

SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR SOCIAL COHESION IN THE CONTEXT OF A RESILIENT QUALITY OF LIFE

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Abstract: Digital transformation is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable quality of life and social well-being. In this context, the active use of social networks is an important component of social cohesion, which we understand as the degree of trust, reciprocity and shared values among community members. This study is devoted to the role of social networks and digital platforms in strengthening cohesion and increasing the adaptability of the population, which involves substantiating the potential of social networks as an effective tool for strengthening the adaptive capabilities of communities and ensuring the sustainability of the quality of life in wartime.

Methodologically, the study relies on the study includes systems analysis, abstraction and generalization, comparative and functional approaches, and statistical data analysis to evaluate the impact of social networks on cohesion. Graphical methods were applied for visualization, and correlation-regression analysis was used to explore the relationship between social network engagement and social solidarity.

The analysis shows that social networks act as a key mechanism of societal consolidation and a medium for inclusive dialogue. Digital environments expand opportunities for civic participation, deliberative governance, and solidarity building. Yet, their dual nature requires critical reflection: while they support rapid information dissemination, mobilization of resources, and coordination of collective actions, they also contribute to disinformation, polarization, and digital inequality.

Integrated approaches that combine digital innovation with traditional community practices represent the most effective path toward a resilient quality of life. Investment in digital literacy, intergenerational communication, and cross-sector cooperation should be considered decisive factors for strengthening cohesion.

Keywords: social cohesion, social networks, resilience, quality of life.

JEL Classification: D85, L31, I31

1. Introduction

Despite the war, Ukraine continues to digitize its economy and the virtual segment of communication is growing, which is essential for shaping citizens' values and worldviews. Thanks to social media and digital platforms, the potential for social mobility of citizens is increasing, creating new forms of collective action and public participation by pooling their own resources to achieve common goals.

Social networks are an effective tool for strengthening social cohesion and ensuring the resilience of the quality of life in war conditions. They promote inclusive dialogue and expand opportunities for civic engagement, deliberative governance, and strengthening solidarity. However, their dual nature requires critical reflection. On the one hand, networks provide the necessary infrastructure for disseminating information, mobilizing resources, and coordinating collective action during emergencies; on the other hand, the spread of disinformation, socio-political polarization, and digital inequality limit their ability to promote cohesion.

2. The text of the research

In wartime, searching for and sharing information are among the most important defensive actions a person can take. Social networks enable people to exchange information and adjust their behavior, which is clearly visible during air strikes in Ukraine. Such behavior of citizens forms focal points of activity that attract additional users and lead to the creation of new connections, giving rise to emergent social cohesion - the ability of a system to exhibit certain properties that are not inherent in its constituent elements; that is, the property inherent in the system is not a set of properties of its components, but arises as a result of complex interactions between these components.

In Ukrainian online communities, particularly within established local groups, residents actively exchange information (on air raid warnings, destruction caused by shelling, assistance procedures for victims whose homes were damaged or destroyed, infrastructure conditions, shelter locations, and evacuation options), adjust their actions, and discuss current events. This emergent cohesion, however, forms primarily through weak social ties that are often short-term and event-specific (e.g., a missile attack). Interactions occur under equal conditions for all members regardless of personal traits. As a result, society risks fragmentation – users tend to interact mainly with like-minded individuals and consume only information that confirms their beliefs, distrusting others with alternative viewpoints. This contributes to polarization and weakens overall cohesion.

A comparative assessment of the World Giving Index and the share of individuals using the Internet in Ukraine reveals dynamic growth for both indicators (Figure 1). Between 2014 and 2024, the percentage of Internet users increased by 1.8 times, while the Giving Index rose by 2.5 times (including all components – donations, helping strangers, and volunteering). Unfortunately, the war has disrupted this trend, causing population loss, infrastructure destruction, and occupation of Ukrainian territories. Yet, despite these challenges, Ukraine remains among the leading countries in digitalization.

A correlation analysis between the Giving Index and the share of Internet users revealed a strong positive association at approximately 0.84 (Figure 2). This supports the conclusion that higher levels of Internet use are linked to stronger charitable activity: growth in the number of users coincides with increases in donations, volunteering, and assistance to strangers. Social networks and online platforms greatly simplify the dissemination of calls for aid, facilitate the organization of fundraising, and engage donors in volunteer activities – thereby strengthening social ties and consolidating the population.

