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## ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

### **Socialización digital de los jóvenes: Cambios significativos en el contexto de las transformaciones sistémicas globales \*** **DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10456285**

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#### **Resumen**

Se presentan los resultados de la investigación realizada en forma de encuesta masiva en línea a jóvenes rusos en 2022. Se describen los aspectos de la socialización digital en la correlación entre interacción virtual y real. Se presenta la distribución de las opiniones de los jóvenes encuestados sobre el papel de las tecnologías digitales en sus vidas y hasta qué punto estas tecnologías pueden sustituir los factores de la comunicación real, "en vivo". Los autores concluyen que los jóvenes están dispuestos a interactuar activamente en dos espacios, el digital y el real, lo que permite considerar el modelo de socialización que los combina estrechamente como el más aceptable en la actualidad.

**Palabras clave:** socialización digital, comunicación, jóvenes, interacción virtual.

#### **Abstract**

#### **Digital Socialization of Youth: Significant Changes in the Context of Global Systemic Transformations**

The results of the research conducted in the form of a mass online survey of Russian youth in 2022 are presented. It describes the aspects of digital socialization in the correlation between virtual and real interaction. The distribution of young respondents' opinions about the role of digital technologies in their lives and the extent to which these technologies can replace the factors of real, "live" communication is presented. The authors conclude that young people are ready to actively interact in two spaces - digital and real, which allows us to consider the model of socialization that closely combines them as the most acceptable at present.

**Keywords:** digital socialization, communication, young people, virtual interaction.

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## 1.- Introduction

At present, the domestic social environment, which is under the influence of large-scale digitalization and global systemic changes caused by intensive technological and geopolitical processes, determines meaningful changes and new specific features of the process of socialization of young generations.

Realization of the special role and place of young people in society is associated with the assessment and understanding of this social group as an organic part of modern society. Young people bear a special function of responsibility for the continuity of history and culture of society, the life of elders and reproduction of subsequent generations, and ultimately - for the survival of peoples as cultural and historical communities, which is irreplaceable by other social groups. The fulfillment of this role by young people is impossible without scientific study of issues related to the identification and study of mechanisms that shape their inclusion in the life of society.

"Youth is not a self-developing system, its life is conditioned by the existing socio-economic and political conditions" (Rudenkin & Rudenkina, 2019: 44). Therefore, the study of its socialization is always in the field of sociological science and is recognized as timeless. This problematic is also relevant in the context of considering its digital aspect, which allows researchers to focus their attention on such a form of youth socialization, which in modern conditions of information society (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008) has received a number of names close in meaning - "digital socialization", "Internet socialization", "information socialization" or "cybersocialization" (Castells et al., 2007; Soldatova, 2018).

With the increasing speed of mastering the Internet environment by younger generations, its increasing socializing influence on young people has become more and more tangible. In the conditions of changing the bases and models of socialization under the influence of new digital technologies, when "the Internet space is not a supplement to the social reality familiar to young people from childhood, but initially becomes one of the fundamental bases of this reality" (Maksimova et al., 2017: 1627), demonstrating both positive and negative effects on young people, a regular, comprehensive analysis of this complex process is necessary (Maximova et al., 2018). This circumstance dictated the authors' appeal to the study of this issue and the definition of the research objective to identify new trends and trends formed and traced in the process of socialization of young generations, taking place under the influence of the digital environment.

## **2.- Methods**

The information base of the study was formed by the materials of a representative sociological survey conducted in 2022 by a group of Russian scientists, with the participation of the authors of the article, and a secondary analysis of the results of research by scientists of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (JSC "VCIOM").

The characteristics of respondents - representatives of the socio-demographic group under study are as follows: student youth studying at school, colleges and universities, aged 16 to 22 years, men - 37.6%, women - 62.4%. The sample size amounted to 1,100 people.

## **3.Results and discussion**

Digital socialization continues to strengthen the influence of rapidly developing information technologies on the process of assimilation of norms, values and patterns of behavior by new generations. The two environments - real and virtual, of course, should equally influence the process of socialization of young generations. However, in the modern conditions of information society, this impact on young people, who with each new generation demonstrate often more active passage of even primary socialization in the Internet environment than under the influence of the institution of the family, can't always be regarded as equivalent, and often more shifted towards the recognition of the digital world as a priority, its unlimited independence in the formation of norms and values inherent in modern society. The depth of immersion in the digital space has affected the social image of younger generations. This fact is confirmed by the results of numerous studies conducted in the form of regular surveys by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center, which are published in the form of extended data sets for different years. Interpretation of these data makes it possible to catch the main trends in the change of opinions and assessments of representatives of various social groups of society regarding the issues of digitalization and artificial intelligence. Here are some of them that allow us to form a collective portrait of today's young generations in terms of their digital socialization.

