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The problem of cyberbullying in the mirror of videoblogging


Alla M. Shesterina¹ , Vera V. Boguslavskaya² 

¹Lomonosov Moscow State University

1 Leninskie Gory, Moscow, 119991, Russian Federation

²Pushkin State Russian Language Institute

6 Academician Volgina St., Moscow, 117485, Russian Federation

 shesterina8@gmail.com

Abstract

INTRODUCTION. Psychological topics are currently in demand in video blogging. The purpose of the study is to identify approaches of video bloggers of the Russian-speaking sector of the Internet to informing about cyberbullying, to specify the dominant rhetoric in this thematic niche. **MATERIALS AND METHODS.** The research material is the videos posted on the Rutube platform and issued first by prioritization algorithms for the query “cyberbullying”. Based on a multimodal discourse analysis of these videos, we specify the dominant rhetoric in the description of cyberbullying, and also record the dominant subtopics within the key topic. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.** Video bloggers are actively developing the topic of cyberbullying. In terms of dominant rhetoric, we cannot speak about the predominance of objective or subjective forms of information presentation – they are present in the analyzed content to an equal extent. At the same time, it can be noted that the rhetorics of optimism and rationality dominate over the rhetoric of frustration. Attention is paid to such aspects of the phenomenon as types, causes and means of preventing cyberbullying. At the same time, cyberbullying is not always defined, indicating that the term is gradually becoming generally accepted. At the same time, its interpretation is extremely variable among different authors, and the range of phenomena united by the term “cyberbullying” is wide. The description of the causes and ways of combating this phenomenon are also varied. **CONCLUSION.** In the analyzed media sector such phenomenon as retelling of the same type of information in different variants, as well as prescriptive manner of narration is widespread. However, the majority of publications are of a constructive nature and are aimed at combating the negative consequences of cyberbullying.

Keywords: new media, network videocontent, videoblogging, cyberbullying, media literacy, media psychology, narrative rhetoric

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Проблема кибербуллинга в зеркале видеоблогинга


Алла Михайловна Шестерина¹  , Вера Васильевна Богуславская² 

¹ФГБОУ ВО «Московский государственный университет им. М.В. Ломоносова»

119991, Российская Федерация, г. Москва, Ленинские Горы, 1

²ФГБОУ ВО «Государственный институт русского языка им. А.С. Пушкина»

117485, Российская Федерация, г. Москва, ул. Академика Волгина, 6

 shesterina8@gmail.com

Аннотация

ВВЕДЕНИЕ. Психологическая тематика сегодня востребована в видеоблогинге. Цель исследования – выявить подходы видеоблогеров русскоязычного сектора Интернета к информированию о кибербуллинге, конкретизировать доминирующие в этой тематической нише риторике. **МАТЕРИАЛЫ И МЕТОДЫ.** Материал исследования – видеоролики, размещённые на платформе «Рутьюб» и выдаваемые алгоритмами приоритетизации первыми по запросу «кибербуллинг». На основе мультимодального дискурс-анализа этих видеороликов мы конкретизируем доминирующие риторике в описании кибербуллинга, а также фиксируем доминирующие подтемы в рамках ключевой темы. **РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ.** Видеоблогеры активно разрабатывают тему кибербуллинга. В аспекте доминирующих риторик нельзя говорить о преобладании объективной или субъективной формы подачи информации – они присутствуют в анализируемом контенте в равной степени. Наряду с этим, можно отметить, что риторике оптимизма и рациональности доминируют над риторикой фрустрации. Обращено внимание на такие аспекты явления, как виды, причины и средства предотвращения кибербуллинга. При этом определение кибербуллинга даётся не всегда, что свидетельствует о том, что термин постепенно становится общепринятым. Вместе с тем его трактовка чрезвычайно вариабельна у разных авторов, широк круг явлений, объединяемых понятием «кибербуллинг». Также вариабельны описание причин и способов борьбы с этим явлением. **ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ.** В анализируемом секторе медиа распространено такое явление, как пересказ однотипной информации в разных вариантах, а также рецептурная манера повествования. Однако большинство публикаций имеет конструктивный характер и направлено на борьбу с негативными последствиями кибербуллинга.

