

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL SOCIALIZATION ON THE SPIRITUAL WORLDVIEW OF YOUTH

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Abstract: In this thesis provides a philosophical, sociological, and pedagogical analysis of the process of digital socialization among youth in the context of modern digital society, focusing on its impact on the spiritual worldview of the younger generation. The study highlights the ambivalent nature of the digital environment, which expands learning opportunities while simultaneously posing risks such as destructive ideologies and virtual addiction. In the context of Uzbekistan, the necessity of developing a high-quality national content industry in the Uznet segment is substantiated.

Keywords: digital socialization, digital society, spiritual worldview, youth, spiritual immunity, media literacy, critical thinking, national content, digital ethics

At the current stage of development of modern civilization, digitalization is not just a technical update or improvement of the means of production, but a global socio-cultural phenomenon that fundamentally transforms all aspects of human life. The digital society that has formed today is characterized by the unprecedented speed of information flows, the primacy of virtual reality, and the disappearance of traditional boundaries of space and time. In this environment, human activity, daily communication, and most importantly, the forms of understanding the world are moving into a completely new social format.

At the center of this process are modern youth - representatives of the Z and Alpha generations, who were born and raised in the digital era. The Internet, social networks, gaming platforms and virtual messengers are not just technical tools or information channels for them. These platforms have become the primary life activity of the younger generation, a place for self-expression, establishing social relationships and forming worldview criteria. The virtual world is increasingly covering the daily time budget and value system of young people.

The study of the phenomenon of digital socialization is the most urgent problem of today's social sciences and humanities. Today, traditional socialization institutions - family, school and neighborhood - are partially losing their educational and ideological control functions. They are being replaced by a digital environment that is borderless, dynamic and open to external manipulation. This environment is using differentiated mechanisms of ideological and ideological influence on the minds of young people. A fundamental scientific analysis of the positive and negative consequences of this trend, an assessment of the ambivalent (two-way) influence of the digital environment on the formation of the spiritual worldview of young people is an urgent socio-pedagogical pilgrimage today. The digital environment is reprogramming the core of the worldview of young people - beliefs, aesthetics, moral norms and criteria for understanding national identity.

In the classical sociological approach, socialization was considered as the process of an individual's assimilation of the culture, norms, language and values of society and their integration into the system of social relations. However, in the information society of the 21st century, this concept has changed radically. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck, in his concept of "risk society", noted that modern globalization is pushing forms of human communication out of traditional patterns [1].

Today, digital socialization is the process of assimilation and reproduction of socio-cultural experience by an individual in the ecosystem of the Internet, digital technologies and virtual

communication tools. Manuel Castells, in his fundamental work “The Formation of the Networked Society”, proves that virtual reality has become the main channel for the transmission of cultural codes and that it lives according to its own laws, separated from the real world [2]. While traditional socialization took place in a vertical direction (from the older generation to the younger generation), digital socialization has a horizontal nature (peer-to-peer and under the influence of global networks).

In the digital era, the functional roles of traditional socialization subjects have also undergone a crisis or serious transformation:

Family. Losing its primary control function. Researcher Boyd, in his work “It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens,” shows that a “digital divide” has emerged between parents and children, and that parents are unable to fully control their children’s virtual lives [3].

Education. Schools and universities have lost their centuries-old monopoly on information delivery. Digital platforms and educational blogs have become alternative sources of knowledge.

Social media and virtual communities: Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, Discord have become the main reference group (model environment) for young people. Henry Jenkins, in his theory of “Convergent Culture”, notes that young people participate in virtual communities not only as consumers, but also as content creators (prosumers) and form new subcultures [4].

In the formation of a modern personality, traditional and digital socialization do not completely negate each other, but rather combine in a hybrid form. In sociology, this phenomenon is called “*Phygital*” (*physical + digital*) reality. Niklas Luhmann considered communication to be the basis of society in his theory of social systems [5]. Today, communication is continuously moving from real life to virtual life and vice versa. This hybridity creates a dualism in the spiritual worldview of young people: young people are forced to live simultaneously in an environment of national-local values and in the space of global-digital culture.

The virtual space acts as a kind of social laboratory for the young person. In the concept of Jean Baudrillard, “simulacra” (unreal characters and images) determine the behavioral patterns of young people in the virtual environment [6]. Applying Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical approach to the digital environment, young people create and present their “ideal self” in the virtual space [7]. However, the “filter bubbles” and algorithms described by Eli Pariser confine young people to an information environment that only suits their subjective interests [8]. As a result, the spiritual worldview of young people is weakened by tolerance for other views and the risk of radicalization to certain ideas (echo chamber effect) increases.

