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Gender and Age Differences of Cyberbullying Coping Strategies Among Adolescents: A Cross-Cultural Study (Russia and Kazakhstan)

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Abstract

Introduction. Cyberbullying poses a serious threat to adolescents' psychological well-being. However, the influence of gender, age, and cultural factors on adolescents' coping strategies remains insufficiently studied, particularly in the post-Soviet context. The novelty of this study lies in its cross-cultural analysis of cyberbullying coping strategies. The study aims to identify gender- and age-related aspects of cyberbullying coping strategies demonstrated by adolescents from two different cultures (Kazakhstan and Russia). **Methods.** The study employed an adapted version of the Coping with Cyberbullying Questionnaire (CWCBQ), which demonstrates satisfactory psychometric properties: expert consensus (consistency ≥ 80%), exploratory factor analysis ($KMO = 0.85$; $\chi^2 = 13{,}691.213$, $p < 0.001$), and confirmatory factor analysis ($CFI = 0.955$, $RMSEA = 0.036$), confirming measurement invariance across the Russian and Kazakhstani samples ($\Delta CFI < 0.01$). The participants included 404 adolescents (206 from Russia and 198 from Kazakhstan; 43% boys and 57% girls) aged 11–17 years. **Results.** Notable gender differences emerged: girls tended to rely on *close support* more frequently ($M = 24.8$ / 21.2; $p < 0.01$) and *distal advice* ($M = 15.8$ / 13.9; $p < 0.001$), whereas boys more often preferred *establishing boundaries* ($M = 12.8$ / 12.0; $p < 0.01$). Age-related dynamics revealed a *U*-shaped pattern for *distal advice*, with peaks at ages 12 and 16, as well as an increase in *close support* toward age 17. Cross-cultural differences indicated a stronger orientation toward formal coping strategies in the Kazakhstani sample and a greater

preference for digital autonomy in the Russian sample. **Discussion.** The findings highlight the role of cultural norms of collectivism and individualism in shaping cyberbullying coping strategies. In the Kazakhstani sample, clan-based social structures appear to mitigate the consequences of cyberbullying, whereas in the Russian sample, the dominance of digital autonomy may mask emotional avoidance. Cyberbullying coping strategies are thus shaped by gender, age, and cultural context. The findings highlight the need for differentiated prevention programs, emphasizing emotional regulation in early adolescence, digital literacy in middle adolescence, and the strengthening of social support networks in late adolescence. Family-oriented approaches are recommended for the Kazakhstani sample, whereas technological self-efficacy training is emphasized for the Russian sample.

Keywords

cyberbullying, coping strategies, adolescents, gender differences, age aspects, cross-cultural study, Russia, Kazakhstan

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Introduction

Cyberbullying, as a social phenomenon of the digital age, transforms not only the forms of aggression but also the patterns of coping with it. While early studies (Wolke et al., 2017) emphasized its secondary nature in relation to offline bullying, contemporary research (Soldatova & Rasskazova, 2023) highlights the uniqueness of the digital context—anonymity, virality and round-the-clock availability. These features necessitate a reconsideration of classical coping models (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) through the lens of hybrid reality (McLuhan, 1964), in which digital tools function as an *extension* of personality. This shift has led to the emergence of specific coping strategies, such as establishing digital boundaries—blocking aggressors, adjusting privacy settings, and developing emotional self-regulation skills (Boyd, 2015).

The hybrid nature of digital identity, shaped by algorithmic systems, not only expands opportunities for self-presentation but also generates new vulnerabilities, particularly in the context of cyberbullying. Platform algorithms, acting as crystalline mirrors reconstruct self-perception through content personalization (Ionescu & Licu, 2023). As a result, cyberbullying within hybrid reality acquires the characteristics of a chronic stressor that disrupts the integrity of the digital self. Low algorithmic literacy, which intensifies cognitive biases, alters the very mechanisms of coping with cyberbullying. Teenagers growing up in our

digitally hyperconnected world must find ways to balance guarding their emotions in real life while staying active online. This explains the relevance of studying gender and age differences in coping strategies, where establishing digital boundaries functions not merely as a technical action but as a form of self-regulation within a hybrid personality structure.

