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History of Childhood Maltreatment and Online Harm: A Rapid Review of Research

Abstract

Objective. When the negative effects and risks associated with modern digital technologies are being discussed, the role of offline factors, including traumatic experiences such as childhood maltreatment, in determining the likelihood of exposure to online harm is rarely taken into account. The present study aimed to fill this gap by conducting a systematic rapid review of literature mapping the existing research evidence on the associations between childhood maltreatment history and vulnerability to online harm. **Method.** The rapid review protocol was developed following PRISMA guidelines. Searches were conducted in two databases (WoS, PubMed) in September – October 2023. A total of 40 peer-reviewed articles meeting the inclusion criteria were identified and analyzed. **Results.** Statistically significant relationships between childhood maltreatment experiences and subsequent vulnerability to victimization by and/or engagement in online harm were reported in all of the included articles. Preliminary evidence points to the existence of a relationship between experiencing childhood maltreatment and susceptibility to online harm. **Conclusions.** Results of the present study can guide future research on the role of CM exposure and impact in vulnerability to online harms.

Keywords: childhood maltreatment; rapid review; technology-facilitated violence; online harm.

Clinical Impact Statement. Childhood maltreatment is a traumatic experience that can have lasting impact on the individual's mental health and wellbeing. As such, it is likely to affect not only offline functioning but also vulnerability to harm in online spaces. Review of existing research suggests that exposure to maltreatment and adverse childhood experiences may put

individuals at increased risk of victimization by and involvement in violence and harmful practices facilitated by the modern communication technologies.

Introduction

Childhood maltreatment (CM) affects millions of children worldwide. Defined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as "any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver (e.g., clergy, coach, teacher) that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022), CM can take the form of abuse (sexual, physical, and emotional), neglect (physical and emotional), or other forms of exploitation affecting children's well-being, development, and health (World Health Organization, 2022).

CM is associated with numerous negative outcomes, both immediate and long-term. Children experiencing maltreatment are at risk of injury and illness, cognitive deficits and lower academic performance, as well as mental health and behavioral difficulties (Walker & Wamser-Nanney, 2023). Adult survivors are at higher risk of developing health conditions (Felitti et al., 1998), mental health disorders (Baldwin et al., 2023; Kuzminskaite et al., 2021; Nelson et al., 2017), addiction (Hyman et al., 2006; de la Peña-Arteaga et al., 2021; Elliott et al., 2014), and high-risk behaviors (Senn & Carey, 2010; Hahn et al., 2016; Thibodeau et al., 2017). In addition, vulnerability of CM survivors to repeated victimization, as well as their risk of engagement in violence towards others, pose a significant concern, aggravating the negative outcomes of experienced CM and, contributing to intergenerational and community-based spread of violence (Walker & Wamser-Nanney, 2023; Watts & McNulty, 2013; Burke et al., 2023; Baron & Forde, 2020).

While the association between childhood victimization and vulnerability to violence (both experienced and perpetrated) is generally well-researched, there is one area where the contribution of CM to the experiences of violence remains understudied – technology-facilitated violence and harm. This paper aims to fill this gap.

The Present Study

This study pursued two objectives. Objective 1: to propose, based on the analysis of literature on CM and its impact, a list of online harms relevant in the context of CM sequelae. Objective 2: to conduct a rapid systematic review of literature in order a) to map the existing

research evidence on the associations between CM and online harm, and to b) fine-tune the typology of online harms associated with exposure to CM.

Violence and Harmful Behaviors in Online Environments

There are currently 5.18 billion Internet users worldwide, which constitutes two thirds of the global population (Petrosyan, 2023). An average user has 6 - 7 social media accounts and spends 151 minutes per day using social networking websites and applications (Dixon, 2023; Wong & Bottorf, 2023).

As people spend more time online, violent and/or criminal behavior also gains online presence. This results in the emergence of technology-facilitated victimization, where individuals are subjected to harm perpetrated with the assistance of modern technologies.

For the purposes of this paper, the term “online harm” is used as an umbrella term encompassing a range of negative experiences or outcomes associated with the use of modern digital communication technologies, primarily, related to the use of Internet and, in particular, social media.

From Childhood Maltreatment to Online Harm Exposure and Involvement

In order to fulfill Objective 1, based on the analysis of literature, the following online harms were identified as potentially associated with prior exposure to CM:

First, CM is a known risk factor for subsequent re-victimization (Walker & Wamser-Nanney, 2023). Therefore, exposure to CM may result *in increased vulnerability to different forms of cyber victimization*. This may take the form of: (1) increased risk of experiencing *technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TF GBV)*, including cyber dating abuse and online sexual victimization; and (2) increased risk of experiencing *other forms of cyber victimization* (e.g., cyberbullying, cyber crime, etc.);

Second, survivors of CM have been described as being at *higher risk of engaging in violence* (Papalia et al., 2018; Widom et al., 2007), which may not be limited to offline interactions but extend into online spaces and/or in utilizing digital communication technologies for the purposes of engaging in violence. This may include: (3) increased risk of *engaging in*

cyberbullying and online harassment in the role of a perpetrator; and (4) increased risk of *engaging in TF-GBV* in the role of a perpetrator.

Third, CM is associated with the development of cognitive distortions related to interpersonal relationships, specifically, distrust (Hepp et al., 2021), and to risk recognition (Fereidooni et al., 2023b). Difficulties in risk recognition and response may contribute to vulnerability to online scams and fraud; while lack of trust may result in susceptibility to disinformation and conspiracy theories. This make take the form of (5) increased *vulnerability to online scams and fraud*; and (6) increased *vulnerability to online disinformation*.

Finally, CM is a statistically significant predictor for behavioral addictions (Lim et al., 2019), which, in the digital world, can be extended to (7) increased *vulnerability to problematic social media use*.

As can be seen from the paragraphs above, seven types of online harm, potentially associated with experiencing CM, were identified. These are grouped into four categories: 1) cyber victimization; 2) engaging in technology-facilitated violence; 3) susceptibility to scams and online disinformation; 4) problematic use of digital communication technology.

To fulfill Objective 2 of the study, a rapid systematic review of literature was conducted to map the existing research on the associations between different forms of CM and the identified types of online harm (see the following sections for more details).

Method

Rapid Systematic Review

Given the rapid evolvement of modern communication technologies and the comparably rapid emergence of associated behavioral research, the rapid review method was chosen as the most appropriate approach for assessing the current status of the field. This type of review is defined as “a form of knowledge synthesis that accelerates the process of conducting a traditional systematic review through streamlining or omitting specific methods to produce evidence for stakeholders in a resource-efficient manner” (Garritty et al., 2021, p. 15).