Ключевые слова: новые медиа, сетевой видеоконтент, видеоблогинг, кибербуллинг, медиаграмотность, медиапсихология, риторика повествования

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Вклад авторов: А.М. Шестерина – идея и дизайн исследования, анализ и интерпретация данных, обработка результатов исследования, редактирование рукописи, критический пересмотр и коррекция рукописи, утверждение окончательного варианта рукописи. В.В. Богуславская – обзор литературы, подбор первичного материала, обработка и редактирование материала, сбор данных, написание черновика рукописи, оформление рукописи в соответствии с требованиями редакции.

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INTRODUCTION

Forming media literacy today is one of the key challenges facing media researchers. It is associated with such a process as the mediatization of various spheres of our lives [1]. Its intensity is noted by many researchers as a factor of significant sociocultural transformations that affect the life of society as a whole and each individual [2–5]. This process leads to an exacerbation of those problems that previously existed in the network environment [6–8]. First of all, they are associated with aggressive behavior of users, which is sometimes activated by such qualities of Internet communication as apparent anonymity, impunity, and frivolity. Such problems include – cyberbullying. In the framework of the research, we define cyberbullying as “intentional, systematic aggression directed against a victim using digital technologies” [9], primarily in a networked environment. Unfortunately, survey results show that online bullying is extremely common. Thus, according to the results of a joint study by the social network “VKontakte” and the company that develops survey processes “UXSSR”, in 2023, 57 % of Russians encountered a situation of cyberbullying¹. The results of the 2021 VCIOM (Russian Public Opinion Research Center) study specify the manifestations of bullying that Russian user most often had to deal with:

- rude comments addressed to oneself – 10 %;
- rude comments about other people – 49 %;
- trolling towards oneself – 7 %;
- trolling towards other people – 39 %;
- insults due to gender, age or views – 6 %;
- insults due to gender, age or views towards other people – 34 %;
- offensive rumors addressed to oneself – 5 %;
- offensive rumors against other people – 31 %;

- threats of violence against oneself – 3 %;
- threats of violence against other people – 21 %;
- publishing private information, intimate photos or videos addressed to oneself – 2 %;
- publication of private information, intimate photographs or videos, address of other people – 21 %;
- publishing offensive photos or videos addressed to oneself – 1 %;
- posting hurtful photos or videos about other people – 26 %².

In addition, it is important to emphasize in the context of the research that cyberbullying victims are often wary of seeking help in the first reality and seek answers online. And due to the process of visualizing media consumption noted by scientists [10–13], they choose network video content as a kind of “advisers”. The quality of video content about cyberbullying in such a situation becomes especially significant, since incorrect explanations, pseudoscientific, unsupported advice can only aggravate the problem. The purpose of the research is to identify the approaches of video bloggers in the Russian-speaking sector of the Internet to informing about cyberbullying, to specify the rhetoric that dominates this thematic niche and to determine the audience’s reaction to this kind of video content.

Despite the significance of the problem, it’s severely understudied. It is safe to say that there are many studies aimed at analyzing the phenomenon itself “cyberbullying” and developing recommendations for responding to this problem [14–17]. There are also studies of video blogs as a relatively new media sector with a significant impact on audiences in general [18–22] and young viewers in particular [23; 24]. However, so far there has been no comprehensive study of the representation of the topic of cyberbullying in the Russian-language video blogging sector in order to identify the authors’ approaches to informing about this problem, as well as to determine the audience’s reaction to this kind of con-

¹ Akimova E. 57 % of Russians have encountered cyberbullying. Why this is a problem. // RBC. 10.11.2023. URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/life/news/654dfdeb9a79472d91e62168> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

² Cyberbullying: the scale of the problem in Russia // VCIOM. 07.06.2021. URL: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/kiberbulling-masshtab-problemy-v-rossii> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

tent. In our study, we strive to close this obvious gap.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research material is video hosting channels "Rutube" of a popular science and cultural and educational orientation. The empirical basis of the study was ten videos, prioritized by the platform's recommendation algorithms on demand "cyberbullying" and comments on them: "Cyberbullying" (channel «Digit Lesson»)³, "What is cyberbullying?" (channel "AGOPP")⁴, "What is cyberbullying" (channel "UT Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for the North Caucasus Federal District")⁵, "Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it" (channel "RosCo")⁶, "Types of cyberbullying" (channel "Cyberethics")⁷, "Cyberbullying. Educational cartoon for the lesson "Conversations about important things" (channel "YAKlass")⁸, "Connected by the same network | Cyberbullying" (channel "Center for Global IT Cooperation")⁹, "Cyberbullying. How to deal with bullying on the Internet" (channel "DON-24 TV channel")¹⁰, "Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do?" (channel "Regional Development

Center")¹¹, "What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying" (channel "Anti-terrorism")¹².

