

Social health and environmental behavior of students in the digital age

Vera A. Zakharova¹ Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2697-8926>

Ilya V. Chernov², Department of Physical Culture, Kortunov Novochoerkassk Engineering and Reclamation Institute – Branch, Don State Agrarian University, Novochoerkassk, Russia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7479-9079>

Tatiana I. Nazarenko³, Associate Professor of the Department of General and Applied Psychology, North Caucasus Federal University, Stavropol, Russia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6496-5966>

Pavel V. Pavlov⁴, Professor of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Platov South-Russian State Polytechnic University (NPI), Novochoerkassk, Russia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9700-5136>

Vasily S. Lyubchenko⁵, Professor of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Platov South-Russian State Polytechnic University (NPI), Novochoerkassk, Russia. E-mail: sofia-npi@mail.ru . <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3966-6216>

Anna A. Kulikova⁶ Associate Professor of the Institute of Service and Business (Branch), Don State Technical University, Shakhty, Russia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0943-4003>

Suggested Citation:

Zakharova, V. A., Chernov, I. V., Nazarenko, T. I., Pavlov, P. V., Lyubchenko, V. S. & Kulikova, V. S. (2020). Social health and environmental behavior of students in the digital age. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Science*. 15(5), 1288-1294 <https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v15i5.5167>

Received from 04 August, 2020; revised from 24 August 2020; accepted from October 28, 2020.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Huseyin Uzunboylu, Higher Education Planning, Supervision, Accreditation and Coordination Board, Cyprus.

©2020 Birlesik Dunya Yenilik Arastırma ve Yayıncılık Merkezi. All rights reserved.

Abstract:

This paper describes the importance of theoretical understanding of modern social health, educational and environmental behavior of students in the digital age. The purpose of this research is to analyze the concepts and trends of social health and environmental behavior of students in the context of modern social digitalization process. The paper deals with the framework and methodology of modern social and philosophical theories devoted to the problems of digital society and digital technologies. The theoretical and methodological approaches analyzed to the study of modern social digitalization processes, their negative and positive trend, and the impact of these trends on social health and environmental behavior of Students in education. In this paper, the process of digitalization is inconsistent: providing new technological opportunities for communication and education, including environmental education and students' environmental projects that has a negative impact on consciousness and behavior of young people. The results showed that there is a need to form creative personality in education through the modern digital era. The further research stated in the field of social health and formation of students' environmental behavior in the context of modern information, communication technologies and development of digital society in the education.

Keywords: Digital Age, digital technologies, students, social health, environmental behavior

Introduction

The modern era is characterized by intensive development of information, communication technologies and digitalization for the public life. In various social theories, this phenomenon is defined as "the Information Age", "network society" (Castells, 1996) or "digital society", "the Digital Age", etc. The process of digitalization affects various in the social groups. It has a special impact on social attitudes and practices of the young people, on the "modern digital generation" (Kasavina, 2019). The environment defines as a place to live or to get to know or to improve that is focused on everyday life. At the same time, the problem of interaction between young people and digital environment remain multidimensional that affects various aspects of Students activities (Bayanova & Minyaev, 2019).

The concept of social health is an important indicator that characterizes the level of students' integration into social reality and social development as a subject of social relations (Kornilova et al., 2018). It is obvious that the modern processes of social digitalization have a significant impact on students' social health as an important factor of socialization (Veraksa et al., 2018).

The issue of students' social health in the Information Age brings up a subject of human ecology and its environmental practices in a new way. Thus, modern researchers emphasize the importance of education for "healthy and ecological personality" in the Digital Age (Akhmetova, 2020). At the same time, it should be noted that ecological culture of students is formed in the process of education and upbringing (Zabelina & Fortunato, 2019). Digitalization and digital technologies play a significant role in supporting environmental behavior of modern students.