Research Question

RQ1. What is the current status of research on the possible association between experiencing CM and subsequent susceptibility to online harm (both as a victim and as a perpetrator)?

Search Strategy

This rapid review was conducted in adherence with the preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2016). Searches were conducted in two databases: Web of Science and PubMed. The searches were not limited by year of publication. All searches were conducted in September – October 2023, and were restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English. Review papers, editorials, letters to the editor, comments, book chapters, and conference abstracts were excluded from the search.

Keywords were selected in line with the proposed research question, with each search using a combination of keywords referring to CM (e.g., childhood abuse) coupled with keywords targeting different types of online harm (e.g., cyberstalking). Boolean searches were conducted using “AND” operator to connect each CM term with each form of online harm. For the full list of keywords, please see Table S1 in the Supplemental File.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extracted from the included studies were charted using an Excel spreadsheet. The following information was recorded: author(s) name(s); year of publication; title of the article; abstract of the article; source title; and DOI link. After de-duplication, both authors (OB and BK) independently assessed all titles and abstracts. Differences in assessment were discussed and resolved. Initial full text analysis was conducted by OB. Subsequently, BK reviewed all of the rejected articles and the articles where inclusion was flagged by OB as “conditional”. Following this, disagreements were discussed, and consensus was reached.

For all articles, the following information was recorded: author(s) name(s); year of publication; country where the study was conducted; study sample characteristics; study design; results (see Table S3 in the Supplemental File for more detail).

Quality Assessment

The Standard Quality Assessment Criteria for Evaluating Primary Research Papers from a Variety of Fields (Kmet et al., 2004) was used to assess the quality of included studies, following the modified procedure described in Zark and Satyen (2022). Since the goal of this rapid review was to provide a general overview of the current status of research on the topic of interest, articles were not excluded from analysis based on quality assessment. See Table S2 in the Supplemental File for more details.

Results

Articles Included in the Analysis

The database searches resulted in 198 entries being identified, of which 76 were identified as duplicates and removed. The titles and abstracts of the 122 unique records were screened and 51 of these were excluded. Finally, the full texts of the remaining 71 articles were read and their eligibility assessed. As a result of this procedure, further 31 articles were removed. The reasons for exclusion were: a) no empirical data ($n = 2$); b) no assessment of childhood maltreatment as one of the independent variables ($n = 15$); c) no analysis of the possible relationship between childhood maltreatment and exposure to online harm ($n = 8$); d) no assessment of any type of online harm as one of the dependent variables ($n = 5$); e) full text not found ($n = 1$). In the end of the selection process, 40 articles met the criteria and were included in the review. The PRISMA flowchart of the process is presented in Figure S1 in the Supplemental File.

Characteristics of Included Articles

The earliest study was published in 2012, with the number of publications showing exponential growth in the subsequent years, with 27 out of 40 studies published in 2022 ($n = 14$) and 2023 ($n = 13$). Study locations in the USA ($n = 13$) and China ($n = 12$) were most common. With the exception of one study, which utilized a mixed methods approach, all of the studies reported quantitative data. The majority of included studies focused on adolescent and/or young adult populations, with only two studies including other age groups. Three of the studies focused exclusively on female samples, while the rest recruited participants of different genders.

A short summary of included articles can be seen in Table 1. For more details, see Table S3 in the Supplemental File.

[Table 1 goes here]

Types of Online Harm Exposure

Next, articles were grouped by the type of online harm described in relation to CM exposure. In describing these results, the classification of online harms described in the Present Study section of this paper is followed:

Cyber Victimization

Fourteen out of 40 papers, considered the impact of earlier CM exposure on cyber victimization. Of these, nine articles addressed victimization in the context of cyberbullying, five considered TF GBV (four were exclusively focused on this type of victimization and one article (Terrell et al., 2023) considered both gender-based victimization and victimization by cyberbullying), and one paper considered a broad range of cybercrime victimizations (including cyberfraud, cyber harassment, and sexual victimization).

Cyberbullying Victimization. The majority of articles in this group ($n = 7$) employed samples of adolescent participants. In the remaining two articles, adult psychotherapy outpatients (aged 18 – 39) and university students (age range 18 – 22) were surveyed (Iffland et al., 2023; Akarsu et al., 2022). Samples employed in all of the studies were mixed in terms of gender, with the exception of the study by Kennedy et al. (2022), where participants were female. With the exception of one study, which utilized data from a longitudinal study (Nagata et al., 2023), all studies were cross-sectional. CM experiences were assessed based on self-report in all studies except one, where participants had substantiated histories of childhood sexual abuse (Kennedy et al., 2022).

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence Victimization. Five papers in the dataset addressed online sexual victimization and/or partner cyber abuse. The following sexual victimization-related harms were considered: online sexual victimization (Choi et al., 2023; Turner et al., 2023); cyber abuse by partner (Baller & Lewis, 2022); cyber and in-person victimization connected to online dating (Fereidooni et al., 2022); and engagement in sexting

(Terrell et al., 2023). While sexting is not necessarily a problematic behavior, in adolescent samples it is associated with negative outcomes (Huntington & Rhoades, 2023).

Two of the five studies (Choi et al., 2023; Fereidooni et al., 2023a) focused exclusively on female samples. Two studies surveyed adolescent participants (Terrell et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2023); two studies focused on the current/recent experiences in adult samples (Fereidooni et al., 2023a; Baller & Lewis, 2022); and one study (Turner et al., 2023) assessed online sexual victimization before the age of 18 retrospectively, in an adult sample.

Cyber Crime Victimization. One study only explored the relationships between CM and exposure to different forms of cybercrime. Tamarit-Sumalla et al. (2022), in a sample of university students, demonstrated that participants who experienced multiple types of cybercrime, were more likely to have survived childhood victimization.

Engaging in Technology-Facilitated Violence

The majority of articles in this group were focused on engaging in cyberbullying ($n = 9$). Of these, one (Wang et al., 2023) used the term “internet harassment” rather than cyberbullying; however, as the study was conducted in adolescents and the assessed behaviors were similar, the decision was made to place it in this group.

The remaining four articles in this group considered the effects of prior CM on engaging in dating and/or intimate partner cyber abuse.

All of the papers in this group reported the results of cross-sectional studies based on self-report.