Has opened up enormous positive opportunities for the spiritual and intellectual growth of the younger generation. First of all, this is due to the expansion of opportunities for obtaining knowledge and information. In the context of an information society, the digital environment has become the main driver of the formation of intellectual capital for the younger generation. The concept of a “limited audience” in the traditional education system has been replaced by an open knowledge space. Jean-François Lyotard, in his work “The Postmodern Condition”, emphasized that the free circulation of information protects society from stratification. This process increases the cognitive potential of young people and accelerates intellectualization, which is an important element of a spiritual worldview.

Secondly, the process of broadening the worldview and getting acquainted with different cultures is underway. The virtual space eliminates local and regional boundaries in the worldview of young people, bringing them into a global cultural dialogue. The “global village” effect, which was coined by the Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan, is fully manifested through digital socialization. As Umberto Eco noted in his work on intercultural semiotics, the networked

environment reduces xenophobia in young people and increases the sense of interculturalism and cultural tolerance [9]. Through understanding and respecting other cultures, the humanistic worldview of young people is strengthened.

Third, the digital environment develops independent thinking and creativity in young people. The image of the “prosumer” (both consumer and producer), predicted by Alvin Toffler in his “Third Wave” concept, has become a reality today [10]. Young people are participating in social networks not only as recipients of information, but also as creators of media content (blogging, digital art, programming). This situation activates critical thinking in young people, because presenting an idea requires a creative approach and logical argumentation from the individual.

Fourth, social activism and civic engagement are gaining momentum. Manuel Castells, analyzing the role of network structures in social mobilization, has shown that digital communication provides horizontal solidarity. Today, young people are actively organizing digital campaigns on environmental issues, charity events, and social justice.

Fifth, the possibilities of using educational, scientific and cultural digital resources have expanded to an unprecedented extent. As researchers in the field of “Digital Humanities” have noted, the world’s largest libraries, virtual galleries of museums such as the Louvre or the Hermitage, have moved to young people’s smartphones. Young people are enjoying examples of world literature and art online, improving their aesthetic taste.

Along with positive trends, the digital environment also carries the risk of having a serious destructive impact on the spirituality of young people. The first danger is - The spread of alien and destructive ideas. The borderless digital space is acting as an ideological training ground aimed at manipulating the minds of young people. As Sergey Kara-Murza noted, the anonymous and uncontrolled environment of the network creates favorable conditions for the rapid spread of radical, extremist and destructive ideologies and the molding of the minds of young people [11]. Young people, whose spiritual immunity is not fully formed, are becoming targets of virtual ideological expansion.

Secondly, there is a transformation (erosion) of spiritual values. As Jeffrey Alexander has noted in his work on cultural sociology, global digital flows tend to displace local and national values. As a result of rapid progress in the virtual world, the pursuit of material wealth and the promotion of hyper-individualism, a culture of pragmatism and consumerism is gaining priority in the minds of young people. Traditional criteria such as family, sacredness, respect for elders are being overshadowed by superficial virtual trends.

Third, virtual dependence and the weakening of real social relationships are causing social crises. Psychological dependence on gadgets (gadget addiction) is replacing live communication between people with virtual simulations. As real-life friendships and family ties weaken and are replaced by superficial digital connections, social autism, emotional loneliness, and a decrease in empathy are observed in young people.

Fourth, young people are exposed to disinformation, manipulative content, and information attacks every day. In the “post-truth” era, fake news and deep fake content (deepfakes) block young people’s ability to objectively assess reality. As a result, distrust of social institutions, the state, and the future, as well as spiritual and ideological confusion, arise in the minds of the younger generation.

Fifth, the negative impact of popular culture on the worldview of young people is further amplified by algorithms. The “culture industry,” as described by the Frankfurt School, is now degrading the aesthetic taste of young people, presenting immorality and violence as normal [12]. TikTok and primitive content based on the pursuit of ratings are limiting the logical thinking of young people.

Sixth, the digital environment has exacerbated cyberbullying and ethical problems in the virtual environment. As D. Boyd noted, the distance and anonymity of the network reduces people's sense of real responsibility. Among young people, discrimination and violation of privacy in the virtual space are becoming commonplace, which indicates that digital citizenship and network ethics (netiquette) are not sufficiently formed.