Young people are not only able to successfully use the innovations offered by digitalization, information and communication technologies, but actively create innovations themselves, including environmental issues promotion projects (Gordeeva et al., 2018). In this regard, it assumes that environmental behavior of students become a significant development factor for the modern digital society. The problem of social health and environmental behavior of young people in the context of digitalization is an urgent research problem that requires comprehensive consideration. This review involves the study of social and economic foundations of digital society formation. This paper analyzed the features of students' socialization in the context of digitalization and the impact of these conditions on social health and environmental practices of the younger generation.

In order to understand the space as an environment, it is necessary to understand the relationships between human and the environment in which they participate as well as the ability to project themselves into it. The learning environment becomes swap space, stimulating and thoughtful, both for learners and for teachers (Duarte 2003)

Further prospects for the development of students as a subject of social and environmental practices in the context of social reality digitalization which are considered as well. The effective teaching methods have been paid more attention that the environment is a factor that mostly influences in the behavior of students.

Method

The study of social health and environmental behavior of students in the context of modern digital society is interdisciplinary by nature. First of all, it involves addressing theoretical and methodological approaches presented in modern sociological and philosophical concepts. In this study, the methodology presented the theories of "Information Age" and "network society" by M. Castells (1996), the theory of "digital platforms capitalism" by N. Srnicek (2017) and the theory of "communicative capitalism" by J. Dean (2005; 2017) to understand how the "Digital Age" is formed.

In this study, sociological theories used for modern students' social practices to emphasize the importance of students' innovative potential and innovative activities (Chuprov & Zubok, 2000; Chuprov & Zubok, 2011; State Students Policy, 2013).

The problems of students' in social health emphasize the importance of E. Fromm's (2005) philosophical ideas of "healthy society", and aimed at development of creative personality. Fromm stated, that a healthy society promotes or hinders development of healthy (productive and non-alienated) personality.

In general, it seems that these approaches allow to form an adequate methodological tool that opens up opportunities for comprehensive study of students' social health and environmental behavior in the modern digital age.

Results

Digital Age and Emergence of Digital Economy

Most researchers treat the modern social reality as a "digital" or "knowledge" society, which corresponds to the notion of digital economy. But what is the basis of digitalization of modern social and economic processes? In his recent book "Platform capitalism" N. Srnicek (2017) discusses the economic basis of "Digital Age".

Srnicek states, the emergence of digital economy was a kind of reaction to economic growth slowdown associated with industrial production at the end of the past century. The sector of telecommunications began to develop actively in the 1990s and was very attractive for investment, in contrast to slowing industrial growth. Telecommunications open up great opportunities associated with the so-called "lean" business model. They allowed to transfer business to online form, reducing the cost of production. In this regard, there takes place active "commercialization" of the Internet (initially a non-commercial project).

Srnicek points out, that active investment and the drumbeat of IT in the 1990s served as "infrastructure foundation" of the modern digital economy. After the global financial crisis of 2008, the "infusion" of financial capital into digital technologies gained a second wind and "got outsized". After the financial crisis, there fell profitability of traditional financial instruments (due to the lower interest rates). In order to make a profit, investors turned to the risky assets. They invested in technology companies which, unlike the "hulking industrial titans", were based on a "lean" business models and flexible employment. N. Srnicek (2017) states, that such a model served as the basis of modern "digital platforms", engaged in extracting and monitoring large amount of data.

Data extraction and "exploitation of communication" remains an essential feature of the modern Digital Era. J. Dean named (2005; 2017) this phenomenon "communication capitalism". She noted that, if industrial capitalism is focused on labor exploitation, then "communicative capitalism" as "an economic and ideological form", inextricably linked with modern global networks, is aimed at exploitation of communication processes.

It should be noted that digitalization is significantly changing today's reality. The researchers emphasize, that under the influence of new digital technologies "there take place visible changes: in people, culture and social space, expressed in restructuring of thinking, perception, communication, language, living space, and socialization" (Kasavina, 2019).

