

Affective, cognitive and social predictors of mediatraumatization of Ukrainian university youth during war: An empirical model

Olena Bohucharova ^a, Ivan Danyliuk ^{b, *}

^a *Department of Psychology, Sociology and Pedagogy,
Donetsk State University of Internal Affairs, Ukraine*

^b *Department of Experimental and Applied Psychology,
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine*

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Abstract. This study aims to develop an empirical model of media-related psychological distress and posttraumatic-like symptoms associated with war-related media exposure, and to examine the relative contributions of affective, cognitive, social, and media-related behavioral factors among Ukrainian university youth exposed to emotionally negative military media content related to the Russian–Ukrainian war. A total of 128 participants were recruited from two Ukrainian universities. The study employed a modified version of the PCL-5 adapted for media exposure, the OPANA Ukrainian questionnaire (PANAS), the Fundamental Assumptions Scale, the Constructive Thinking Inventory, the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form, the Social Well-Being Scale. Media exposure was assessed through a multi-platform exposure index and self-reported doomscrolling behavior. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relative contributions of affective, cognitive, social, and media-related variables to media-induced psychological distress. In Model 1, affective (negative and positive affect), cognitive (self-worth, constructive thinking), and social (psychological well-being, social integration) variables were entered simultaneously. The model was statistically significant, $F(6, 121) = 33.10$, $p < .001$, explaining 62% of the variance in media-induced distress ($R^2 = .62$, adjusted $R^2 = .60$). In Model 2, media-related variables (media exposure and doomscrolling) were added. The extended model remained statistically significant and demonstrated an increase in explained variance ($R^2 = .68$, adjusted $R^2 = .65$), with the inclusion of media variables accounting for an additional 6% of variance ($\Delta R^2 = .06$, $p < .001$). Doomscrolling emerged as a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$), whereas general media exposure showed a weaker but still significant effect ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$). The results support a shift from exposure-based models toward an integrative that considers media-related distress as a product of dynamic interactions between emotional reactivity, cognitive processing, social functioning, and adaptive media consumption habits

* Corresponding author. Ivan Danyliuk,  0000-0002-6522-5994,  danyliuk@knu.ua

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Богучарова Олена, Данилюк Іван. Афективні, когнітивні та соціальні предиктори медіатравматизації молоді українських університетів під час війни: емпірична модель.

Анотація. Дослідження має за мету побудову емпіричної моделі медіа-індукованого психологічного дистресу та посттравматично-подібних симптомів, пов'язаних із впливом воєнного медіаконтенту, а також на аналіз внеску афективних, когнітивних, соціальних і поведінкових медіафакторів серед української студентської молоді в умовах російсько-української війни. У дослідженні взяло участь 128 респондентів із двох українських університетів. Використано модифіковану версію шкали PCL-5, адаптовану до умов медіаекспозиції, опитувальник OPANA (українська адаптація PANAS), Шкалу базових переконань, Опитувальник конструктивного мислення, Коротку форму континууму психічного здоров'я та Шкалу соціального благополуччя. Медіаекспозиція оцінювалася за допомогою багатоплатформного індексу та показника тривалості думскролінгу. Проведено ієрархічний множинний регресійний аналіз для перевірки внеску афективних, когнітивних, соціальних і медіа-пов'язаних змінних у медіа-індукований психологічний дистрес. У моделі 1 афективні (негативний і позитивний афект), когнітивні (самоцінність, конструктивне мислення), соціальні (психологічне благополуччя та соціальна інтеграція) змінні увіходять разом. Модель 1 статистично значуща $F(6, 121) = 33.10$, $p < .001$, пояснюючи 62 % варіативності медіа-індукованого психологічного дистресу ($R^2 = .62$, adjusted $R^2 = .60$). У Моделі 2 додано медіа-пов'язані змінні (медіаекспозиція та думскролінг). Розширена Модель 2 залишилась статистично значущою і продемонструвала зростання пояснювальної варіативності ($R^2 = .68$, adjusted $R^2 = .65$) при включенні медіа змінних, додаючи ще 6 % варіативності ($\Delta R^2 = .06$, $p < .001$). Думскролінг є значущим позитивним предиктором ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$), тоді як загальна медіа експозиція показала слабший, але значущий ефект ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$). $F(2, 119) \approx 31-34$, $p < .001$. Отримані результати підтверджують зсув від моделей, заснованих на експозиції, до більш інтегративних, які розглядають медіа-індукований дистрес як продукт динамічних інтеракцій між емоційною реактивністю, когнітивною обробкою, соціальним функціонуванням і адаптивними звичками медіа споживання.