The study includes two key stages. In the first stage, we analyze the content of the videos with the aim of identifying the dominant rhetoric of the narrative. In this part of the study, we apply a multimodal analysis, in which we consider the following levels of the work: verbal, intonational, visual, level of subtext and level of context. At each of these levels, we record markers that determine the author's attitude to the subject of the story according to criteria that are essential to us: objectivity or subjectivity, a key idea and an emotional message.

At the second stage, using the discourse analysis method, we identify the audience's reaction to the analyzed video content. To achieve this goal, we analyze comments on videos, recording their content according to the following relevant parameters: significance or insignificance of the topic, positive or negative attitude towards the topic.

The comparison of the results of the first and second stages allows us to identify the interdependence between the dominant rhetoric of the author and the reaction of the audience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the media content in the sample revealed two key rhetoric in which cyberbullying is discussed.

1. Objectivizing the narrative. Online bullying is presented in such videos as a social problem. The means of solving it are media education, adjustment of the legal sphere and psychological assistance.

Narrative objectification is present in 50 % of the analyzed videos. The degree of objectification can vary. The author can be present in the frame, personify the message, but present the material unemotionally ("What is cyberbully-

³ Cyberbullying // Rutube. 16.01.2023. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/37f71a781e8ba5f6f74e0f0357b58406/> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

⁴ What is cyberbullying? // Rutube. 11.02.2025. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/d2e62155219d3290b1da5248721a4330/> (accessed: 13.02.2025).

⁵ What is cyberbullying // Rutube. 14.12.2023. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/51ffab25166bfb4f234969bed282956f/> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

⁶ Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it // Rutube. 24.09.2024. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/b122d8b344f1ac6a3d60e2daf1abb2f9/> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

⁷ Types of cyberbullying // Rutube. 16.04.2022. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/1d64d93b67caaf523f1997e67cf78c35/> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

⁸ Cyberbullying. Educational cartoon for the lesson "Talk about important things" // Rutube. 12.11.2024. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/03bb482194741a6384f1b11bdda3d57a/> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

⁹ Connected by one network | Cyberbullying // Rutube. 05.08.2022. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/067514e2fbc0f0b733057bf05c1d5b32/> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

¹⁰ Cyberbullying. How to deal with bullying on the Internet // Rutube. 28.06.2021. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/0f09c1d42181d2de647181a0fd2662cd/> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

¹¹ Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do? // Rutube. 12.16.2024. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/5e2e70678215011e7c576df7351a9ed2/> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

¹² What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying // Rutube. 18.09.2024. URL: <https://rutube.ru/video/12b6342846c51b3a153f7c7500b21cfe/> (accessed: 14.01.2025).

ing?”, “Cyberbullying: what is it and how to protect yourself from it”). The author may be absent from the frame and transmit information in voice-over text “Cyberbullying. Educational cartoon for the lesson “Conversations about important things”). The video can be completely depersonalized: information is transmitted only through video sequences (a combination of images and credits), and the sound series contains only musical accompaniment (“What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying”) or not at all (“What is cyberbullying”). In this case, animation and video formats from the board are often used.

2. Narrative subjectivation. The problem is viewed emotionally. Subjectivation takes two key forms. In the first case, cyberbullying is considered a personal tragedy of a person. The author addresses those who can be considered victims of cyberbullying (“How to combat online bullying”, “Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do?”). In the second case, the author emotionally conveys information about the phenomenon, there is an intimidation of the narrative, the presence of voice makeup, a reduction in the distance of communication, and sometimes fictional fairy-tale characters are introduced (nerpa Zhenya in the video “Cyberbullying”, “Types of cyberbullying”, “Connected by one network| Cyberbullying”).