It is quite clear that these changes have a serious impact on students. The authors of joint monograph concerned with students policy and practices of implementing Students innovative potential, state, that the modern society (among other characteristics) has some important features: the basic social practices are defined by information and communication processes; the priority is given to network social interactions rather than to hierarchical ones; the virtual world acts as an integral part of our daily life; and finally, innovativeness becomes an attribute of modern social reality (Gosudarstvennaja molodezhnaja politika: rossijskaja i mirovaja praktika realizacii v obshhestve innovacionnogo potenciala novyh pokolenij (State Students Policy, 2013). These features of modern society also allow to treat the Students as a "digital generation".

Students in the Digital Age: Digitalization and Social Health

"Immersion" in digital reality is becoming an integral part of modern Students life. At the same time, young people are not only able to successfully adapt to digitalization process, but often act as the subject of IT-innovations. That makes sense, since they, as a special social and demographic group, are subjects of innovative activity with innovative (creative) potential (due to their age characteristics). Young people can integrate into social structures and assimilate the established forms of social activity. They can also creatively change these forms as well, thereby realizing their innovative potential (Chuprov & Zubok, 2000). This innovative potential of Students is being successfully implemented today, including the field of IT-technologies and software products.

It is often (and quite reasonably) noted that modern information technologies open up a number of new opportunities, primarily associated with expansion of communication space, digital innovations in the field of economics, production, remote work and education. Young people actively use these opportunities and participate in these processes (including creation of new information content).

However, most researchers pay attention to the negative aspects of Students digital reality. First of all, there are the risks to social health. Thus, the main negative aspects include: deformation of offline social relations and communications, replaced by online communication; Internet addiction, risks of destructive information (Gafiatulina, Lyubetsky & Zakharova, 2019), as well as cognitive defects and psychological problems. So, psychological problems caused by excessive information flow may include anxiety, excessive stress, emotional tension and depression. In the cognitive sphere, against the background of information overload, there may worsen attention and mental performance.

Also, in the field of digital communication there takes place a total deformation and simplification of the language. In turn, there appeared a new type of thinking – the "network" one, which is often characterized as "clip", "unsystematic" or "mosaic" (Kurbatov, 2013; 2017). At the same time, in the digital environment, the actual meaning of messages loses its importance and only the endless process of communication itself is considered to be important.

J. Dean (2017) noted, that in digital networks the value of a message is replaced by the value of exchanging messages, sending and receiving them. Whether the post is a lie or not – it doesn't matter, if the article is well thought out. What really matters is that something was expressed, that a comment was shared, that the image was "liked" and reposted. Even something "important and true" is rarely noticed, since the continuous flow of contributions is endless. The "important and true" things appear at the same time, in the same manner, and require the same attention as all the others. The content no longer matters. What really matters is the process of distribution.

These negative trends related to the digital environment often lead to "deterioration" of students' social health and its involvement in real social relations. First of all, we are talking about "deterioration" in Students socialization. In this regard, researchers identify the new form of digital socialization: "cybersocialization" or socialization in the digital environment (Kasyanov, Gafiatullina & Samygin, 2019). At the same time, they point out the contradictory nature of "cybersocialization", which has not only positive aspects (opportunities for digital educational technologies, expanding opportunities for communication, leisure, etc.), but also significant risks for Students social health (Yakovleva, 2013).

Students Environmental Behavior in the Context of Digitalization

Currently, they actively discuss the issue of environmental aspects of digitalization and impact of digital technologies on the environment. Digital technologies are actively penetrating the economy, healthcare, education, and culture, but their potential in solving environmental problems is also significant. For example, digital technologies are used to analyze data and monitor environmental situations. In this context, the role of digital technologies in ensuring the transition to "eco-friendly" or "green" economy is very promising (Perelet, 2018).

Digital reality itself becomes a special "habitat", along with the natural and urbanized environment (Petrova, 2019). Young people spend a good deal of their time in this new "digital environment". All that has a significant and multidimensional impact on their behavior. We already mentioned that information

technologies offer us a whole range of opportunities, including those related to student's education. This includes online education, access to educational electronic resources, modern scientific publications, lectures by the leading scientists, etc. In this context, digital technologies play an important role in environmental education, forming the Students environmental culture. The level of ecological culture appears to be the value attitude of a person to the environment (Yanitsky, 2007). It acts as a key point that determines student's environmental behavior.