Ключові слова: *модель медіа-індукованого психологічного дистресу, афективні, когнітивні, соціальні, поведінкові медіафактори, війна, кроссекційний дизайн, негативний афект, посттравматично-подібні симптоми, ієрархічний множинний регресійний аналіз, українська університетська молодь.*

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally transformed the way individuals experience war, shifting exposure from direct physical encounters to continuous mediated contact. In contemporary conflicts, individuals are no longer passive recipients of information but are persistently immersed in real-time streams of emotionally intense and often graphic war-related content. This

transformation has led to growing scholarly interest in the psychological consequences of media exposure to armed conflict, including exposure to drone attacks on civilian areas (Ben-Zur et al., 2012; Pe'er & Slone, 2022).

A substantial body of research demonstrates that repeated exposure to distressing media content can produce psychological effects resembling those associated with direct trauma, although not equivalent to it in a clinical sense (Dvir-Gvirsman et al., 2014; Otto et al., 2007; Mijanovich & Weitzman, 2010). Individuals exposed to war-related media frequently report symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, emotional dysregulation, heightened arousal, and persistent anxiety, even in the absence of direct physical danger (Holman et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2019). This phenomenon is commonly conceptualized as media-induced psychological distress or vicarious traumatization, rather than clinical post-traumatic stress disorder (McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Figley, 1995).

Importantly, media-related distress should be distinguished from PTSD as defined in DSM-5, which requires direct or indirect exposure to traumatic events meeting Criterion A. In the present study, we focus on media-related psychological distress with PTSD-like symptom patterns, without assuming the presence of clinically diagnosable PTSD.

Theoretical perspectives on mediatization suggest that modern warfare unfolds simultaneously across physical, symbolic, and communicative domains, with media playing an active role in constructing and amplifying war narratives (Gerbner, 1998; Seib, 2004; Zillmann, 2002). Rather than merely reflecting reality, media systems shape emotional responses through selective framing, visual intensity, and narrative repetition. Continuous “live” broadcasting and algorithm-driven content exposure further intensify psychological engagement with distressing material (Pinchuk, 2025).

Empirical evidence indicates that the psychological impact of such exposure is particularly pronounced among young people. University students and cadets, as active consumers of digital media, are especially vulnerable due to high levels of media engagement and ongoing identity formation. Recent data from Ukraine demonstrate elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and trauma-related distress among youth exposed to war-related information environments (Goto et al., 2024; Kokun, 2023).

Importantly, emerging research suggests that psychological distress in such contexts is not determined solely by the amount of media exposure but also by individual differences in emotional, cognitive, and social functioning. Affective processes, particularly negative affect, have been consistently identified as key correlates of vulnerability to stress reactions, whereas positive affect may serve a buffering role by facilitating adaptive coping (Fredrickson, 2001). Exposure-related factors (media exposure and doomscrolling) are important for youth

vulnerability to stress reactions too (Ben-Zur et al., 2012; Dvir-Gvirsman et al., 2014; Pinchuk, 2025)

Cognitive factors also play a crucial role. According to the theory of basic assumptions, exposure to threatening information may disrupt fundamental beliefs about the self and the world, increasing psychological vulnerability (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Similarly, constructive thinking, conceptualized as an adaptive cognitive processing style, may enhance resilience by promoting flexible and effective coping strategies (Epstein, 1998; Epstein & Meier, 1989).