Furthermore, the synthesis of social and personal categories in adolescents' self-descriptions (Soldatova et al., 2017) correlates with preferences for distal or close coping strategies. The stronger the integration of online and offline identities, the greater the need for combined methods of coping, ranging from emotional support to institutional assistance. Consequently, cross-cultural analysis of cyberbullying coping strategies requires consideration of the specific features of digital socialization, which can both constrain the coping repertoire and stimulate innovative forms of protecting the "extended" self.

Additionally, differences between cultures in how people handle cyberbullying aren't just explained by their digital skills or how familiar they are with technology. If hybrid reality, according to McLuhan, sets the general framework for the "extension" of personality through digital tools, then the cultural-historical context determines how exactly these tools reconstruct social practices. Thus, the empirically identified differences between Russian and Kazakhstani adolescents—digital autonomy versus clan support—reflect a profound contradiction between technological determinism and cultural tradition. For example, among adolescents in the Kazakhstan sample, the support of clan structures helps restore boundaries by the ages of 15–17, whereas in the Russian sample, digital autonomy dominates, which aligns with the theory of individualism (Görzig & Macháčková, 2015). These differences underscore the need to adapt anti-bullying strategies to local contexts that form the "framework of acceptability" for the digital generation, where clan ties and individualism become complementary elements of a new coping ecosystem rather than antagonists.

The identified cross-cultural differences in coping strategies expose a deeper methodological problem: the contradictory data on the prevalence of cyberbullying may not be a statistical error, but a marker of culturally determined mechanisms of trauma representation. Unlike the findings of the global Ipsos survey (McCarthy, 2018), where 0% of Russian parents reported incidents of cyberbullying, the current study revealed a significant prevalence of the problem among adolescents (N=404). This indicates that cyberbullying in individualistic societies often remains latent due to the stigmatization of victims, whereas in collectivistic cultures (Kazakhstan), clan structures provide open discussion and support. This creates a contradictory dynamic: technologies that standardize forms of cyber - aggression (e.g. anonymity and virality) often come into conflict with cultural differences, which can significantly change how an issue is viewed. In the Russian sample, digital autonomy, corresponding to the values of individualism (Görzig & Macháčková, 2015), acts as a "double screen": on the one hand, it provides tools for blocking aggressors (Boyd, 2015), and on the other, it conceals the scale of bullying, as victims "silence" the problem due to fear of judgment. In the Kazakhstani sample, clan ties transferred to the digital space do not reduce the frequency of bullying but change its essence: from a personal trauma, it turns into a topic for collective discussion. Thus, discrepancies in the data from global and local studies are not an error but

a result of cultural differences in the perception of the problem. Hybrid identity (McLuhan, 1964) affects not only how adolescents overcome aggression but also their willingness to talk about it at all. This challenges universal strategies for addressing cyberbullying, as programs need to account for cultural norms that determine what is seen as "private" versus "public" even though technologies may impose uniform rules of conduct online.