Engagement in Cyberbullying. Of the nine papers concerned with engagement in cyberbullying, two papers addressed both perpetration and victimization (Akarsu et al., 2022; Gan et al., 2023). The rest of the studies focused exclusively on perpetration. All of the studies were conducted on adolescent samples.

Engagement in Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence. Three studies in this subgroup were conducted in samples of young adults and one was focused on adolescents.

Where both engagement in TF GBV and victimization were considered, participants exposed to

childhood maltreatment were more likely to both be victimized by and to engage in cyber IPV (Cano-Gonzalez et al., 2023).

Susceptibility to Scams and Online Disinformation

At the outstart of the study, it was hypothesized that exposure to CM can result in vulnerability to online scams and disinformation. The results of the rapid review, identified one paper where susceptibility to scams was considered as an outcome. No publications considering the connection between exposure to CM and vulnerability to online disinformation were identified.

Susceptibility to Scams. A study by Grillo and Ward (2022) explored the effects of childhood adversity on susceptibility to COVID-19 social media-based scams (fraudulent offers of services and products claiming to alleviate the physical and financial risks caused by the pandemic). In a series of pre-registered studies employing experimental design, the authors of the paper demonstrated that under conditions of heightened environmental threat, adults raised in conditions of adversity become more susceptible to scams. It must be noted, however, that the type of adversity considered in this study was childhood deprivation of basic resources, rather than CM, specifically.

Problematic Use of Digital Communication Technology

Twelve articles explored the relationship between CM and problematic use of digital communication technology. The majority of these publications focused either on children and/or adolescents (Chen et al., 2023; Kircaburun et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2020; Seo et al., 2020) or young adults (Forster et al., 2021; Imperatori et al., 2023; Lin & Chiao, 2022; Worsley et al., 2018; Ye et al., 2023).

Problematic use of digital communication technology was defined as social media addiction in five studies (Chegeni et al., 2023; Imperatori et al., 2023; Kircaburun et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2019; Worsley et al., 2018); problematic internet use in four studies (Forster et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2023; Lin & Chiao, 2022; Seo et al., 2020; Tudorel, 2023); and smartphone addiction in three studies (Forster et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2020; Tudorel, 2023). Finally, in one study (Ye et al., 2023) addiction to online gaming was considered.

With the exception of one article, which presented the results of a longitudinal study (Lin & Chiao, 2022), all studies were cross-sectional and based on self-report.

Other Forms of Online Harm

The results of the rapid review identified two articles focused on the types of online harm that were not included in the list of relevant outcomes described earlier in this paper: digital self-harm and doomscrolling.

Digital self-harm. Digital self-harm is defined as posting of hurtful and/or damaging information about oneself on the internet and social media (Patchin & Hinduja, 2017). The study (Meldrum et al., 2023) was conducted in a large sample of adolescents in the U.S., utilizing cross-sectional design and self-report instruments.

Doomscrolling. The term “doomscrolling” was popularized in 2020, with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is used to describe “the activity of spending a lot of time looking at your phone or computer and reading bad or negative news stories” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

Price et al. (2022) reported an association between CM history and pandemic-related social media exposure in a small samples of young adults. Specifically, symptoms of depression and PTSD were elevated on the days when negative content was viewed on social media, and the increase in symptoms was greater for individuals with more severe histories of CM.

Relationship between CM Exposure and Susceptibility to Online Harm

There were a positive association between CM exposure and susceptibility to online harm in all studies, with the exception of Iffland et al. (2023) where some subtypes of assessed CM exposure were not associated with the online harm outcome. See Table S3 in the Supplemental File for more detail.

Discussion

The goal of the systematic rapid review reported in this paper was to map the landscape of existing research on online harms associated with CM exposure. Our findings demonstrate that this is a relatively new and rapidly evolving field, as evidenced by the publication date of the earliest article in the dataset and by the exponential growth of publication in the past two

years. The geographical span of conducted studies is fairly broad, with significant representation of non-Western samples. The majority of the studies in the dataset employed quantitative methodology and utilized large and/or representative samples. Most of the studies were cross-sectional and based on self-report.

Taken together, the results of the rapid review suggest that exposure to CM and adverse childhood experiences may put individuals at increased risk of victimization by and involvement in violence and harmful practices facilitated by the modern communication technologies. Research studies included in the review addressed a broad range of such online harms, including (but not limited to) TF GBV, cyberbullying, and problematic engagement with social media.

All of the studies in the dataset found statistically significant relationships between the types of CM assessed and the type of online harm under consideration (with the exception of Iffland et al. (2023) where some subtypes of CM were not associated with the online harm outcome). While this uniformity of positive findings may be, to some degree, indicative of a) publication bias and b) problems in data analysis (i.e. correction for multiple comparisons was not always performed), this preliminary result allows to conclude that the impact of CM on the safety and well-being of individuals in online spaces is a phenomenon worthy of further investigation.

Comparing the findings from the rapid review of literature with the typology of online harms relevant in the context of CM exposure, proposed earlier in the paper, we find that most of the listed topics are reflected in existing research; however, some notable differences were also identified.

These are as follows: 1) vulnerability to online disinformation and conspiracy theories in CM survivors has not been investigated yet; 2) problematic media and technology use is not limited to social media addiction, but can also include maladaptive use of smartphones, addiction to online gaming, etc.; 3) risk of revictimization is not limited to partner and/or dating abuse and cyberbullying victimization but may include vulnerability to a broader range of

cybercrimes; 4) finally, two types of online harm not included in the original model were identified: digital self-harm and the negative mental health impact of doomscrolling.

The revised typology of online harms associated with prior exposure to CM is presented in Figure 1. [Figure 1 goes here]

Limitations. Due to the shortcuts employed to expedite the literature search process (e.g., limitations by language, number of databases, type of publication, etc.), some relevant publications might have been missed, and since truncation was not used in the search strings, some publications may have been overlooked. In many of the articles included in the analysis, CM exposure was reported as a cumulative score of a self-report measure (e.g., ACE; CTQ), making it impossible to associate the risk of online harm under consideration with a specific form of CM. Publications were not excluded from the analysis based on quality appraisal, which may have resulted in the inclusion of research studies of insufficient quality. Most of the studies included in the analysis were based exclusively on self-report, possibly resulting in bias due to under- and/or over-reporting of both CM and online harm exposure; a number of articles reported results with statistically significant but modest effect sizes; corrections for multiple comparisons were not performed in many of the included articles. Finally, given that the analysis was limited to published peer-reviewed articles, a “file-drawer effect” might be present, with studies not finding significant connections between CM and online harms being omitted. Taken together, these limitations mean that the results of this rapid review should be treated as preliminary and interpreted with caution.