Beyond individual-level processes, broader indicators of psychological and social well-being contribute to resilience. Models of positive mental health emphasize the protective role of psychological well-being and social integration, suggesting that individuals with stronger social connectedness and a greater sense of meaning may be less susceptible to stress-related disturbances (Keyes, 2005).

The objective of the present study is to develop an empirical model of media-related psychological distress with PTSD-like symptoms and to examine the relative contributions of affective, cognitive, social, and media-related behavioral factors among Ukrainian university youth exposed to war-related media content.

It is hypothesized that greater media exposure to Russian-Ukrainian war-related content, operationalized through frequency and intensity of media consumption (including doomscrolling), and greater the relative contributions of affective (negative), cognitive (maladaptive), social (weaker social connectedness) factors is positively associated with higher levels of media-related psychological distress and PTSD-like symptoms.

Methods

Participants

Participants were Ukrainian cadets and university students ($M_{age} = 21.14$, $SD = 2.60$). A total of 128 individuals participated in the study, including 48 females (37.5 %) and 80 males (62.5 %). Participants were recruited from two Ukrainian institutions: Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and Donetsk State University of Internal Affairs (in Kropyvnytskyi).

Eligibility criteria included being 18 years of age or older and reporting recent exposure to potentially distressing war-related media content. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Both cadets and civilian students were included due to their shared exposure to intensive war-related media environments. While these groups may

differ in relevant characteristics, they were analyzed as a single sample to examine general psychological mechanisms. This decision is acknowledged as a limitation and addressed in the Discussion.

Participants reported intensive media use, including frequent doomscrolling and daily exposure to war-related news content.

Measures

Media-related Psychological Distress (PCL-5, modified)

Psychological distress with PTSD-like symptoms was assessed using a modified version of the PCL-5 (Blevins et al., 2015), adapted to refer to media exposure rather than direct traumatic events. Importantly, this instrument was used to assess symptom severity and patterns, not to establish a clinical diagnosis of PTSD. Given that media exposure does not meet DSM-5 Criterion A (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), clinical cut-off interpretations were not applied.

Affective states were measured using PANAS (Watson et al., 1988), Ukrainian adaptation OPANA (Klimanska & Haletska, 2020). *Cognitive schemas* were assessed using the Self-Worth subscale of the Fundamental Assumptions Scale (Janoff-Bulman, 1988; Chaika, 2024). *Constructive thinking* was measured using the Constructive Thinking Inventory (CTI) (Epstein, 1998; Epstein & Meier, 1989). *Psychological well-being* was measured using the Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (Keyes, 2002). *Social well-being* was measured using the Social Well-Being Scale (Keyes, 1998). *Sociodemographic variables* were collected via an author-developed questionnaire.

Procedure

Participants completed an online survey hosted on a secure platform. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Upon completion, participants were debriefed and provided with mental health resources.

Media Exposure Measurement

Media exposure was assessed using a list of 10 platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, television, messaging apps, web sources). Participants rated their level of exposure to war-related content on each platform using a 5-point Likert scale.

A composite exposure index was calculated by averaging responses across platforms. Internal consistency was modest ($\alpha = .65$), which is acknowledged as a limitation.

Doomscrolling was assessed as the average daily time spent consuming war-related content and was included as an additional exposure indicator.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and hierarchical multiple regression analysis in IBM SPSS Statistics 25. All predictors included in the interpretation are reported in the regression models.