It is clear that the modern digital reality significantly increases our possibilities of social communication. If environmental behavior is treated as a form of social behavior in the context of sociological theory (Zakharova, 2020), then digital environment provides much room for implementing various social practices, social interaction and communication of young people in the field of ecology. First of all, modern information technologies contribute to promotion of Students environmental projects aimed at healthy lifestyle, protection of nature and environment of our own cities, districts, etc. Digital technologies are also indispensable for collecting and analyzing data related to environmental issues.

Discussions

However, digital environment also has a negative impact on many aspects of students' consciousness and behavior. In addition to the previously mentioned aspects that negatively affect social health, one more should be noted. The digital environment and virtual communication are in social networks, young people break away from nature, "moving away" from it, which does not contribute to healthy lifestyle.

The problem of positive and negative aspects of new information technologies in the context of ecology becomes the subject of special research. Currently, there is a new direction in the field of environmental science – "Information Ecology", aimed at studying the influence of digital environment on people and society, including social interactions in digital space (Petrova, 2019).

In any case, it is absolutely clear that modern digitalization processes should not displace and replace people, but, on the contrary, contribute to their development and improvement. Moreover, modern researchers insist on the need to educate the Students, as a subject of environmental culture (associated with development of digital society). The new personality is a carrier of ecological culture and an active agent of nature, which are able to harmonize relations in "society – man – nature" system. Digitalization causes drastic changes in the essence and functions of man, so it is necessary to develop the ecological constant as a strategy for sustainable development of the modern world (Akhmetova, 2020).

It seems that education of such a person is the basis of E. Fromm's (2005) "healthy society", where development of individual and his creative productivity becomes the key priority. Fromm stated, that "healthy society" gives us an opportunity for "creative work", "development of mind" and "a sense of becoming ourselves, based on the sense of our creative powers".

Conclusion

In this article we pointed out the multidimensional character of Students social practices problem. Our aim was to identify some components of this problem, focusing on the issues of social health and Students environmental behavior. The formation of digital economy, which is treated as a "capitalism platform" (Srniczek, 2017) or "communication capitalism" (Dean, 2005, 2017) in modern social theories, has led to significant social transformations. At the same time, the impact of digitalization on social development and Students behavior can be described as contradictory. In digital age, children prevent to fulfil their potential and also act to keep abusing, threatening and trafficking as well as threat to their well-being.

Young people (as a social and demographic group) are the most adapted to digitalization. Moreover, it is the younger generation that mostly acts as a subject of "digital" innovations and their active users in various fields – education, work, leisure, etc. The negative trends of digitalization are mostly manifested in students as well that online risks to the social health of students. These risks are included formation of Internet addiction, substitution of real interpersonal communication with "virtual"

communication in social networks, the risks associated with appearance of psychological problems, and cognitive disorders, etc. This contradictory nature of digitalization also affects the problem of students' environmental behavior. Of course, digital technologies have certain advantages in the field of environmental issues: the possibility of promoting students' environmental projects, monitoring of environmental situations, and technological opportunities for development of environmental education, etc. At the same time, the negative consequences included distancing of young people from the natural world, which is an important health and healthy lifestyle factor.

Recommendations

In modern conditions of digitalization, it is important to educate the individual as a subject of culture and environmental culture. The center of modern "digital society" there should be a real person (as a subject of social and cultural transformations) instead of depersonalized and artificial flow of information or communication processes, which often dissolve the true identity. In this regard, it should be emphasized that new digital technologies are only a means to human development, but not the goal themselves. The main goal of social processes is personality and its creative development.

In digital age, Social Health and Environmental Behavior also risks to student's privacy, threats, harms, safety and significant magnifying harms of well-being.