Regardless of the rhetoric, the authors use a similar composition, including the following compositional nodes in different sequences:

1. Exposition. There is often a reliance on a figurative landmark, the telling of a specific story (“Cyberbullying. How to combat online bullying”, “Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do?”, “Cyberbullying”, “Types of cyberbullying”);

2. Definition of cyberbullying (“Cyberbullying”, “What is cyberbullying?”, “Cyberbullying. Educational cartoon for the lesson “Conversations about important things”). It is present in only 30 % of the analyzed content, which indicates that the term itself has already become commonly used;

3. Specification of its characteristics and types (“What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying”, “What is cyberbullying?”, “Cyberbullying: what

is it and how to protect yourself from it”, “Types of cyberbullying”, “Cyberbullying. Educational cartoon for the lesson “Talking about important things”);

4. Determining the causes (“Cyberbullying. How to combat online bullying”, “Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do?”, “Types of cyberbullying”);

5. Recommendations to combat this phenomenon (100 % of the analyzed content).

The last two parts are extremely variable. As a rule, they include general provisions that are supplemented by unique author information.

Thus, among the reasons are the peculiarities of the network environment (primarily – anonymity of communication), poor development of legal norms, psychological illiteracy of the population.

Individualized reasons include the aggressors desire to gain emotions and popularity (“Cyberbullying. How to deal with online bullying”), the power imbalance between the victim and the aggressor (“What is cyberbullying?”), the psychological characteristics of the aggressor (“What is cyberbullying?”). The latter are sometimes taken to the point of absurdity. So, in the video “Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do?” there is a phrase addressed to the victim: “Think, perhaps they (the aggressors) are so sad... And you are so popular”. Such a phrase sounds like an implicit justification for the aggressor. And in the video “Types of cyberbullying” we find excessive hyperbolization of the phenomenon: “Don’t you think that people are basically evil?”.

Common means of struggle include advice not to react to the bully’s attacks, not to make excuses, to block the offender, and to remove the problem from network communication into real communication.

Individual recommendations differ in varying degrees of validity. For example, the recommendation “not to post personal photos” is hardly feasible (“What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid falling victim to cyberbullying”). The same can be said about the recommendation: “Keep an eye on everyone who subscribes to you. Look at which pages they follow. Maybe there are hate groups in subscriptions” (“What is cyberbullying?”). But the recommendations to

use the appropriate settings and algorithms of the networks themselves and to contact the technical support service seem correct (“Cyberbullying. How to combat online bullying”, “Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it”). Recommendations are also correct “do not mirror the negative” (“Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do?”), “find someone who will support you”, “take a screenshot of the offender’s messages” (“Cyberbullying”), “contact the police” (“Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it”). One of the videos is devoted to the analysis of criminal liability for online bullying (What is cyberbullying”), and the other – administrative liability (“Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it”).

You can also note the peculiarity of the recommendations – their focus on children. It can be seen in remarks emphasizing that cyberbullying is primarily a child problem situation: “Tell adults about the problem” (“What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying”), “How can you explain to a child in which case it is better to contact adults?” (“What is cyberbullying?”), “Train your child to report threats to you...” (“What is cyberbullying?”), “Schoolchildren are most often the victims” (“Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it”). The focus on children is also supported by the fact that 50 % of the videos from the analyzed sample are made in animated formats.

In terms of emotional message, the following rhetoric can be defined:

1. Rational. The author talks about the problem relatively calmly and carefully (“What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid falling victim to cyberbullying”, “What is cyberbullying?”, “Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it”);

2. Optimistic. The author appeals to victims with a positive attitude and a solution to the problem (“Cyberbullying. How to combat online bullying”, “Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do?”, “Cyberbullying”, “Cyberbullying. Educational cartoon for the lesson “Talking about important things”);

3. Frustrating. The author describes the situation as extremely complex, with shocking

problems (“Single Network Linked | Cyberbullying”).

These rhetorics are reinforced intonationally, as well as at the video level – in the use of credits and infographics.