Results

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and ranges) for all study variables are presented in Table 1. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and ranges) for some study variables as modified PCL-5, OPANA, media exposure and doomscrolling are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges of the Study Variables: Modified PCL-5, OPANA, Media Exposure and Doomscrolling (N = 128)

Scale	Criteria	M	SD	Min	Max
PCL-5	Intrusion (B)	10.8	4.1	2	20
	Avoidance (C)	4.9	2.2	0	8
	Negative Cognitions & Mood (D)	15.6	5.3	4	28
	Arousal (alterations in arousal and reactivity (E)	13.4	4.8	1	24
	Mean total score	34.7	11.5	7	66
Media-related factors	OPANA				
	Positive Affect (PA)	18.2	6.3	8	38
	Negative Affect (NA)	29.4	7.8	14	47
	Media Exposure (ME)	5.5	4.20	2,0	10
	Doomscrolling (DS)	7.5	4.80	6,0	13

The mean total score on the modified PCL-5 was $M = 34.7$ ($SD = 11.5$), indicating a moderately elevated level of media-related psychological distress with PTSD-like symptoms among participants. Importantly, this value is reported for descriptive purposes only and is not interpreted using clinical cut-off criteria, as media exposure does not meet DSM-5 Criterion A.

At the symptom cluster level, participants reported the highest scores for negative alterations in cognition and mood ($M = 15.6$, $SD = 5.3$) and arousal/reactivity ($M = 13.4$, $SD = 4.8$), followed by intrusion symptoms ($M = 10.8$, $SD = 4.1$). Avoidance symptoms were comparatively lower ($M = 4.9$, $SD = 2.2$).

These findings suggest that media exposure is primarily associated with cognitive-emotional strain and heightened arousal, whereas avoidance tendencies appear less pronounced.

With regard to affective states, participants demonstrated elevated levels of negative affect ($M = 29.4$, $SD = 7.8$) and lower levels of positive affect ($M = 18.2$, $SD = 6.3$), reflecting a pattern consistent with prolonged exposure to distressing media environments.

With regard to media variables media exposure ($M = 5.5$, $SD = 4.2$), ME min=2,0; ME max=10; doomscrolling ($M = 7.5$, $SD = 4.8$) DSmin = 6,0; DSmax = 13, whereas DS much more ME.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the results of the correlation analysis (2-tailed Pearson r) between mean total score of media-induced PTSD-like manifestations of modified PCL-5 and PA, NA, ME, DS indicators.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables (N = 128)

Variables	NA	PA	ME	DS
PCL-5				
Total	.62***	-.41***	.28**	.57***

Note. Values are Pearson's r . NA – Negative affect; PA – Positive affect; ME – Media Exposure; DS – Doomscrolling

Table 3 presents the results of the correlation analysis (2-tailed Pearson r) between mean total score of media-induced PTSD-like manifestations of modified PCL-5 and WAS, CTI, MHC–SF, SWB, SI indicators.

Table 3
Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables (N = 128)

Vari- ables	BW	MJ	SW	GCT	EC	BC	EWB	PBW	SWB	SI
PCL-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	.44***	.47***	.51***	.45***	.33**	.36**	.42***	.34**	.36**	.28**

Note 1. Values are Pearson's r . BW – Benevolence of the World; MJ – Meaningfulness/Justice; SW – Self-Worth; GCT – Global Constructive Thinking; EC – Emotional Coping; BC – Behavioral Coping; EWB – Emotional Well-Being; PBW – Psychological Well-Being; SI – Social Integration.

Note 2. $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$ (two-tailed).

Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant associations between media-related psychological distress (PCL-5 total score) and key study variables. Specifically, PCL-5 scores were positively associated with negative affect ($r = .62$) and negatively associated with positive affect ($r = -.41$). In addition, significant negative correlations were observed between PCL-5 scores and cognitive as well as well-being indicators, including self-worth ($r = -.51$), constructive thinking (r range = $-.36$ to $-.55$), and dimensions of psychological and social well-being (r range = $-.28$ to $-.56$). Also PCL-5 scores were positively associated with media exposure ($r = .28$) and doomscrolling ($r = .57$) as variables.

