

Happiness and life satisfaction in the context of online risks among children and adolescents from marginalized communities in Slovakia

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Research background

- National Coordination Center (NKS) for Addressing Violence against Children at the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic

Previous research:

- EU KIDS online 2018
- The experiences and behavior of children and young people in Slovakia 2021 (pandemic), 2022 (longitudinal), 2023
- Marginalized Roma communities. Internet use in the context of risky experiences (2024)

WHY THIS STUDY?

- Although research on digital risks is growing, their impact on the mental well-being of vulnerable groups remains under-researched.
- The aim of the study was to examine the associations between happiness, life satisfaction, and online risk factors among children and adolescents from marginalized communities in Slovakia.
- 8% of Slovakia's population (450.000) are Roma

MARGINALIZATION AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

It affects various groups of the population as a result of:

- structural inequalities
- discrimination
- limited access to resources

Forms of disadvantage:

- poverty
- low level of education
- unemployment
- limited access to healthcare and housing

Aim of the study

- to examine the associations between happiness, life satisfaction, and online risk factors among children and adolescents from marginalized communities in Slovakia.

Research

Research sample:

- The sample included 777 children and adolescents (52.3% girls; mean age = 14.8 years, median 15, modus 16, SD = 2,151, min. 11, max. 18)
- 37 schools
- 8 self-governing regions in Slovakia

Selection of research sample and data collection process:

- National Coordination Center (NKS) for Addressing Violence against Children at the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, 11/2024 – 12/2024.
- Based on their knowledge of marginalized groups, NKS coordinators selected primary and secondary schools attended by children and adolescents from these communities.
- Data collection took place during lessons in computer classrooms in the form of an online questionnaire.

Ethical aspects: The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Catholic University.

Analysis

- Descriptive statistics
- Decision trees analysis

Variables

modified and simplified items from EUKO Slovakia

- demographics (sex, age, risk of material deprivation)
- active time spent online (working day and weekends)
- experiences with cyberbullying (victim/aggressor),
- exposure to sexual and toxic content,
- sexting,
- parental control,
- **Feeling of happiness and life satisfaction: modified 4-item Happiness – satisfaction scale (Joseph, et al. 2004).**

