondary (ages 11–16) education. This structure enables age-appropriate, progressive learning. Within schools, students are taught how to navigate social media safely, avoid harmful content, and manage their online time effectively. The United Kingdom employs a multi-layered regulatory framework for monitoring young people's use of social media, consisting of educational, parental, and legal-regulatory components. Schools provide training on safe online behavior; parents are encouraged to supervise and regulate their children's internet use; and digital platforms are legally required to comply with safety standards for young users, overseen by the regulatory body Ofcom [7].

The Online Safety Act, adopted by the UK Parliament on 26 October 2023, serves as a key legislative instrument aimed at preventing the dissemination of illegal and harmful content online, particularly content affecting children [8]. In addition, Ofcom regularly conducts research on children's and adolescents' internet usage. According to 2024 data, 99% of children use the internet; by the age of 11, nine out of ten children own a smartphone; and 75% of individuals aged 8–17 have at least one

social media profile. Ofcom reports indicate that children are increasingly protected from exposure to harmful content, including pornography, are less likely to be added to group chats without consent, and have improved mechanisms for reporting harmful material. Overall, the UK experience demonstrates an integrated approach aimed at balancing educational objectives with the regulation of youth online activity. This model supports students' academic, psychological, and social development while implementing evidence-based measures to mitigate the negative effects of social media.

At the same time, the rapid advancement of digital technologies and the internet has made social media an integral part of young people's lives worldwide. Consequently, many countries, including **Singapore**, have developed regulatory frameworks and strategies to ensure safe social media use and protect youth from harmful online environments. Singapore has enacted several laws governing internet and social media use, among which the Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2022 is particularly significant. Adopted in November 2022 and implemented in February 2023, this law aims to limit the spread of harmful content, especially that affecting children and adolescents [9]. It classifies harmful content into categories such as materials promoting self-harm or suicide, violence, sexual exploitation, racial or religious hatred, and misinformation that may endanger public health or safety [10]. Social media platforms that fail to remove such content in a timely manner may face fines or restrictions imposed by



regulatory authorities. In Singapore, school education plays a pivotal role in mitigating the negative impact of social media. State schools have introduced educational programs known as “Digital Literacy” and “Cyber Wellness.” Through these programs, students are taught essential skills, including safe internet use, the identification of misinformation, strategies for combating cyberbullying, and adherence to ethical norms of behavior on social media. This approach contributes to the development of young people’s digital culture.

On 5 November 2025, the Parliament of Singapore adopted the Online Safety (Relief and Accountability) Act, aimed at strengthening measures against harmful online content and cyberbullying. In addition, the Singaporean government introduced a new regulatory code in 2025 to protect young users from harmful applications. Under this framework, applications are required to verify users’ age, and individuals under the age of 18 are restricted from downloading applications intended for adults. In particular, applications containing explicit or harmful content are blocked for minors. These regulations are expected to be fully implemented by 2026. Furthermore, beginning in 2026, certain platforms in Singapore have started implementing artificial intelligence-based age verification systems [11]. For instance, Google has introduced measures for users under 18 that include automatic age detection, age-appropriate content filtering, and the mandatory activation of safety settings.

South Korea is one of the countries in the Asian region that has most effectively integrated digital technologies into its education system. The country is distinguished by its advanced infrastructure and innovative educational model. Having overcome the 1997 Asian financial crisis through a strong informatization policy, South Korea continues to invest in the development of the information and communication technology (ICT) sector in the current era of big data and intelligent computing. Recent statistical data on internet addiction in South Korea indicate that, despite the increasing number of internet users, the overall proportion of individuals classified as internet-addicted has been gradually declining. However, the prevalence of addiction varies significantly across age groups. For instance, the rate is 6.4% among children aged 5–9, 11.7% among adolescents, and 5.9% among young adults aged 20–25. Among these groups, adolescents exhibit the highest level of internet addiction. At the same time, a notable upward trend has been observed among middle-aged adults (50–54 years), with 3.8% reported to be affected by problematic internet use. Moreover, the level of internet addiction among adolescents from single-parent families (12.0%) and dual-income families (12.3%) exceeds the average rate (11.7%). With the increasing penetration of smartphones, annual surveys have also been conducted to assess problematic smartphone use. These findings indicate a steady rise in smartphone addiction, with the highest reported rate reaching 11.8% [12].



In South Korea, the prevention of internet addiction is considered a national priority and constitutes a key component of state policy. Preventive efforts are primarily implemented through the education system. Legislation mandates annual training programs on internet addiction prevention in primary, secondary, and upper secondary schools, as well as in certain public institutions. These programs are designed with consideration of the psychological characteristics of different age groups. For example, programs targeting adolescents focus on developing self-control, time management, and the ability to use digital technologies in a conscious and responsible manner. In addition to educational measures, prevention is reinforced through large-scale public awareness campaigns. One notable initiative is the “Smart Off Day” campaign, organized by the government to raise awareness—particularly among young people—about the negative consequences of excessive smartphone and internet use. This campaign is actively promoted through mass media, including television, radio, print media, and social networks.