These results indicate that higher levels of negative emotionality, doomscrolling and less adaptive cognitive patterns are associated with higher levels of media-related distress, whereas positive affect, adaptive thinking, well-being and lower levels media exposure are associated with lower symptom levels.

Regression Analysis

To examine the relative contribution of affective, cognitive, social, and media exposure variables, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. Full regression coefficients are presented in Table 4.

The inclusion of Media Exposure and Doomscrolling resulted in a revised model fit, with updated explained variance and model significance indices ($F(8, 119) = 33.10$, $p < .001$), ($R^2 = .68$, adjusted $R^2 = .65$), ($\Delta R^2 = .06$, $p < .001$) indicating incremental contribution beyond psychological predictors.

The final model fit 2 was statistically significant, $F(8, 119) = 33.10$, $p < .001$ ($F(8, 119) \approx 31-34$; $\Delta F(2, 119) \approx 10-13$ for both $p < .001$), explaining $R^2 = 68\%$ of the variance ($R^2 = .68$, adjusted $R^2 = .65$).

Table 4

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Media-Induced Psychological Distress (PCL-5 Total Score) (N = 128)

Predictor	Model 1 β	Model 2 β
Negative Affect (NA)	.46***	.43***
Positive Affect (PA)	-.19*	-.17*
Self-Worth (SW)	-.28**	-.25**
Constructive Thinking	-.24**	-.22**
Psychological WB	-.22**	-.20**
Social Integration	-.21**	-.19**
Media Exposure (ME)	—	.14*
Doomscrolling (DS)	—	.31***
Model fit:	.62	.68
R ²		
Adjusted R ²	.60	.65
ΔR^2	—	.06***
F	33.10***	31-34***
$\Delta F (2,119)$	—	10-13***

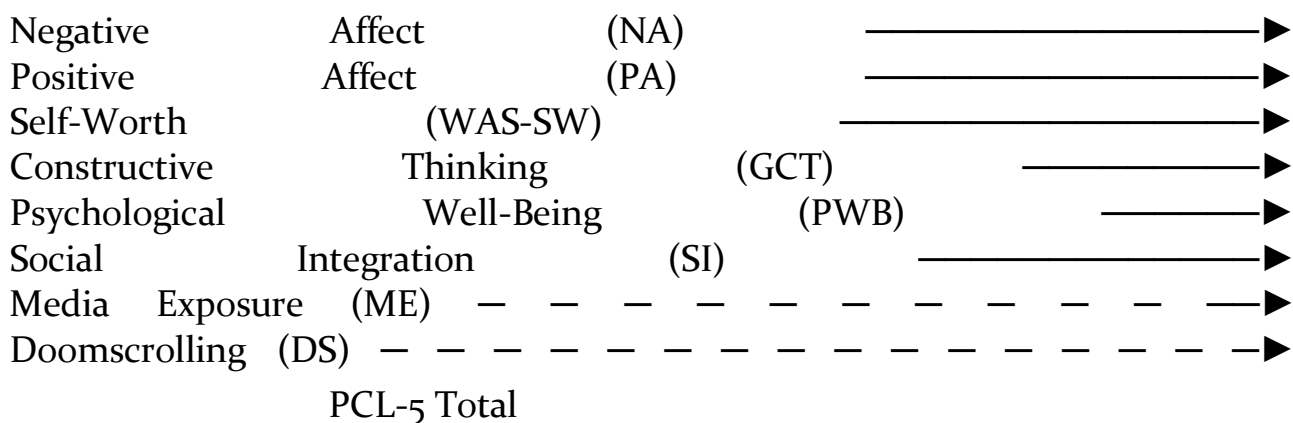
Note. β = standardized coefficients. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Conceptual model (arrows) presents traits (—►) vs media behavior separation (—►) as conceptual arrows.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of Predictors of PTSD-like Symptom Severity (PCL-5 total score)

Conceptual model (arrows)



Note. NA – Negative Affect; PA – Positive Affect; WAS-SW – Self-Worth; GCT – Global Constructive Thinking; PWB – Psychological Well-Being; SI – Social Integration; ME – Media Exposure; DS – Doomscrolling.