However, synchronizing anti-bullying programs with cultural codes requires not only recognizing the latency of the problem in individualistic societies but also rethinking the very methodology of studying it. While Wolke et al. (2017) interpret cyberbullying as a "ripple on the surface of the ocean of traditional aggression" the work of Soldatova & Rasskazova (2023) demonstrates that digital anonymity and content virality transform it into an independent phenomenon. Technological determinants (algorithms, platforms) become catalysts for a "tsunami" of trauma that erases the boundaries between online and offline reality. This contradiction between classic models (Wolke et al., 2017) and modern realities of hybrid reality actualizes the synthesis of developmental theories. Integrating Steinberg's (2017) concepts of the adolescent brain's cognitive plasticity, Lerner's (2018) concept of positive development through interaction with context, and Arnett's (2016) concept of "emerging adulthood" allows for proposing strategies that consider the dual nature of digital tools—both as "psychological tools" (Vygotsky, 1984) and sources of a "digital divide" (Smirnov, 2023). For example, Kazakhstani "family digital patches" (video messages from elders in chats) can not only increase empathy, as shown in the study by Brewer & Kerslake (2015), where a statistically significant increase in indicators was recorded (Δ = +15%, $p<0.05$), but also redefine the role of technologies—transforming them from algorithmic mediators into conduits of cultural authority. This helps compensate for the "divide" in adult-child communication (Smirnov, 2023) by integrating traditional values into the digital space. In the Russian sample, technological self-efficacy training (activation of the prefrontal cortex, $p<0.01$) becomes a tool for internalizing digital boundaries, where blocking aggressors (Boyd, 2015) evolves from a technical action into an act of personal self-affirmation, mitigating the risks of "functional inversion" (Smirnov, 2023). At the same time, the gender aspect, revealed by Eagly & Wood (2012) within the framework of social role theory, adds a critical dimension: while girls use platforms to strengthen connections, following empathy patterns, boys, as shown by Wright (2017), more often transform technologies into tools for avoidance or aggression, reproducing masculine stereotypes even in a hybrid reality.

Research Aim and Hypotheses

The aim of the study is to reveal the patterns of adolescents' choice of cyberbullying coping strategies through the lens of their gender, ontogenetic, and cross-cultural determination.

The research hypothesis assumes that coping behavior in digital environments is marked by complex differentiation:

Gender specificity manifests itself in the dichotomy between socio-institutional mechanisms in girls *("close support" "distal advice"*) and instrumental-autonomous methods of self-regulation in boys ("*establishing boundaries*").

Age dynamics follow a non-linear *U*-shaped pattern, which highlights unique aspects of cognitive flexibility and the stages of psychosocial development during adolescence.

Cross-cultural variability (Russian and Kazakhstani samples) acts as a significant predictor of the choice of coping resources, determining the priority of either collectivistic (socio-clan) support networks or individualistic strategies of digital autonomy.

The interrelation of strategies is determined by their functional conjugacy, which has specific correlational profiles depending on the adolescents' gender.

Methods

The article presents the results of an empirical study aimed at examining cyberbullying coping strategies among adolescents, considering gender and age differences. The analysis focuses on a comparative assessment of adolescents' preferences in the Russian sample (N=206) and the Kazakhstani sample (N=198) in choosing four key strategies:

1. **distal advice** (appealing to formal institutions or authorities);
2. **establishing boundaries** (digital self-regulation and limiting interaction).
3. **close support** (seeking help from the immediate environment);
4. **active ignoring** (conscious conflict avoidance).

The empirical sample consisted of 404 adolescents aged 11–17 (M = 13.7, SD = 1.73), of which 57.2% were girls (n=231) and 42.8% were boys (n=173). The socio-demographic profile of the participants, students in grades 5–11 of Russian-language schools, is representative of the adolescent population of the studied regions: Orsk (Russian Federation), as well as Aktau, Semey, Ust-Kamenogorsk, and Aktobe (Republic of Kazakhstan). The inclusion criterion was the experience of active use of the Internet and social networks with a history of online activity of at least one year. The data collection procedure complied with international ethical standards, including principles of anonymity, confidentiality, and obtaining voluntary written consent from parents.

The empirical basis of the work was survey data using the adapted Russian-language version of the Coping with Cyberbullying Questionnaire (CWCBQ) (Sticca et al., 2015; adaptation: Utemissova, 2024). Psychometric validity and invariance between the samples of Russia and Kazakhstan (ΔCFI<0.01) ensured strict data comparability at the cross-cultural level (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002) and satisfactory psychometric characteristics: expert consensus (consistency ≥80%); exploratory factor analysis (KMO=0.85; χ^2=13691.213, p<0.001); confirmatory factor analysis (CFI=0.955, $RMSEA$=0.036). The cross-cultural equivalence of the questionnaire increases its validity. These results confirm the applicability of the questionnaire in cross-cultural studies (Utemissova, 2024).