Implications for Future Research. Results of the present study can be used to guide future research on the role of CM exposure and impact in vulnerability to online harms. Future research directions can include: a) conducting studies on the possible online harm-related outcomes where data is lacking or limited (e.g., vulnerability of CM survivors to online disinformation; negative effects of doomscrolling in CM survivors; negative behaviors and experiences associated with the use of online forums, such as Reddit; impacts of image-based abuse, etc.); b) gathering additional evidence on all types of online harm, with a particular emphasis on high quality study design and data analysis (e.g., experimental designs; studies

conducted in representative samples; meta-analytic syntheses, pre-registered studies, etc.); c) developing studies that go beyond self-report methods and cross-sectional designs (e.g. studies that combine self-report methods with social media data analysis, including text, image, and network analysis); d.) exploring possible pathways and mechanisms linking CM with negative online experiences and behaviors; e) developing and testing of prevention and intervention approaches to protecting vulnerable populations from online harm; f) conducting full-scale systematic reviews and meta-analyses using more databases and/or other sources of information (such as gray literature); and, finally, g) conducting comparative research across different countries to allow for the exploration of cultural differences in the association between CM experiences and online harms.

Conclusions. In the discussions of negative effects associated with modern communication technologies, offline experiences that may impact or even determine the likelihood of exposure to online harm are rarely taken into account. Further research is necessary to explore how adversities that take place in the “real” world shape online experiences. CM is a significant traumatic experience that can have lasting implications for the individual’s mental health and wellbeing, and, as such, it is likely to affect not only offline functioning but also vulnerability to harm in online spaces.

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Table 1. Articles Included in the Review (n = 40)

First Author (Year)	Population	CM Measure	Online Harm	First Author (Year)	Population	CM Measure	Online Harm
Akarsu (2022)	students	CTQ	CBV; CV	Li (2022b)	adolescents	CTQ-SF	CBP
Baller (2021)	students	ACE	C-IPV; C-IPVp	Li (2023)	adolescents	CTQ-SF	CBV
Cano-Gonzalez (2022)	students	CTQ-SF	C-IPV; C-IPVp	Lim (2019)	adults	ACE	SMA
Cano-Gonzalez (2023)	students	CTQ-SF	C-IPV	Lin (2022)	adolescents	ACE	PIU
Chegeni (2023)	adults	ACE-ASF	SMA	Ma (2020)	adolescents	CTQ	PSU
Chen (2023)	adolescents	CTQ-SF; ACE-IQ	PIU	Meldrum (2023)	adolescents	ACE	DSH
Choi (2023)	female adolescents	ACE	OSV	Menard (2012)	students	CAT	CSP
Fang (2022)	adolescents	CTQ-SF	CBP	Nagata (2023)	adolescents	ACE	CBV
Fereidooni (2022)	adult females	CTQ-SF	OSV	Price (2022)	young adults	ACE	DS
Forster (2021)	students	ACE	PIU; PSU	Seo (2020)	children and adolescents	ACE	PIU
Gan (2023)	adolescents	CPANS	CBP	Smith-Darden (2017)	adolescents	ACE	DDA
Geng (2022)	adolescents	CTQ-SF	CBV	Tamarit-Sumalla (2022)	students	CVq	CV
Grillo (2022)	adults	CRq	SS	Terrell (2023)	young adults	ACE	CBV
Hong (2018)	adolescents	PBI+	CBV	Tudorel (2023)	adults	ACE-IQ	PIU; PSU
Iffland (2023)	adult outpatients	CTQ	CBV	Turner (2023)	young adults	CSVq	OCSA
Imperatori (2023)	adults	CTQ	PSMU	Wang (2019)	adolescents	CTQ-SF	CBP
Kennedy (2022)	female adolescents	substantiated CSA	CBV	Wang (2022)	adolescents	CPM	CBP
Kircaburun (2020)	students	CTQ	CBP	Worsley (2018)	students	ACE	PSMU
Kircaburun (2021)	adolescents	CTQ	PSMU	Xu (2022)	students	CTQ-SF	PSMU; CBP
Li (2022)	students	CTQ	CBP	Ye (2023)	students	CPANS	CBP; POG

Note. CM measures: ACE = Adverse Childhood Experiences questionnaire; ACE-ASF = International Adverse Childhood Experiences Abuse Short Form; ACE-IQ = Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire; CTQ = Childhood Trauma Questionnaire; CTQ-SF = Childhood Trauma Questionnaire – Short Form; CPANS = Child Psychological Abuse & Neglect scale; CPM = Childhood Psychological Maltreatment scale; PBI+ = Parent Behavior Inventory + additional questions; CRq = childhood resources questions; CVq = childhood victimization questions; CAT = Child Abuse and Trauma Scale. **Online Harms:** CBP = cyberbullying perpetration; CBV = cyberbullying victimization; CV = cyber victimization; CA = cyber aggression; DDA = digital dating abuse; C-IPV(p) = cyber intimate partner violence (perpetration); OSV = online sexual victimization; OCSA = online child sexual abuse; CSP = cyberstalking perpetration; SMA = social media addiction; PIU = problematic internet use; PSU = problematic smartphone use; PSMU = problematic social media use; POG = problematic online gaming; SS = scam susceptibility; DSH = digital self-harm; DS = doomscrolling.