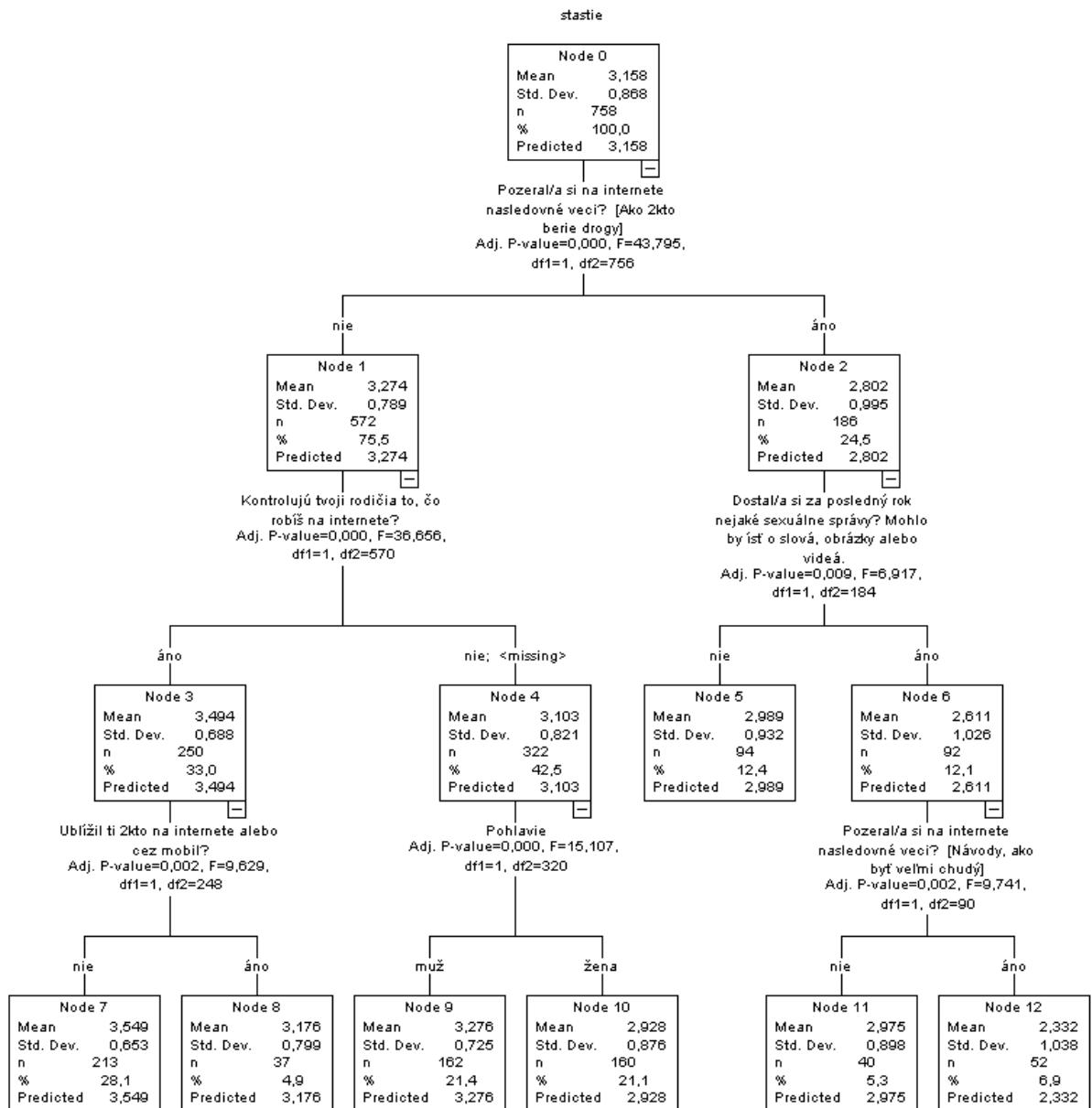
Variables

- Risk of material deprivation – adopted from Quantitative Tools - Global Kids Online project
- new clothes, two pairs of shoes in the right size, a quiet place to study, fruit and vegetables, their own bed, electricity, one hot meal a day, visits to the dentist and doctor.