Visual images of victims are an important part of the narrative. They can be broadly divided into three types:

1. Victims at the peak of cyberbullying. Here we see suffering, depression on a person’s face. A dark color palette is used (“Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do?”, “Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it”, “Connected by the same network | Cyberbullying”);

2. Victims who have overcome the misfortune and solved the problem. Faces are either serious, concerned and confident, or joyful (“What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying”, “Cyberbullying. How to combat online bullying”, “Cyberbullying”);

3. Victims are popular, famous people who have experienced and dealt with serious problems (“Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it”, “Types of cyberbullying”).

Some terminological confusion can be noticed in the analysis of the phenomenon itself. A number of authors interpret the concept “cyberbullying” narrowly, only as deliberate online bullying, while other authors include in the concept “cyberbullying” such phenomena as “trolling” (“Cyberbullying and trolling. What to do?”), “boycott”, “harassment”, “outing”, “dissing”, “frapping” (“What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying”), “happy slapping”, “griefing” (“What is cyberbullying?”), “hating”, “cyberstalking”, “personal data leak” (“Cyberbullying: what it is and how to protect yourself from it”), “cybermobbing”, “body shaming”, “sexism”, “leaking”, “catfishing” (“Types of cyberbullying”).

It is interesting to trace the audience’s reaction to the broadcast content. It can be roughly divided into positive and negative.

Positive reactions include support for victims, support for the author, and support for the company (“Cyberbullying. How to combat bullying on the Internet” – comments from respondents in the video itself in the format of a street

survey). There may also be personal stories of cyberbullying: “I am constantly being bullied on the Internet! It even happened that I wanted to leave the Internet for good!”¹³ (“What is cyberbullying. And how to avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying”), “I am constantly being bullied on the Internet (((((“Cyberbullying”). The negative reaction is expressed in the formulation of the thesis about the meaninglessness of such content and in the desire to switch the audience’s attention to another topic: “Also for me, the meaning of life” (“Types of cyberbullying”).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that the network environment pays sufficient attention to the problem of cyberbullying. The authors are generally united in their story about the essence, causes, consequences, forms of this phenomenon and ways to combat them. It is important that there is content addressed to both adult and children’s audiences.

¹³ The author’s spelling and punctuation are preserved in the commentary quotes.

The materials are dominated by two key rhetoric – a realistic and optimistic attitude towards the possibility of solving the problem. Frustrating rhetoric was found in only one video. This can be assessed as a positive approach to communication, since it is important for victims to understand that their situation is solvable.

The negative aspects of developing the topic of cyberbullying in the analyzed media sector include infrequent contact with experts (only in two videos), leading to the repetition of banal statements or even the appearance of erroneous recommendations. Also alarming is the authors’ differing understanding of the “cyberbullying” category. Different authors include various specific communication acts in the range of analyzed phenomena, which devalues some recommendations, since they apply only to individual forms of cyberbullying.

Summarizing the above, we emphasize that on the “Rutube” platform active and fairly correct work is being carried out to improve the literacy of the population regarding the situation of cyberbullying, however, increasing media literacy in this area still cannot be considered fully implemented.

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Information about the authors

Alla M. Shesterina, Dr. Sci. (Philology), Professor, Professor of the School of Television, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7270-2376>, Scopus ID: 57243108400, shesterina8@gmail.com

Vera V. Boguslavskaya, Dr. Sci. (Philology), Associate Professor, Professor of the Russian Literature and Intercultural Communication Department, Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, Moscow, Russian Federation, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4118-382X>, Researcher ID: O-2193-2016, VVBoguslavskaya@pushkin.institute

Corresponding author:

Alla M. Shesterina
e-mail: shesterina8@gmail.com

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Информация об авторах

Шестерина Алла Михайловна, доктор филологических наук, профессор, профессор Высшей школы (факультета) телевидения, Московский государственный университет им. М.В. Ломоносова, г. Москва, Российская Федерация, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7270-2376>, Scopus ID: 57243108400, shesterina8@gmail.com

БОГУСЛАВСКАЯ Вера Васильевна, доктор филологических наук, доцент, профессор кафедры русской словесности и межкультурной коммуникации, Государственный институт русского языка им. А.С. Пушкина, г. Москва, Российская Федерация, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4118-382X>, Researcher ID: O-2193-2016, VVBoguslavskaya@pushkin.institute

Для контактов:

Шестерина Алла Михайловна
e-mail: shesterina8@gmail.com

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