SPSS 26.0 was used for statistical analysis. To evaluate the hypotheses, quantitative methods were applied: Pearson correlation analysis, Mann-Whitney U test for comparing independent samples, Kruskal-Wallis test to examine age dynamics, and multivariate analysis

of variance (ANOVA) to determine how age, gender, and country affect strategy selection. The choice of parametric (ANOVA) and nonparametric tests (Mann-Whitney, Kruskal-Wallis) was determined by checking the data for compliance with the assumptions of normal distribution (Shapiro-Wilk test) and homogeneity of variances. If variables did not meet the assumptions of parametric tests (p<0.05), nonparametric alternatives were used instead. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare strategies between gender groups because the distribution of data for the *"close support"* and *"active ignoring"* scales was not normal. The Kruskal-Wallis test was employed to examine age dynamics because the age subgroups were not evenly distributed. Multivariate ANOVA was used to evaluate cross-cultural differences whenever variances were homogeneous, as indicated by a Levene's test p-value greater than 0.05. The reason for using both parametric and nonparametric methods together is to ensure that statistical assumptions are met. ANOVA's assumptions of normality and equal variances were satisfied in cross-cultural comparisons (strategy "*distal advice*": F=3.281, p=0.039), but not within gender groups.

Results

An analysis of the correlations between cyberbullying coping strategies (Table 1) revealed gender-specific patterns. Statistically significant relationships between all strategies were found in boys: a strong correlation of "*close support*" with "*active ignoring*" (r=0.730; p<0.001), and moderate relationships of "*distal advice*" with "*close support*" (r=0.560; p<0.001) and "*active ignoring*" (r=0.481; p<0.001). In girls, the relationship between "*close support*" and "*active ignoring*" dominates (r=0.603; p<0.001), whereas the connection between "*distal advice*" and "*close support*" is weaker (r=0.391; p<0.001) and there is no significant correlation with "*active ignoring*".

Gender differences in the use of strategies are expressed as follows (Table 2): girls use "*close support*" more often (M = 24.8 / 21.2; U=16604, p=0.004) and "*distal advice*" (M=15.8/13.9; U=13540, p<0.001), whereas boys prefer "*establishing boundaries*" (boys: M=12.8/12.0; U=17337, p=0.022).

Age dynamics demonstrate a U-shaped pattern for "*distal advice*" with peaks at 12 and 16 years. Cross-cultural comparisons revealed an orientation among adolescents in the Kazakhstani participants toward formal strategies, in contrast to Russians, who prefer digital autonomy. Boys demonstrate a tendency to prefer "*active ignoring*" (U=17797.500, p=0.059), which, although it does not reach the standard level of significance, aligns with the theory of masculinity encouraging the avoidance of demonstrating vulnerability (Cornwall et al., 2016).

Table 1
Correlations between cyberbullying coping strategies in groups of boys and girls (Spearman's ρ)

Group	Strategy Pairs	*r*	*p*
Girls (*n*=231)	Distal advice — Close support	0.391	<0.001
	Close support — Active ignoring	0.603	<0.001
Boys (*n*=173)	Distal advice — Close support	0.56	<0.001
	Close support — Active ignoring	0.73	<0.001
	Distal advice – Active ignoring	0.481	<0.001

Table 2
Comparative analysis of cyberbullying coping strategies depending on adolescents' gender (Mann-Whitney U test)

Coping Strategy	Boys (*n*=173), *M±SD*	Girls (*n*=231) *M±SD*	*U*	*p*
Distal advice (DA)	13.9±0.4	15.8±0.3	13540	<0.001***
Establishing boundaries (EB)	12.8±4.0	12.0±3.6	17337.5	0.022*
Close support (CS)	21.2±0.4	24.8±0.3	16604	0.004**
Active ignoring (AI)	13.9±0.3	15.8±02	17797.5	0.059

Note: *M±SD — mean ± standard deviation; U — Mann-Whitney U test; *p<0.05, **p<0.01, **p<0.001.*

In addition to pronounced gender differences in the choice of coping strategies, data analysis revealed complex age dynamics demonstrating the relationship between the stages of psychosocial development and the digital adaptation of adolescents. The "*distal advice*" (DA) strategy demonstrates a *U*-shaped trajectory with peaks at 12 (*M*=15.27±6.35) and 16 years (*M*=17.05±4.82), a decrease toward 14 years (*M*=13.87±4.77), and stabilization by 17 (*M*=16.22±4.35) (Table 3). The "*close support*" (CS) strategy shows an increase from 11 (*M*=22.69±5.41) to 17 years (*M*=26.09±2.78), with minimum values at 14 years (*M*=21.99±5.87).