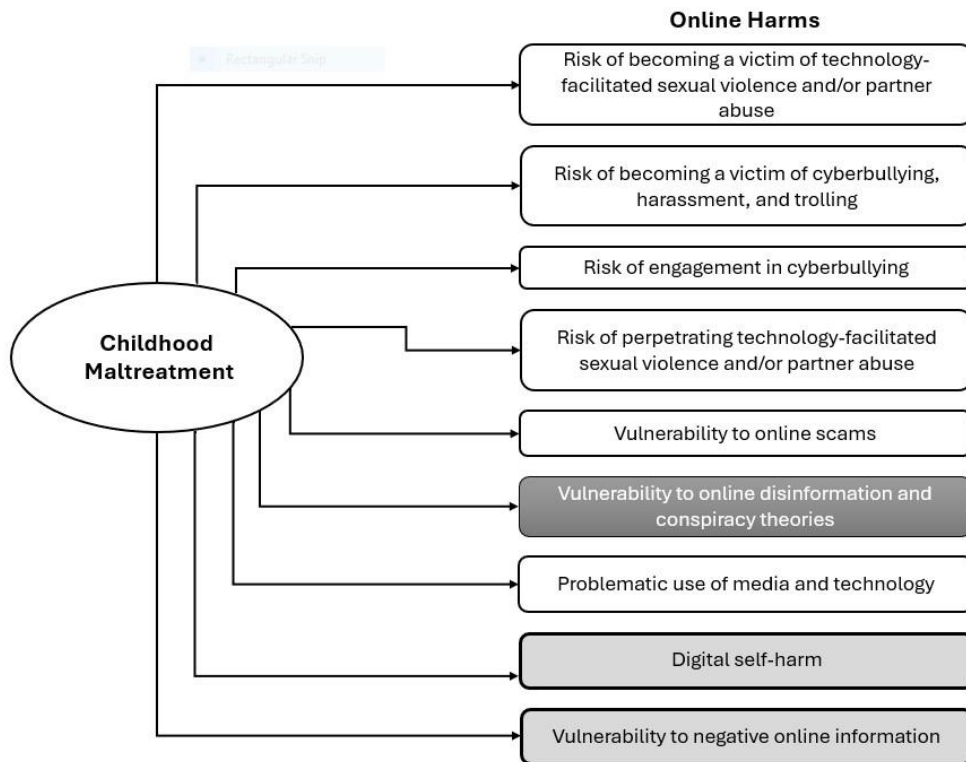


Figure 1. Types of Online Harm Associated with Childhood Maltreatment

Note. White on grey = type of OH present in the initially proposed list but not in the results of rapid review'; Black on grey = type of OH not present in the initially proposed list but identified in the results of the rapid review.

SUPPLEMENTAL FILE

Table S1. Keywords Used to Identify Articles

Keywords Describing Childhood Maltreatment Experiences	Keywords Describing Online Harms
Adverse childhood experiences	cyberstalking
Childhood maltreatment	Digital dating abuse
Childhood abuse	Online dating
Childhood physical abuse	Image-based sexual abuse
Childhood sexual abuse	Online sexual harassment
Childhood neglect	Revenge porn
Childhood victimization	catfishing
Childhood adversity	Romance scam
	cyberbullying
	Cyber harassment
	Online harassment
	trolling
	cyberaggression
	Online aggression
	Online victimization
	Online disinformation
	Conspiracy theories
	Online scams
	scams
	Social media
	Social media addiction
	Problematic internet use

Table S2. Quality Assessment of Included Studies

Criteria													
First Author (Year)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Quality
Akarsu (2022)	+	+	-	+	+	+/-	+	-	+	+	/	-	Fair
Baller (2021)	+	+/-	-	?	-	+/-	+/-	-	+	-	/	-	Poor
Cano-Gonzalez (2022)	+	+	-	+	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Cano-Gonzalez (2023)	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	/	-	Fair
Chegeni (2023)	+	+	+	?	+	-	+	-	+	+	/	+	Fair
Chen (2023)	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	/	+	Good
Choi (2023)	+	+	+	?	-	+	+	-	+	+	/	+	Fair
Fang (2022)	+	+/-	+	?	-	-	+	-	+	-	/	+	Poor
Fereidooni (2022)	+	+	-	+	-	+/-	+	-	+	+	/	-	Fair
Forster (2021)	+	+	-	?	-	+	+/-	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Gan (2023)	+	+	+	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	+	/	+	Fair
Geng (2022)	+	+	?	?	-	+	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Grillo (2022)	+	+/-	-	?	-	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+	?	-	Fair
Hong (2018)	+	+	+	?	-	+/-	+/-	-	+	+	/	+	Fair
Iffland (2023)	+	+/-	-	+/-	-	+/-	+	-	+	+	/	+	Fair
Imperator (2023)	+	+	-	+	+	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Kennedy (2022)	+	+	-	?	-	-	+	+	+	-	?	+	Fair
Kircaburun (2020)	+	+/-	-	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	-	Poor
Kircaburun (2021)	+	+/-	-	+	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Li (2022)	+	+/-	-	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Li (2022b)	+	+	-	+	+	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Li (2023)	+	+/-	-	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	+	/	-	Fair
Lim (2019)	+	+/-	-	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Lin (2022)	+	+	?	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	?	+	Fair

Ma (2020)	+	+	+	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	+/-	Fair
Meldrum (2023)	+	+/-	+	?	-	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	-	/	-	Poor
Menard (2012)	+	+/-	-	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	+	/	+/-	Fair
Nagata (2023)	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	?	+	Good
Price (2022)	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Seo (2020)	+	+/-	?	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	-	Poor
Smith-Darden (2017)	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Tamarit-Sumalla (2022)	+	+/-	-	?	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	/	+/-	Poor
Terrell (2023)	+	+	+	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	+	/	+	Fair
Tudorel (2023)	+	+/-	-	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	-	Poor
Turner (2023)	+	+	+	?	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	+	/	+	Fair
Wang (2019)	+	+/-	-	?	-	+	+	+	+	-	?	+	Fair
Wang (2022)	+	+	-	?	-	+	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Worsley (2018)	+	+	-	+	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	+	Fair
Xu (2022)	+	+	+	?	-	+/-	+	-	+	-	/	-	Fair
Ye (2023)	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	/	+/-	Fair

Note. Criteria: 1 = Was the research question or objective clearly stated? 2 = Was the study population clearly specified and defined? 3 = Was the study conducted in a representative sample? 4 = Were inclusion and exclusion criteria for being in the study prespecified and applied uniformly to all participants? 5 = Was sample size justification provided? 6 = For exposures that can vary in amount or level, did the study examine different levels of the exposure as related to the outcome? 7 = Were the independent variables clearly defined, valid, reliably measured? 8 = Were the assessments conducted more than once over time? 9 = Were the dependent variables clearly defined, valid, reliably measured? 10 = Were different types of CM assessed individually? 11 = Was loss to follow-up after baseline 20% or less? 12 = Were key potential confounding variables measured and adjusted statistically for their impact on the relationship between exposure(s) and outcome(s)? Symbols: + = yes; - = no; +/- = partial; ? – unknown; / = not applicable

Table S3. Summary of Articles Included in the Review (n = 40)

Author(s)	Year	Country	Design	Sample	Results
Akarsu et al.	2022	Turkey	Quantitative	350 students studying at the health sciences and medical faculty of a university in Istanbul in the 2017–2018 spring semester (mean age of 19.35 $\pm$ 0.93 years, 77.1 % were female)	The study found a significant positive correlation between traumatic childhood and cyberbullying and cyber victimization. In addition, a significant positive correlation has also been found between cyberbullying and cyber victimization levels.
Baller and Lewis	2021	USA	Quantitative	Participants between the ages of 18–24 (n = 228, 175 females, 51 males, 2 undisclosed)	The sample demonstrated a positive association between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and cyber aggression victimization experienced by women. Significant negative associations between cyber abuse and poor communication quality has been found in both sexes.