References

- Akhmetova, D.Z. (2020). "Ecological Man" in the Era of Digitalization. *Vysshee obrazovanie v Rossii*, 29(5), 117-126.
- Bayanova, L.F. & Minyaev, O.G. (2019). Cultural Congruence Test for Russian Adolescents. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, 12(3), 163–176.
- Castells, M. (1996). *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. Vol. 1: The Rise of the Network Society. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Chuprov, V.I. & Zubok, Yu.A. (2000). *Students in Social Reproduction: Problems and Prospects*. Moscow: ISPR RAS.
- Chuprov, V.I. & Zubok, Yu.A. (2011). *Sociology of Students*, Moscow: Norma.
- Dean, J. (2005). Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics. *Cultural Politics*, 1(1), 51-74.
- Dean, J. (2017). Communicative capitalism: from disagreement to division. *Kommunikacii. Media. Dizajn*, 2(3), 152-165.
- Fromm, E. (2005). *Healthy Society*. Moscow: AST.
- Gafiatulina, N.H., Lyubetsky, N.P. & Zakharova, T.Yu. (2019). Social Health in Conditions of Cybersocialization of Russian Students: on the Issue of Ensuring Information Security of Students. *Gumanitarnye, social'no-jekonomicheskie i obshhestvennye nauki*, 4, 28-31.
- Gordeeva, T.O., Sychev, O.A., Pshenichnuk, D.V. & Sidneva, A.N. (2018). Academic Motivation of Elementary School Children in Two Educational Approaches — Innovative and Traditional. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, 11(4), 19-36.
- Kasavina, N.A. (2019). Digitalization as a Subject of Interdisciplinary Research. *Jepistemologija i filosofija nauki*, 56(4), 251-259.
- Kasyanov, V.V., Gafiatullina, N.X. & Samygin, S.I. (2019). Cybersocialization as a Risk Factor Influencing the Social Health of Russian Students in the Digital Age. *Gumanitarnye, social'no-jekonomicheskie i obshhestvennye nauki*, 6, 21-26.
- Kornilova, T.V., Chumakova, M.A. & Krasavtseva, Yu.V. (2018). Emotional intelligence, patterns for coping with decisional conflict, and academic achievement in cross-cultural perspective (evidence from selective Russian and Azerbaijani student populations). *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, 11(2), 114-133.
- Kurbatov, V.I. (2013). Virtual Communication, Virtual Network Thinking and Virtual Language. *Gumanitarij Juga Rossii*, 4, 56-68.

- Kurbatov, V.I. (2017). Net-thinking: New Realities of the Information Era. *Gumanitarij Juga Rossii*, 6, 173-181.
- Perelet, R.A. (2018). Environmental Aspects of the Digital Economy. *Mir novoj jekonomiki*, 12(4), 39-45.
- Petrova, E.V. (2019). Information Ecology in the Digital Environment. *Jekonomicheskie i social'no-gumanitarnye issledovanija*, 3, 103-108.
- Srnicek, N. (2017). Platform Capitalism. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- State Students Policy. (2013). Russian and world practice of implementing the innovative potential of new generations in society. Under general editorship of V.A. Lukov. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo gumanitarnogo universiteta.
- Veraksa, A.N., Bukhalenkova, D.A. & Kovyazina, M.S. (2018). Language Proficiency in Preschool Children with Different Levels of Executive Function. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, 11(4), 115-129.
- Yakovleva, O.V. (2013). The Impact of Virtual Environment on Socialization of Modern Students: Analysis of the Main Risks. *Izvestija rossijskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta im. A. I. Gercena*, 162, 183 –188.
- Yanitsky, O.N. (2007). Ecological Culture: Essays on Interaction of Science and Practice. Moscow: Nauka.
- Zabelina, E.V. & Fortunato, V.J. (2019). Development of a Russian Version of the MindTime Profile Inventory: The Measurement of Past, Present, and Future Thinking in a Russian Sample. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, 12(2), 146-164.
- Zakharova, V.A. (2020). Environmental behavior in the context of sociological theory. *Bulletin of the South Russian state technical University (Novocherkassk Polytechnic Institute)*. *Seriya: Social'no-jekonomicheskie nauki*, 3, 109-117.