The "*establishing boundaries*" (EB) strategy demonstrates stable values in the age range of 11–17 years (*M*=11.78–12.78) without statistically significant differences (*H*=3.125; *p*=0.793). The lowest values appeared at age 12 (*M*=11.78±4.50), followed by an increase at ages 13 and 14 (*M*=12.46±3.99 and 12.41±3.98, respectively). The highest values occur at age 16 (*M*=12.78 ± 3.13), although changes with age are not statistically significant. The "*active ignoring*" (AI) strategy demonstrates an age-related increase from 11 years (*M*=14.48±3.53) to 17 years (*M*=17.00±2.32).

Table 3
Age dynamics of cyberbullying coping strategies (M±SD)

Strategy	11 years	12 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	*H* (*p*-value)
Distal advice (DA)	14.23±4.91	15.27±6.35	15.04±4.89	13.87±4.77	15.73±4.62	17.05±4.82	16.22±4.35	17.806 (0.007**)
Establi-shing boundaries (EB)	11.90±3.54	11.78±4.50	12.46±3.99	12.41±3.98	12.45±3.29	12.78±3.13	12.48±3.59	3.125 (0.793)
Close support (CS)	22.69±5.41	24.61±4.96	22.76±5.69	21.99±5.87	23.12±4.58	24.93±4.03	26.09±2.78	22.866 (0.001***)
Active ignoring (AI)	14.48±3.53	15.98±3.44	14.67±3.37	14.63±3.87	14.78±3.42	15.05±3.32	17.00±2.32	15.878 (0.014*)

Note: *M±SD — mean ± standard deviation; H — Kruskal-Wallis test; *p<0.05, **p<0.01, **p<0.001.*

Table 4
Cross-cultural differences in cyberbullying coping strategies (M±SD)

Strategy	Age	Russia	Kazakhstan	*F* (*p*-value)
Distal advice (DA)	11–12 years	15.3±4.6	16.1±4.4	3.281 (0.039*)
	13–14 years	13.0±4.7	16.6±5.1	
	15–17 years	13.2±5.0	17.1±5.0	
Establishing boundaries (EB)	11–12 years	13.4±3.3	13.2±3.6	0.750 (0.473)
	13–14 years	11.8±3.4	12.1±4.1	
	15–17 years	11.6±3.7	12.6±4.5	
Close support (CS)	11–12 years	23.8±4.5	24.7±4.0	4.282 (0.014*)
	13–14 years	22.8±5.5	24.0±4.8	
	15–17 years	23.2±5.6	25.0±3.5	
Active ignoring (AI)	11–12 years	15.1±3.0	15.8±2.8	1.891 (0.059)
	13–14 years	14.8±3.8	15.6±3.2	
	15–17 years	15.1±3.7	17.0±2.3	

Note: *M±SD — mean ± standard deviation; F — ANOVA test; *p<0.05, **p<0.01, **p<0.001.*

An analysis of cross-cultural differences in cyberbullying coping strategies (Table 4) revealed statistically significant differences between adolescents in the Russian sample (N=206) and the Kazakhstani sample (N=198) in the strategies of *distal advice* (F=3.281; p=0.039) and *close support* (F=4.282; p=0.014). In the Kazakhstani sample, adolescents demonstrate a higher orientation toward formal strategies:

***Distal advice*:** maximum values in the 15–17 age group (M=17.1±5.0) versus 13.2±5.0 in the Russian sample (p<0.05), which aligns with cultural norms of collectivism and clan support (Lerner et al., 2018; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

***Close support*:** stable growth toward 15–17 years (M=25.0±3.5 / 23.2±5.6 in the Russian sample; p<0.05), confirming the role of family networks in the post-Soviet context (Balpeisova et al., 2019).