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relative contributions of affective, cognitive, social, and media-related variables to media-induced psychological distress.

In Model 1, affective (negative and positive affect), cognitive (self-worth, constructive thinking), and social (psychological well-being and social integration) variables were entered simultaneously. The model was statistically significant, $F(6, 121) = 33.10$, $p < .001$, explaining 62 % of the variance in media-induced distress ($R^2 = .62$, adjusted $R^2 = .60$). Negative affect emerged as the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = .46$, $p < .001$), whereas positive affect ($\beta = -.19$, $p = .010$), self-worth ($\beta = -.28$, $p = .001$), constructive thinking ($\beta = -.24$, $p = .005$), psychological well-being ($\beta = -.22$, $p = .007$), and social integration ($\beta = -.21$, $p = .004$) were significant negative predictors.

In Model 2, media-related variables (media exposure and doomscrolling) were added. The extended model remained statistically significant and demonstrated an increase in explained variance ($R^2 = .68$, adjusted $R^2 = .65$), with the inclusion of media variables accounting for an additional 6 % of variance ($\Delta R^2 = .06$, $p < .001$). Doomscrolling emerged as a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$), whereas general media exposure showed a weaker but still significant effect ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$). Importantly, affective predictors – particularly negative affect – remained the strongest contributors to distress even after controlling for media-related behaviors.

These findings indicate that while media exposure contributes to psychological distress, its effects are substantially amplified by patterns of intensive and repetitive engagement, such as doomscrolling.

Within the model, negative affect was positively associated with PTSD-like symptoms. whereas positive affect, self-worth, constructive thinking, psychological well-being, and social integration were all significant negative predictors. Media exposure (ME) and doomscrolling (DS) also demonstrated significant associations, with doomscrolling emerging as the strongest media-related predictor.

A separate regression model including exposure variables: Negative affect emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .46$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of negative emotionality are strongly associated with increased media-related distress.

Positive affect was negatively associated with distress ($\beta = -.19$, $p = .010$). Among cognitive variables, self-worth ($\beta = -.28$, $p = .001$) and constructive thinking ($\beta = -.24$, $p = .005$) were also significant predictors.

Psychological well-being ($\beta = -.22$, $p = .007$) and social integration ($\beta = -.21$, $p = .004$) were associated with lower levels of distress.

Importantly, *media exposure indicators*, including the composite exposure index and daily doomscrolling time, were also positively associated with distress,

although their effects were smaller compared to affective predictors. This suggests that while exposure contributes to distress, individual differences in emotional reactivity play a more central role.

Overall, the findings support a multidimensional model in which media-related psychological distress is associated with affective, cognitive, social, and exposure-related factors.

Discussion

The present study aimed to develop and empirically test a multidimensional model of media-induced psychological distress in the context of war by integrating affective, cognitive, social, and behavioral media-related predictors. The findings provide strong support for the proposed framework and clarify the relative contribution of these domains.

First, the results confirm the central role of affective processes. Negative affect emerged as the strongest predictor of media-induced distress across both models, which is consistent with prior research indicating that heightened emotional reactivity increases vulnerability to stress-related symptoms. At the same time, positive affect demonstrated a significant protective effect, supporting resilience-oriented frameworks that emphasize the buffering role of positive emotional experiences in adverse conditions.

Second, cognitive factors were found to play a substantial role. Lower self-worth and reduced constructive thinking were associated with higher levels of distress, aligning with theoretical perspectives that conceptualize trauma-related responses as partially rooted in disruptions of core beliefs and maladaptive cognitive processing. These findings suggest that the interpretation and internal processing of media content are critical mechanisms through which distress is intensified or mitigated.