Recommendations. Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed. In Uzbekistan, the rate of social media use among adolescents has been steadily increasing. Many parents provide their children with smartphones for educational purposes or communication; however, they often lack knowledge of internet safety tools and parental control mechanisms. Moreover, when adolescents in Uzbekistan experience

online harassment or pressure, they frequently conceal such incidents from adults due to feelings of shame or fear. Taking into account international best practices and adapting them to national socio-cultural values, the following measures are recommended:

Legal and institutional reforms.

It is necessary to improve legislation on “safe internet for children” by drawing on the experience of Australia, including the introduction of stricter age restrictions and the obligation for social media platforms to filter harmful content in the Uzbek language. In addition, the establishment of a national cyber protection center is recommended, where adolescents and parents can seek assistance anonymously through a rapid-response system involving psychologists and legal experts.

Reforms in the education system (based on the Singapore model).

The introduction of “digital hygiene” courses within school curricula is essential. These courses should go beyond basic computer skills (such as Word or Excel) and include training on identifying misinformation, protecting personal data, and developing appropriate communication behavior on social media. Furthermore, the implementation of “Digital Detox” initiatives—such as designating one day per week as a “smartphone-free day” in schools—would promote face-to-face interaction through interactive and social activities.

Social and cultural approaches (based on the South Korean model).

Public awareness campaigns should incorporate national and cultural values to explain the negative effects of social media, including concepts such as the



value of time and the harm of gossip and misinformation. Additionally, it is recommended to promote national content development projects by supporting Uzbek bloggers and content creators in producing engaging yet educational materials for adolescents through state incentives.

In this way, the adaptation and implementation of advanced international practices in alignment with national socio-cultural characteristics can contribute to reducing the negative impact of social media among adolescents and fostering their healthy socialization.

Conclusion. The findings of this study indicate that social media exerts a significant and multifaceted influence on the behavior of school students. In particular, cyberbullying, the spread of

misinformation, psychological pressure, and exposure to destructive content emerge as key factors contributing to the formation of deviant behavior among young people. The analysis demonstrates that the negative impact of social media extends beyond students' psychological well-being, affecting their socialization processes, legal awareness, and sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, international experience confirms that addressing this issue requires a comprehensive and systematic approach. In particular, enhancing digital literacy, implementing robust legal regulations, strengthening parental and pedagogical supervision, and developing school-based psychological support services stand out as effective preventive measures.

References:

1. UNICEF Youth Poll: Misinformation Is the Leading Cause of Stress for Youth on Social Media, Followed by Bullying and Harmful Content. 11 February 2025.
2. UNESCO Releases New Research on Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media. 30 November 2017.
3. UNICEF (2017). How Does the Time Children Spend Using Digital Technology Impact Their Mental Well-Being, Social Relationships and Physical Activity? An Evidence-Focused Literature Review. Available at: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Children-digital-technology-wellbeing.pdf>
4. NHS. Mental Health of Children and Young People in England in 2022. Available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/news/2022/rate-of-mental-disorders-among-17-to-19-year-olds-increased-in-2022-new-report-shows>
5. Whiteford, H. A., et al. (2013). Global Burden of Disease Attributable to Mental and Substance Use Disorders: Findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010. *The Lancet*, 382, 1575–1586.
6. Kaye, B. (2025). Australia Social Media Ban Set to Take Effect, Sparking a Global Crackdown. Reuters, December. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/australia-social-media-ban-set-to-take-effect-sparking-global-crackdown-2025-12-09>



7. UK Government. What's Changing for Children on Social Media from 25 July 2025. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/whats-changing-for-children-on-social-media-from-25-july-2025>
8. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. (2025; updated 2026). Online Safety Act. Published 24 July 2025; last updated 2 March 2026. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-safety-act-online-safety-act-2023>
9. Ministry of Digital Development and Information (Singapore). (2023). Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act Takes Effect on 1 February 2023: Press Release, 31 January 2023. Available at: <https://www.mddi.gov.sg/newsroom/online-safety-act-takes-effect-on-1-february-2023>
10. Woodhouse, J., & Lalic, M. (2024). The Impact of Smartphones and Social Media on Children: Research Briefing (Debate Pack). House of Commons Library, 13 May 2024. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2024-0103/>
11. Rakshika, V. (2026). Google Starts Rolling Out Age-Verification Safeguards for Under-18s in Singapore. The Straits Times, 2 February 2026. Available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/google-starts-rolling-out-age-verification-safeguards-for-under-18s-in-singapore>
12. Koh, Y.-S. (2017). Internet Addiction Prevention and Counseling Center (IAPC) of National Information Society Agency (NIA), Seoul, South Korea. In C. Montag & M. Reuter (Eds.), Internet Addiction. Studies in Neuroscience, Psychology and Behavioral Economics. Springer International Publishing Switzerland. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-46276-9_19. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-46276-9_19