Cano-Gonzalez et al.	2022	USA	Quantitative	1,136 Hispanic participants (women: $n = 823$, men: $n = 313$) between the ages 18–29 attending a university in South Texas	Men were more likely to perpetrate cyber sexual IPV. Women were more likely to report cyberstalking perpetration. Men and women with exposure to mother-to-father violence held attitudes justifying IPV that was associated with perpetrating the three cyber IPV types (psychological, sexual, and stalking) in adulthood. When witnessing a parent using violence against the other parent (WPV), no significant gender differences were found in the associations of mother-to-father WPV and father-to-mother WPV on the three types of cyber IPV perpetration.
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Cano-Gonzalez et al.	2023	USA	Quantitative	1, 113 participants (women: $n = 806$, men: $n = 307$) aged between 18-29, attending a University in South Texas	Results were in line with “cumulative risk hypothesis”, meaning that exposure to multiple traumatic childhood experiences and cyber IPV not only accumulate, but also have a detrimental effect on mental health. Individuals with higher mean scores on childhood maltreatment and witnessing parental violence were more likely to be in the class with higher probabilities of cyber IPV victimization and perpetration.
Chegeni et al.	2023	Iran	Quantitative	1, 233 Iranian persons aged 19 to 65 years, accompanying patients in a private and three public hospitals in Kerman, southeast Iran (685 females, 548 males)	History of ACEs was positively associated with social media addiction (SMA). Age and gender also showed a significant relationship with SMA, being more prevalent among the male and also younger participants.

Chen et al.	2023	China	Quantitative	6,639 adolescents (3,457 boys and 3,182 girls) aged between 11–20 years, recruited from 6 junior and senior middle schools	Adolescents exposed to any ACE had significantly lower scores in all health-related quality of life (HRQOL) dimensions; with results showing a mediating role of problematic internet use (PIU) in the association between ACEs and HRQOL.
Choi et al.	2023	South Korea	Quantitative	509 female adolescents (aged 13–18years within six metropolitan cities and provinces of residential areas	Female adolescents' risky online behaviors were significantly associated with online sexual victimization (OSV). In cases of high exposure to maltreatment and family dysfunction during childhood, the risk of OSV increased in comparison to adolescents with low exposure to ACEs.

Fang et al.	2020	China	Quantitative	2,407 Chinese adolescents (aged 11–16 years, 1,191 boys, 1,202 girls, and 14 participants with no reported gender) from 7 junior high schools in Taiyuan and Changzhi city	The results showed that the relationship between childhood maltreatment and adolescent cyberbullying perpetration was partially mediated by callous-unemotional (CU) traits. In addition, perceived social support moderated the relationship between CU traits and cyberbullying perpetration. The predictive function of CU traits on cyberbullying perpetration was stronger in adolescents with low levels of perceived social support. In this way, CU traits could serve as a link between childhood maltreatment to adolescent cyberbullying perpetration.
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Fereidooni et al.	2022	Netherlands	Quantitative	413 heterosexual women aged between 18 and 35 who used mobile dating applications in the year before the assessment	Childhood maltreatment severity was positively related to cyber sexual victimization severity. Association between cyber sexual victimization was moderated by motives related to regulating negative affect and self-esteem.
Forster et al.	2021	USA	Quantitative	1027 students enrolled at a public university in Southern California (over 88% of participants between 18-29 years of age, majority female:78%)	Students exposed to household dysfunction (HHD; e.g.; parental substance use, mental illness, incarceration, suicide, intimate partner violence) may be especially vulnerable to developing behavioral addictions such as problematic smartphone use (PSU) and PIU.

Gan et al.	2023	China	Quantitative	699 adolescents from 12 to 17 years from five public middle schools in Hubei, Shaanxi, and Sichuan provinces (46.4% of the sample were males)	Cyberbullying perpetration was positively associated with parental neglect. Parental neglect not only has a direct effect on cyberbullying perpetration but also has indirect effects through cyberbullying victimization. Results also suggested that cyberbullying victimization and internet gaming disorder (IGD) play roles in the relationship between parental neglect and cyberbullying perpetration both individually and jointly.
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Geng et al.	2022	China	Quantitative	1025 Chinese adolescents (521 males, 504 females), between 14–17 years, from two junior high schools in Jinan and Zibo	Adolescents' cyberbullying victimization was significantly predicted by childhood maltreatment. Those with low self-compassion and who were also victims of childhood maltreatment might be more likely to be involved in cyberbullying as victims. In addition, being a victim of childhood maltreatment does not predict a greater likelihood of cyberbullying victimization among adolescents with high self-compassion.
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Grillo and Ward	2022	USA	Quantitative	One pilot and five preregistered studies; adult participants (n=5, 1595)	Results highlighted the enduring impact of childhood environments on adult behavior; (the scarcity of) childhood resources appears to predict scam susceptibility even when current resources do not. When media reports suggest that COVID-19 is under control (low threat), childhood adversity appears to confer a protective advantage. However, during a heightened environmental threat, those raised in scarcity become relatively more susceptible to scams, whereas those raised in abundance become relatively less susceptible.
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Hong et al.	2018	South Korea	Quantitative	10,453 adolescents (44.2% female, 55.8% male), aged between 11-19 years old representative of student population of South Korea in 2015	Direct cyberbullying victimization was significantly related to parental abuse, parental neglect, and family dysfunction. Among the family factors, only parental neglect was significantly associated with indirect cyberbullying victimization. Poor peer relationships and teacher abuse and victimization were both significantly associated with direct and indirect cyberbullying victimization.
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Iffland et al.	2023	Germany	Quantitative	827 outpatients born 1980 and later, who had sought treatment at Bielefeld University outpatient clinic for psychotherapy between 2012 and 2021 (60.3% were females, mean age 25.72)	Patients born in the years 1995–2002 were up to nineteen times as likely to report cyberbullying victimization as patients born in the years 1980–1982. After controlling for child maltreatment and offline peer victimization, cyberbullying victimization significantly accounted for an incremental proportion of variance (1%) when predicting psychological symptom distress.
Imperatori et al.	2023	Italy	Quantitative	633 Italian young adults (456 females, 177 males), age range 18–34 years	The study has shown that severity of childhood trauma (CT) was significantly associated with the severity of symptoms related to behavioral addictions (BAs), including problematic social media use (PSMU).