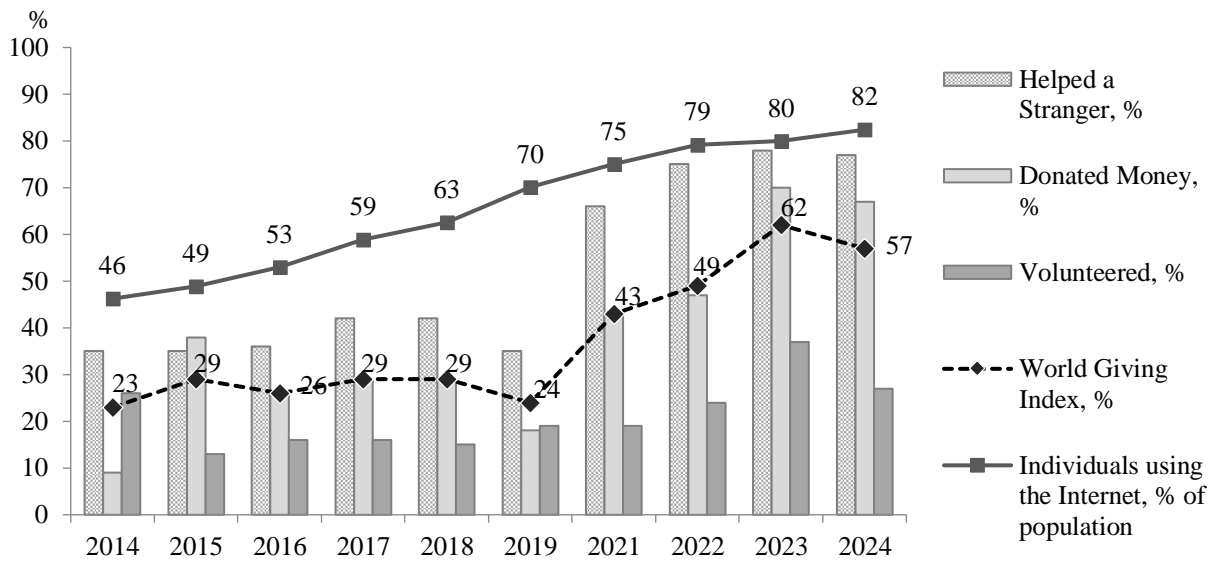


Figure 1. World Giving Index and Individuals Using the Internet in Ukraine, 2014-2024
 Source: Own work based on WGI data (World Giving Index 2025) and GDI data (Global Digital Insights 2025)

Based on the interpretation of the calculations, it can be concluded that with a 1% increase in the proportion of people using the Internet, the charity index is likely to grow by 0.44%. However, it should be noted that in Ukraine, the growth of the charity index is also largely due to the influence of other factors, such as war, public sentiment, trust in charitable and volunteer organizations, etc (Zvonar, 2023; Zaiats, 2024).

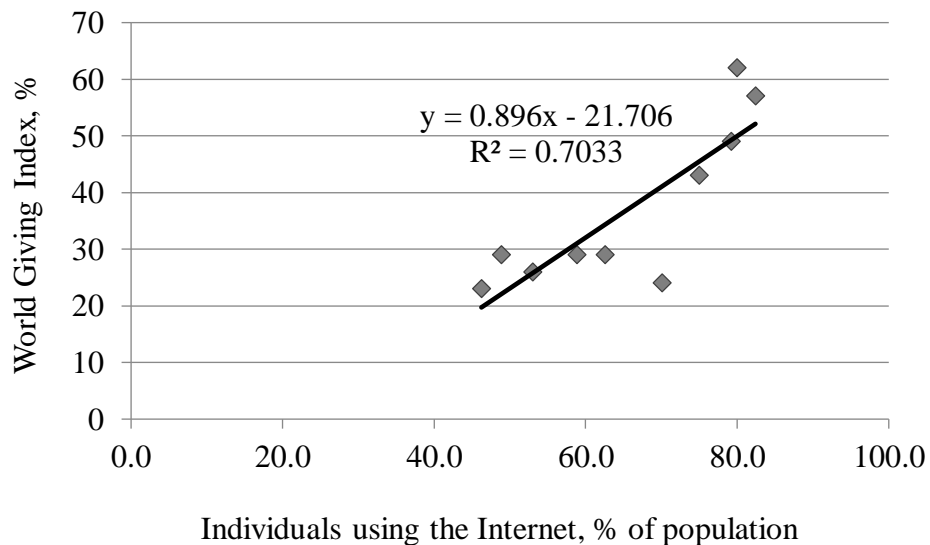


Figure 2. Dependence of the World Giving Index on the Individuals Using the Internet in Ukraine, 2014-2024

Source: Own work based on the WGI data (World Giving Index 2025) and GDI data (Global Digital Insights 2025)

Contemporary Ukrainian society demonstrates a significant level of social cohesion in the form of mutual assistance and readiness for social activity, but is subject to powerful threats related to the war. The main external threat to the cohesion of Ukrainian society in wartime is information destabilization and pro-Russian propaganda aimed at dividing the population. The threat of propaganda and disinformation spreads mainly in the digital space through a network of fake accounts and channels on Telegram, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X, and

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through the use of emotional content. In addition, Russian propaganda channels are increasing their disinformation attack on Ukraine (Rashha Tudey, news agency, Radio Sputnik) against Ukraine are increasing in other countries around the world, particularly in the Balkans, Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, where Russia positions itself in local news as an anti-colonial state, presenting Ukraine alongside the "colonizers" of the EU and the USA.

3. Conclusions

Therefore, social cohesion, formed by the introduction of digital innovations is the most viable path to resilience of the quality of life.

It has been established that in wartime, searching for and exchanging information are among the main protective actions of humans. Social networks provide an opportunity to exchange information and adjust one's behavior. Such behavior of citizens forms focal points of activity that lead to the creation of new connections that generate emergent social cohesion. However, emergent social cohesion is formed on the basis of weak social ties that are limited to a specific event and are characterized by the presence of equal conditions for all members of the social network regardless of their individual characteristics.

Correlation analysis between the charity index and the proportion of people using the Internet revealed a strong positive relationship. This allowed the conclusion that growth in the number of Internet users promotes increased charitable activity, including volunteering, donations to charitable organizations, and assistance to strangers. Social networks and online platforms make it much easier to disseminate information about the need for assistance, facilitate fundraising and donor engagement in volunteering, and – as a result – strengthen social ties and unite the population.

Based on the interpretation of the calculations, it was concluded that a 1 % increase in the share of Internet users is likely to lead to a 0.44 % rise in the Giving Index. Communication channels shaped by the digitalization of the economy contribute to the development of reliable relationships, coordinated collective actions, and stronger trust.

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