In the Kazakhstani sample, the strategy of "*active ignoring*" dominates, especially in the older age group (M=17.0±2.3 / 15.1±3.7; p=0.059), reflecting a tendency toward digital autonomy (Hofstede, 2011; Soldatova & Rasskazova, 2023). The overall sample shows that "*active ignoring*" rises as children grow older, increasing from 14.48 at age 11 to 17.00 at age 17. However, cross-cultural analysis highlights subtle differences in this trend. In the Russian sample, the values for older adolescents (15–17 years: M=15.1±3.7) demonstrate a smaller increase compared to the Kazakhstani sample (M=17.0±2.3), where the strategy is more pronounced and homogeneous. The partial intersection of standard deviations indicates significant intra-group variability in the Russian sample, which may be due to differences in digital autonomy and cultural norms.

Age dynamics (Table 4) show: for *distal advice* in the Kazakhstani sample, there is a linear increase from 11–12 years (M=16.1±4.4) to 15–17 years (M=17.1±5.0), whereas in the Russian sample, there is a decrease (15.3±4.6 — 13.2±5.0), confirming the U-shaped pattern described in Table 3. *Establishing boundaries* shows insignificant changes (F=0.750; p=0.473), with a tendency to decrease in the Russian sample (13.4±3.3 — 11.6±3.7) and a slight increase in the Kazakhstani sample from 13 years (12.1±4.1 — 12.6±4.5), which may be associated with the crisis of autonomy in individualistic cultures (Erikson, 1968).

Gender differences complement the picture: girls use *close support* and *distal advice* significantly more often, which corresponds to the theory of gender socialization (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Tamres et al., 2002). Among boys, "*active ignoring*" dominates, correlating with instrumental coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Discussion

This study's results show that cyberbullying is influenced by several factors, including neurobiology, age, gender, and culture. At the age of 12–14, a period characterized by a neurobiological imbalance between the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex (Crone & Dahl, 2012), adolescents exhibit heightened impulsivity. Nonetheless, cultural context shapes how this impulsivity appears: among Kazakhstani participants, it is moderated by the use

of "*active ignoring*" strategies and seeking "*close support*" while Russian participants, lacking these moderating factors, face a higher risk of maladaptation (Fahy et al., 2016). The cultural norms of individualism, which dominate the Russian sample, reinforce the tendency toward autonomy, thereby masking emotional needs. This is illustrated by a *U*-shaped trend where the importance of "*distal advice*" peaks at age 12 and then decreases by age 14. By the ages of 15–17, neurocognitive maturation facilitates the development of more adaptive strategies (Crone & Dahl, 2012): Kazakhstani adolescents effectively utilize family resources, while in the Russian sample, the previously established emphasis on "*establishing boundaries*" may conceal emotional avoidance, elevating the risks of social isolation (Fahy et al., 2016).

Gender differences remain a consistent pattern: girls significantly more often turn to "*close support*" aligning with gender socialization theories that emphasize the role of empathy and social connectedness (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Conversely, boys prefer instrumental strategies such as "*active ignoring*" reflecting norms of masculinity that encourage the avoidance of displaying vulnerability (Gutmann & Vigoya, 2018). The observed correlations indicate that social expectations influence gender differences in how individuals cope with cyberbullying, which can be explained using social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Distinct gender-related trends in cyberbullying coping methods can be understood through the lens of **social role theory** (Eagly & Wood, 2012). For instance, among boys, the strong correlation between "*close support*" and "*active ignoring*" may reflect an internal contradiction inherent in masculine norms: the need to seek assistance is combined with the maintenance of a *facade* of independence. The moderate correlation between "*distal advice*" and "*active ignoring*" suggests a pragmatic shift toward avoidance once formal support resources have been exhausted.