Third, indicators of psychological and social well-being contributed significantly to the model. Higher levels of psychological well-being and social integration were associated with reduced distress, reinforcing the importance of social connectedness and meaning-making processes as protective resources in prolonged crisis contexts.

Importantly, the inclusion of media-related variables significantly improved the explanatory power of the model. While general media exposure demonstrated a modest effect, doomscrolling emerged as a substantially stronger predictor of distress. This finding suggests that the psychological impact of war-related media is not determined solely by the amount of exposure, but rather by the pattern of engagement. Repetitive and compulsive consumption of distressing content appears to intensify emotional activation and cognitive overload, thereby increasing vulnerability to trauma-like symptoms.

These results have important theoretical implications. They support a shift from exposure-based models toward a more integrative perspective that considers media-related distress as a product of dynamic interactions between emotional reactivity, cognitive processing, social functioning, and behavioral media use. In particular, the findings contribute to the growing literature on media-induced and vicarious traumatization by demonstrating that PTSD-like symptoms may emerge in the absence of direct trauma exposure, while still requiring careful conceptual distinction from clinically defined PTSD.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for multidimensional intervention strategies. Efforts aimed at reducing media-related distress should not focus exclusively on limiting exposure, but also address emotional regulation, cognitive resilience, and adaptive media consumption habits. In particular, interventions targeting maladaptive patterns such as doomscrolling may be especially effective in mitigating the psychological impact of war-related media environments.

Contribution

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it extends research on indirect exposure to war by focusing on media-related psychological distress, rather than clinical PTSD. Second, it provides an integrated empirical model combining affective, cognitive, social and media-related predictors. Third, it offers context-specific evidence from Ukrainian university youth during an ongoing war.

Several practical limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design precludes causal conclusions, and the reliance on self-report measures may introduce bias. In addition, the study did not differentiate between specific types of media content or platforms. Then, cadets and civilian students were analyzed as a single group, which may obscure subgroup differences. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, incorporate more detailed media-use measures, and examine potential subgroup differences. Overall, the findings provide a robust empirical basis for understanding media-induced psychological distress as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by affective, cognitive, social, and behavioral factors.

Conclusion

The present study examined media-related psychological distress with PTSD-like symptoms among Ukrainian university youth in the context of ongoing war, with a particular focus on affective, cognitive, and social correlates.

The findings suggest that media-related distress is associated with a combination of emotional reactivity, cognitive processing, psychosocial resources, and patterns of media exposure. In particular, negative affect showed the strongest association with distress, while positive affect, constructive thinking, psychological well-being, and social integration were linked to lower levels of symptoms.

Importantly, although media exposure and doomscrolling were associated with higher levels of distress, their contribution appeared to be less pronounced than that of affective factors, highlighting the role of individual psychological processes in shaping responses to distressing media environments.

These results support a multidimensional perspective, suggesting that media-related distress cannot be understood solely in terms of exposure, but should be considered within a broader framework that includes emotional, cognitive, and social functioning.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to the cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report measures, and the use of a modified instrument that does not imply clinical diagnosis.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing literature on the psychological impact of war-related media exposure by providing empirical evidence from the Ukrainian context and by proposing an integrative model of media-related psychological distress.

CRedit Author Statement

Olena Bohucharova: Methodology, Validation, Investigation, Software, Resources, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft, Visualisation; **Ivan Danyliuk:** Conceptualisation, Formal Analysis, Resources, Writing – Reviewing & Editing, Supervision.

Disclosure Statement

The authors reported no potential conflicts of interest.

Generative AI Statement

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT4.o) to improve the English language, enhance the style and readability of the manuscript, and assist in the presentation and formatting of tables and mathematical expressions. The tool was used solely for editorial and formatting purposes and was not used to generate research data, perform analyses, interpret results, or draw scientific conclusions. After using this tool, the authors

reviewed, verified, and edited all AI-assisted content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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