Kennedy et al.	2022	Canada	Mixed	Females exposed to substantiated child sexual abuse and a matched comparison group (n=422) were followed over a two-year period (ages 12-16 at baseline)	Females with experiences of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) were significantly more likely than females in the comparison group to report experiencing any bullying over the course of the study, including cyberbullying, and combined cyber/in-person bullying. White females were significantly more likely to experience cyberbullying and combined cyber/in-person bullying than Black females.
Kircaburun et al.	2019	Turkey	Quantitative	Participants comprised of 280 men and 492 women recruited from a state university in the northwestern region of Turkey (mean age 20.72 years)	Dark personality traits (i.e., Machiavellianism, psychopathy, narcissism, spitefulness, and sadism; associated with adverse childhood experiences) have been more characteristic of men, and also made them more likely to engage in cyberbullying than women.

Kircaburun et al.	2020	Turkey	Quantitative	385 adolescents with an active social media account (range 14–18 years), recruited from a high school in a north-western region of Turkey (222 males, 43 females)	Female adolescents had significantly higher PSMU and childhood emotional maltreatment (CEM) scores than male adolescents. However, CEM was not found to have an effect on female adolescents' body image dissatisfaction (BID) and PSMU. Male adolescents who have experienced CEM may develop higher BID, and in turn develop PSMU in order to cope with the related negative affect.
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Li et al.	2022(a)	China	Quantitative	528 college students (158 males, 370 females) aged from 18 to 30	Childhood maltreatment was positively correlated with cyberbullying. Taking age and gender as the covariance, a significant prediction was found in childhood maltreatment on cyberbullying. Anger rumination played a significant mediating role between childhood maltreatment and cyberbullying.
Li et al.	2022(b)	China	Quantitative	1976 Chinese adolescent students aged between 11 to 17 (49.40% were males) attending 7th, 8th, and 10th grades at a middle school and a high school in Hebei province	Findings indicated that childhood maltreatment was positively related to adolescent cyberbullying perpetration, and the relation is mediated by individual relative deprivation and deviant peer affiliation in parallel, as well as sequential manner.

Li et al.	2023	China	Quantitative	2023 adolescents aged between 11 to 17 (49.40% were males) recruited from 7th, 8th, and 10th grades in a middle school and a high school in Hebei province	Results showed that adolescent cyberbullying victimization was positively linked to childhood maltreatment. This relationship was mediated by maladaptive self-cognition. Gender moderated the indirect link between childhood maltreatment and cyberbullying victimization via maladaptive self-cognition. For female adolescents, childhood maltreatment was significantly related to cyberbullying victimization via maladaptive self-cognition. This indirect effect became non-significant for male adolescents.
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Lim et al.	2020	USA	Quantitative	1,231 working adults (45.7% were males, mean age 37.28 years)	Cumulative ACEs were linked to clinical symptoms of social media addiction through the mediator of emotion dysregulation. Specific emotion dysregulation mechanisms common to social media addiction include poor control of impulses when upset, and poor clarity about emotion.
Lin and Chiao	2022	Taiwan	Quantitative	A final sample of 2,293 adolescents from northern Taiwan final sample of participants who provided baseline information on adverse childhood experiences (52.33% male, mean age 14.33 years)	Regression models showed a dose–response association between ACE and young adults’ PIU. Those who experienced four or more ACEs during early adolescence were 75% more likely to be at risk of PIU.

Ma et al.	2020	China	Quantitative	981 teenaged students (476 girls, 505 boys) from 7th to 9th grade from two public junior high schools randomly selected in Guangdong province (mean age of 13.68 years)	The results indicated that the detrimental effect of childhood maltreatment on adolescent mobile phone addiction (MPA) was explained in part by loneliness.
Meldrum et al.	2023	USA	Quantitative	7,799 middle-school and high-school students (3,592 males, 4,207 females; between 12 to 17 years old)	The results indicated a strong, positive association between cumulative ACEs and recent engagement in digital self-harm.
Menard and Pincus	2012	USA	Quantitative	Undergraduate students (men n=807, women n=934; mean age of 19.30 years)	Results indicated that childhood sexual maltreatment predicted cyber stalking for both men and women.

Nagata et al.	2022	USA	Quantitative	10,317 racially and ethnically diverse participants (48.7% female, 51.3% male; mean age 12 years)	Results indicated a dose-response relationship between the number of ACEs and cyberbullying victimization, as two to four and more ACEs were associated with cyberbullying victimization in adjusted models. Sexual abuse, physical neglect, and household mental health problems had the strongest associations with cyberbullying victimization.
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Price et al.	2022	USA	Quantitative	61 young adults (18-20 years; 53 females, 5 transgender) with elevated histories of childhood maltreatment (n = 41) and with minimal exposure to childhood maltreatment (n = 20)	The results showed an association between daily exposure to pandemic-related social media and elevated depression and PTSD symptoms in young adults during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US. This relation was moderated by a history of childhood maltreatment, with this association being stronger for those with more severe maltreatment histories.
Seo et al.	2020	South Korea	Quantitative	180 students (95 boys, 85 girls) between the ages of 9 and 18 years	Results of measuring the relationship among ACEs, depressive symptoms and PIU indicated that ACEs significantly affected depressive symptoms, and depressive symptoms also affected PIU. Depressive symptoms had a significant mediating effect on the relationship between PIU and ACEs.

Smith-Darden et al.	2017	USA	Quantitative	727 middle and high school students who reported at least one dating or sexual partner in their lifetime (51% girls, 58% were in ninth grade)	The study found significant associations between perpetration of electronic dating aggression (EDA) and elements of the social ecology (e.g. perceived safety in the community). ACEs were connected with a greater likelihood of perpetrating EDA against a dating partner.
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Tamarit-Sumalla et al.	2022	Spain	Quantitative	749 university undergraduates (467 women, 282 men, and 4 other; mean age 26.9 years)	The study found co-occurrence between online and offline victimization, while analyzing two classes of cybervictims—consisting of economic cybervictimization (victims of economic cybercrimes only) and cyber-polyvictimization (victims of various types of cybercrimes). With regard to child victimization, 25% of cyber-polyvictims experienced some type of child victimization, compared to 22% of economic cybervictims and 14% of non-cybervictims.
Terrell et al.	2023	USA	Quantitative	Representative sample of 18-year-old men (20%) and women (80%) (n=702)	ACEs were associated with higher-risk online behaviors (such as sexting and cyberbullying).