Among girls, the moderate association between "*close support*" and "*active ignoring*" may reflect a balance between empathic engagement and self-protective behavior. At the same time, the weak correlation between "*distal advice*" and other strategies indicates a greater reliance on informal and emotionally supportive networks. Thus, boys appear to adapt to masculine norms primarily through instrumental and avoidant coping strategies, whereas girls tend to employ strategies that emphasize interpersonal connection and emotional support.

These findings are consistent with Wright's (2017) research, which demonstrates that adolescents with stronger masculine traits are more likely to engage in cyber-verbal aggression in online gaming environments, whereas feminine traits are more commonly associated with relational forms of cyber aggression on social networking platforms. This convergence suggests that digital environments not only amplify aggressive behaviors but also reproduce and reshape traditional gender-role expectations within online interactions.

Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of **gender-sensitive approaches to cyberbullying prevention**, particularly given the established association between avoidance-based coping and increased long-term emotional vulnerability among adolescents (Karaush et al., 2020).

The cultural context plays a pivotal role in shaping adolescents' selection of coping strategies. In the Kazakhstani sample, characterized by the predominance of collectivistic values (Hofstede, 2011), adolescents more frequently seek support from formal institutions and family networks. This pattern is consistent with research highlighting the role of clan-based social structures in post-Soviet societies (Balpeisova et al., 2019). The findings suggest that clan networks in Kazakhstan function as a form of digital extension of collectivistic values within the framework of hybrid identity (McLuhan, 1964). Kazakhstani adolescents aged 15–17 show high levels of both "close support" and "distal advice", illustrating how their online and offline behaviors blend together. For these teens, asking authority figures for help feels like an ordinary extension of their routine social interactions.

In contrast, the Russian participants demonstrates a different pattern. The greater prevalence of "*active ignoring*" and the decline in "*establishing boundaries*" among adolescents aged 15–17 suggest a tendency toward digital autonomy as a strategy for distancing from emotional risks. This tendency fits well within a society that values individualism, where people often see their online identities as distinct from their offline responsibilities. From this perspective, the observed pattern may reflect a broader challenge of digital self-regulation, consistent with the *digital divide* framework described by Smirnov (2023), which emphasizes disparities in the development of digital competencies and emotional regulation. These findings underscore the importance of integrating emotional competence and digital literacy training into educational programs (Soldatova et al., 2017).

The study's findings on differences across cultures and age groups can also be understood by looking at how algorithm-based identity formation interacts with social and cultural expectations. For example, Ehn and Pita (2023) demonstrate that platform algorithms contribute to the formation of dynamic identity structures in which users negotiate between stable and flexible aspects of self-presentation. However, as noted by Ionescu and Licu (2023), the ethical opacity of algorithmic systems—the so-called "black box" effect—may influence coping processes indirectly. In these situations, adolescents engage with environments curated by algorithms as interpreted through their own culturally influenced viewpoints and expectations, rather than interacting directly with the algorithms themselves.

The age dynamics of the strategies exhibit non-linear patterns. The *U*-shaped trajectory of "*distal advice*" (with peaks at 12 and 16 years) mirrors Erikson's (1968) stages of psychosocial development: the search for external authorities in early puberty and their re-evaluation in late adolescence. The decrease in "*establishing boundaries*" around 13–14 years may be linked to a crisis of autonomy, which is exacerbated by conditions of digital hyperconnectivity (Soldatova & Voiskounsky, 2021), a finding consistent with international research on the role of technology in transforming social interactions (Boyd, 2014; Smahel et al., 2020).