In Uzbekistan and the implementation of the “Digital Uzbekistan - 2030” strategy have completely renewed the institutional foundations of youth socialization [13]. With young people accounting for almost 60 percent of the country's population, the sharp increase in Internet coverage has made the younger generation the most active and main driver of the country's digital environment. Local sociological research shows that social networks (especially Telegram, Instagram, and YouTube) occupy a leading position in the daily time budget of Uzbek youth [14]. This process is equalizing the access to information of rural and urban youth, regardless of their geographical location, and universalizing their social behavior models.

However, the lack of high-quality, competitive and attractive national content that would positively influence the spirituality of young people in the Uznet segment remains a pressing problem. As information security researchers have noted, the most effective way to combat external ideological attacks and the influence of “popular culture” is not through bans, but through the development of a national content-making industry [15].

Uzbekistan, the virtual space provides great opportunities for promoting national values in a digital environment. In order to instill a sense of national identity in the minds of the digital generation, traditional textbook methods should be replaced by multimedia tools (infographics, 3D models, animated historical projects). Digital visualization of the heritage of our great ancestors such as Alisher Navoi, Imam Bukhari, Amir Temur forms national pride in young people. At the same time, the systematic satisfaction of the spiritual and educational needs of young people through digital platforms (for example, the Ziyonet network, electronic and audio libraries) is the main factor in protecting them from foreign ideas on the network. National content will be the foundation for preserving the Uzbek spiritual core (core value) in the digital worldview of young people.

The most effective mechanism for combating global digital threats and information attacks is to develop strong media and information literacy among young people. As Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share noted in their research on media pedagogy a modern person in the digital environment should not only consume information, but also have the skills to understand its origin, purpose, and hidden ideological content. Media literacy is an intellectual shield that allows young people to identify fakes and manipulation.

The foundation of moral immunity is the ability to think critically. D. Cluster defines this concept as the art of independent and individual thinking, using information as a starting point and arriving at a rational final decision. Young people who are critical thinkers accept any attractive idea in the virtual space only after sifting it through spiritual and moral criteria.

In the digital world, saving the worldview of young people from crisis is achieved by harmonizing national and universal values. Sila Benhabib emphasizes in the concept of intercultural dialogue that preserving local identity occurs through a correct understanding of global integration. Young people should master world science and advanced technologies through the network (universal value), while remaining faithful to their national language, history and moral beliefs (national value).

Also necessary to form digital ethics and a responsible Internet culture (netiquette). Scientists who study network ethics argue that digital ethics is a logical continuation of a person's moral obligations in real life in the virtual world. Instilling in young people a sense of responsibility that

"every comment I make online affects the lives of real people" is an internal moral regulator that prevents cyberbullying and online insults.

This process requires systematic cooperation between families, educational institutions and the community. Boyd emphasizes in her work that parents and teachers need to enter the virtual world with young people, acting as "digital mediators and mentors" rather than simply prohibiting them from digital life. Sincere and lively communication within the family and media circles in educational institutions protect young people from virtual loneliness.

Systematic scientific and theoretical analyses show that digital socialization has become the most powerful social factor shaping the spiritual worldview of young people today. At a time when traditional institutions are losing their sphere of influence to the algorithms of virtual space, it is scientifically wrong to view digital transformation only as a threat. Effective use of the vast intellectual and educational resources provided by the network, as well as strengthening sustainable spiritual immunity in young people against its destructive, manipulative effects, is a strategic task for the state and society.

Based on the research results, the following practical suggestions are put forward to develop digital culture, media literacy, and critical thinking among young people:

1. Systematically introduce the subjects "Media and Information Literacy" and "Cyber Ethics" into the curricula at all levels of continuous education (school, lyceum, higher education) ; train young people in the methodology of fact-checking and detecting fakes.

2. Increase the use of interactive methodologies, case studies, and scientific debate formats in educational processes that teach young people to move from passive memorization of information to analytical and critical thinking.

3. Provide financial and social incentives from the state to produce attractive, Uzbek-language educational media products (mobile applications, national intellectual podcasts, 3D platforms and animations about historical figures) that meet the spiritual, scientific and aesthetic needs of young people in the Uznet segment.

4. Establish an interactive system of "digital mentoring" that coordinates the activities of the family, school, and neighborhood in the virtual space; implement special media projects to improve the digital pedagogical literacy of parents.

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