Tudorel	2023	Romania	Quantitative	357 participants, (226 women,131 men,) aged between 18 and 59 years, most of the participants (n=286) were students of the West University of Timisoara, rest were non-students	The study analyzed the mediating role of satisfaction with life in the relationship between ACEs and technology addiction, revealing there is an indirect effect of life satisfaction on PIU, and mobile phone use. People who experienced a high level of ACEs will report a low level of satisfaction with life, and those with a low level of life satisfaction will report an excessive use of Internet and mobile phone.
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Turner et al.	2023	USA	Quantitative	A US representative sample of 2,639 participants, ages 18 to 28 (48.5% male, 49.8% female, and 1.8% other gender)	A substantially greater percentage of individuals who had experienced victimization and high levels of non-victimization adversity before the age of 13 reported online sexual abuse. A particularly high percentage of those who experienced early in-person sexual abuse (54.2%) also reported subsequent online child sexual abuse (OCSA). Rates of OCSA were also elevated among those who experienced child maltreatment (40.3%). Those who experienced four or more non-victimization adversities before the age of 13 also had high rates of OCSA (44.6%).
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Wang et al.	2019	China	Quantitative	412 Chinese adolescents recruited from 7th and 8th grades in a junior middle school in Taiyuan, and their fathers and mothers (for adolescents, 53.9% were girls; mean age 13.53 years)	Adolescents who experienced high levels of childhood maltreatment were more likely to cyberbully others.
Wang et al.	2022	China	Quantitative	1,592 Chinese adolescents (between 11-15 years of age; 813 males, 779 females) from a junior high school in Zhengzhou	Psychological maltreatment was positively related to adolescent internet harassment perpetration.

Worsley et al.	2018	UK	Quantitative	1029 students attending a single university in North West England (74.8% female, n=770) aged 17–25 years	Results revealed that a history of childhood maltreatment was significantly associated with more problematic social media use. Both anxious and avoidant attachment dimensions independently mediated the relationship between childhood maltreatment and problematic use of social media, but in opposing directions. Avoidant attachment was associated with less problematic social media use, whilst anxious attachment was associated with more problematic social media use.
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Xu and Zheng	2022	China	Quantitative	835 students from a university in Shandong province (18– 25 years old; 293 males, 542 female)	The results showed that childhood emotional abuse (CEA) and PSMU were positively correlated with cyberbullying. Self-esteem and PSMU sequentially mediated the relationship between CEA and cyberbullying perpetration.
Ye et al.	2023	China	Quantitative	Convenience sample of 1347 students recruited through non-classroom settings (e.g., library study halls, self-study rooms) of 4 universities in Jiangxi Province (41.7% males, 58.3% females)	Results indicated that those who scored relatively high on childhood psychological maltreatment (i.e. abuse and neglect) exhibited greater addiction to online gaming and cyberbullying perpetration.

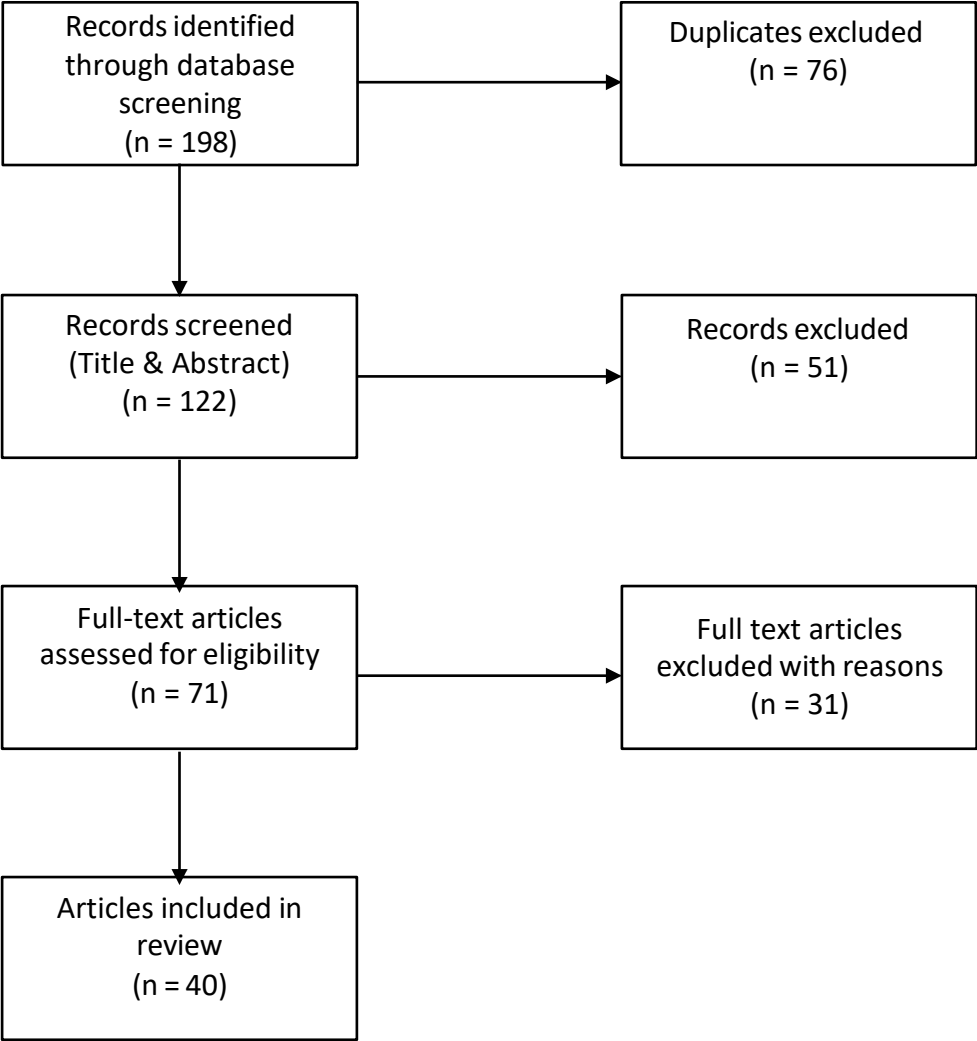


Figure S1. PRISMA flowchart