Results

- all participants

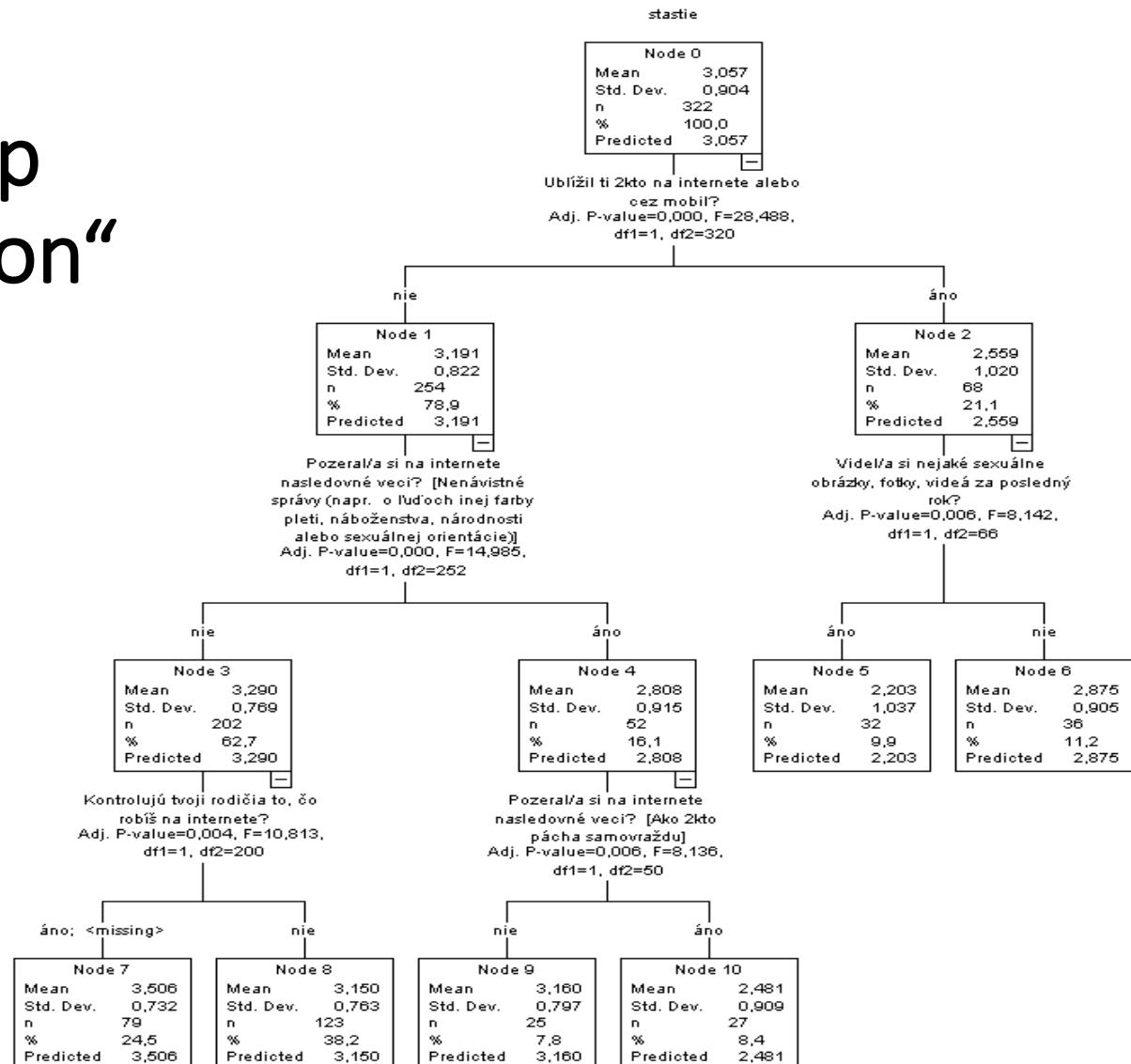
- Most important discriminating variable: toxic content on the internet – how someone takes drugs
- **Protective predictors:** not being exposed to toxic content, parental control, and not being a victim of bullying
- **Risk predictors:** exposure to toxic content on the internet (how to take drugs), sexting (received sexual content), exposure to toxic content on the internet (video tutorials – how to be thin)



Results

Participants within a group „risk of material deprivation“

- Most important discriminating variable: cyberbullying
 - **Protective predictors:** not being a victim of cyberbullying, not consuming hateful content on the internet, parental control, avoiding sexual content, and avoiding self-harm content
 - **Risk predictors:** cyberbullying, hateful content on the internet, sexual content, and self-harm content



Discussion

- The happiness and life satisfaction of children and adolescents from marginalized communities is significantly related to the quality of their online experiences, not primarily to demographic factors and material deprivation.
- The strongest negative predictor is exposure to toxic content (drugs, extreme thinness, self-harm) – both on its own and in combination with other risks.
- Sexting and receiving sexually explicit content are associated with a decline in satisfaction, especially when combined with toxic content.
- Parental control of the internet appears to be a stable protective factor that increases happiness even in the presence of moderate risks.

To sum up

- The absence of experience with cyberbullying is a key protective factor – its occurrence significantly reduces feelings of happiness and life satisfaction.
- The highest level of happiness is indicated by children who have no contact with toxic content, who are subject to parental control, and who have no experience of cyberbullying.
- Prevention should be systematic and multi-layered – e.g. focused on content regulation, supporting parental control, reducing the incidence of cyberbullying.

Marginalised communities X General population

	General population	Marginalized communities
Feeling of happiness and life satisfaction (average)	2,83	3,16
Internet – school day (hours – average)	4,81	5,96
Internet – weekend (hours – average)	5,52	6,01
Cyberbullying - victim	26,9 %	19 %
Cyberbullying - aggressor	16,7 %	22,8 %
Sexually explicit content	63 %	39,8 %
Sexting (received sex. messages)	32 %	26,4 %
Exposure to toxic content (self-harm)	38,7 %	30,3 %
Exposure to toxic content - suicide	30,9 %	21,6 %
Exposure to toxic content -extreme thinness,	37,3 %	30,5 %
Exposure to toxic content – hate speech	49,4 %	34 %
Exposure to toxic content - drugs	39,8 %	24,5 %

Thank you for your attention!

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