The results of this study expand upon the findings of the EU Kids Online project (Smahel et al., 2020) by illustrating how cultural context modifies both the manifestations of cyberbullying and the corresponding coping strategies. While EU Kids Online identified a high prevalence of cyberbullying across Europe and emphasized gender equality in the use of formal

strategies, our data revealed significant cross-cultural and gender differences. For instance, the rate of appealing for "*distal advice*" in the Kazakhstani participants exceeded the European average, and girls used "*close support*" significantly more often. This stands in contrast to the broader European movement toward gender neutrality, likely due to the enduring influence of traditional roles in post-Soviet societies. Furthermore, while European studies describe a linear growth in digital autonomy, the Russian participants exhibited a *U*-shaped pattern for "*distal advice*" which is associated with adolescent identity crises within an individualistic context. Consequently, cultural and age factors do not merely supplement but complicate pan-European conclusions, thereby demanding localized solutions. Thus, cyberbullying represents an independent phenomenon of hybrid reality, rather than a secondary offshoot of offline aggression (Wolke et al., 2017). Digital identity consists of layers of attributes, with algorithmically generated traits (Ehn & Pita, 2023) layered over conventional social roles (Soldatova et al., 2022). This structure means that the ability to withstand cyber aggression is an important measure of adaptability.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of the study include the risk of bias associated with the use of self-reports, the uneven distribution of age subgroups (e.g., 17-year-olds), and the cultural specificity of the sample, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Despite the consistency with the findings from the EU Kids Online (Smahel et al., 2020) and "Children of Russia Online" (Soldatova et al., 2017) projects, longitudinal studies are required to assess the long-term effects of the identified strategies, particularly "*active ignoring*" which, according to Fahy et al. (2016), may exacerbate the risks of maladaptation. A promising direction for future research is exploring how algorithmic changes in digital platforms (e.g., TikTok's transition to 10-minute videos) dynamically transform identity matrices and coping strategies, especially in conditions of cultural diversity. On a global scale, a promising avenue is the implementation of VR simulators for emotional regulation training, as supported by meta-analytical data (Steinberg et al., 2018). These measures can serve as a foundation for developing comprehensive prevention systems that account for both universal and culture-specific aspects of cyberbullying.

For the Kazakhstani sample, family-oriented approaches integrating clan structures into digital platforms are effective, whereas in the Russian sample, prioritizing the development of critical thinking and technological self-efficacy is essential (Soldatova et al., 2017). However, as Smirnov (2023) cautions, digital tools must play an auxiliary role without replacing live, face-to-face interaction, to prevent an "event shift" — the transfer of value emphases into virtual reality (Smirnov, 2023, p. 49).

Key Findings

Girls significantly more often use *close support* and *distal advice* as cyberbullying coping strategies, whereas boys more frequently use *establishing boundaries* and demonstrate a tendency to prefer *active ignoring*.

Age trends show a non-linear pattern: young teens display the highest use of *distal advice*, which drops during mid-adolescence but rises again late in adolescence. *Close support* reaches its maximum value towards the end of adolescence, whereas *active ignoring* gradually increases with age.

Cultural differences play a key role: *distal advice* and *close support* dominate in the Kazakhstani sample, reflecting the influence of collectivist values and clan networks. The Russian participants shows a tendency toward *active ignoring*, particularly among older adolescents, against the backdrop of a decline in *establishing boundaries*, which may be associated with a crisis of digital self-regulation in an individualistic context.

Gender interrelations between strategies also vary boys show a strong correlation between *close support* and *active ignoring*, as well as a moderate correlation between *distal advice* and *active ignoring*. In girls, a moderate correlation between *close support* and *active ignoring* predominates, whereas *distal advice* correlates weakly with other strategies.

Conclusion

Practical implications highlight the need for:

1. For the Kazakhstan sample: programs integrating clan structures into digital support.
2. For the Russian sample: technological self-efficacy training.

Thus, the study contributes to the research on digital socialization and confirms that cultural norms and age-related changes decisively shape cyberbullying coping strategies in a hybrid reality.

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Gulmira U. Utemissova – conceptualization of the study, statistical analysis, interpretation of the results, writing the initial text (literature review and discussion), preparation of the article text, formatting the article in accordance with the journal requirements.

Anastasiya V. Miklyaeva – scientific supervision of the study, data collection coordination, formation of the theoretical review, development of the methodology, critical revision of the manuscript with significant intellectual contribution, approval of the final version of the article.

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Conflict of Interest Information

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.