Young people are active in using the Internet, moving various types of social practices into its space and, according to the data of the "VCIOM" survey conducted in March 2021, are ready to give up television in favor of the Internet. This behavioral attitude is characteristic of 69% of young people aged 18 to 24 and 48% of 25-34-year-olds (TASS, 2021). If we outline the range of activities that are realized by young people using the Internet environment, it can include the following: using the Internet for work or study, watching movies, reading books, using e-mail for correspondence, searching for necessary information, getting information about events in the country and the world,

communicating with friends in chat rooms, forums, social networks, searching for friends and people close to their interests, blogging, playing computer games, shopping. This list could be continued, which is not surprising, given that according to the same VCIOM, 71% of young people aged 18 to 24 years spend more than 4 hours on the Internet every day, 41% of 25-34 years old do the same. At the same time, 26% of 18-24 years old use the Internet daily, but spend less than 4 hours a day there, and 45% of 25-34 years old spend a similar amount of time on the Internet (TASS, 2021).

Compared to the results of our author's study, the structure of activities carried out by young people in the digital environment has not undergone significant changes in the content aspect, but has only been expanded by adding, along with those already mentioned, such elements as "using electronic government services", "ordering a cab through a mobile application", "doing sports online", and when using the Internet for entertainment purposes, respondents also indicated "visiting online exhibitions" and "listening to music". Thus, the comparison of the data from the two studies did not reveal any conceptual differences in the configuration of the main types of behavioral practices implemented by representatives of younger generations in the digital environment. The tendency to maintain online activity, which has sharply increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the following areas: work, study, use of e-services portal, online sports, was clearly highlighted. The period of the coronavirus pandemic was an unforeseen factor that changed not only people's worldview, but also radically transformed behavioral practices in the digital environment.

In modern conditions, young people feel dependence on the Internet to varying degrees and differently realize the consequences of how much their usual life will change if the Internet disappears. Thus, for 34% of the group of 18-24 years old, the fact of a complete change of life and even their sincere misunderstanding of how they would perform everyday activities without the Internet seemed inevitable. In the group of 25-34 years old this opinion is typical for 19% of respondents. 41% and 45% of respondents (in the age groups of 18-24 years old and 25-34 years old, respectively) believe that the disappearance of the Internet will significantly change their lives, but they will be able to adapt. At the same time, for the group with age characteristics from 18 to 24 years old (22%) it is typical to experience negative feelings, depression and anxiety if they were without the Internet for a long period of time. Among informants aged 25 to 35, only 9% experienced such feelings. But positive feelings, joy, and relaxation in the absence of the Internet were equally experienced by both age groups (7% of respondents, respectively). It is noteworthy that the category of young people from 25 to 34 years of age is more aware of the lack of catastrophic consequences in case of an Internet outage - only 19% compared to 34% in the younger age group. Seniors are less likely to experience negative feelings, depression and anxiety if they find themselves without internet for a long period of time (9% vs. 22% in the 18-24 years old group). The same group spent fewer hours on the Internet (41% and 71%, respectively, of those who spent more than 4 hours on the Internet and 45% vs. 26% of those who used the Internet less than 4 hours a day). This circumstance can be explained from the position of greater involvement of representatives of the older age group of young people in the realization of family and professional roles in the space of real social interactions, which inevitably leads to a decrease in the time spent on the Internet.

With the advent of the information society era, a fundamentally new quality of life space has been formed, in which young people, being under the constant influence of the digital environment and experiencing its inevitable impact, go through all stages of socialization.

Despite the importance of the digital environment in the lives of young generations, our research reveals that despite the diversity and diversity of information that young people draw from the Internet space of news sites, forums, blogs, social networking sites, conversations with relatives, friends, acquaintances, carried out in the process of direct interpersonal interaction in the real social environment, are no less significant, relevant, not rejected and also perceived as a source of information. And this aspect is noted by 52.3% of our respondents, destroying stereotypes about the predominant influence of the digital environment on the formation of social experience in modern generations of young people, once again confirming the fact of "the long-standing convergence of offline and online worlds" against the background of the formed everyday digital reality (VCIOM, n.d.).

The entry of young people into the dynamic digital environment has opened new opportunities for the development of communicative interaction, turned online communication into an integral element of everyday life practice, determining the specifics of socialization of young generations, but not excluding, at the same time, interaction in the real social space. According to the author's research, young people are still drawn to offline communication, establishing direct interpersonal communication and contacts. According to the author's research, 61.6% of the surveyed youth communicate "offline with people they met on the Internet" at different intervals, and 45.2% get acquainted with people who subscribe to similar online communities. This position of respondents indicates that they cannot devalue the real social world, with its specific forms and manifestations, laws and properties, before the new digital reality, often perceived as a global absolute value, as well as the predicted future absence of problems with adaptation in the social environment.

Young people come to the understanding that it is impossible to replace live, personal and unmediated communication with online communication, which is noted in their statements, pointing out that "Communication in real life is more valuable" and "It is more pleasant to communicate in person", considering that "Communication via the Internet is not the same at all" and expressing preferences - "I am for live communication", "I prefer face-to-face communication more" and reflecting meaningfully on the issues discussed in the topics, that "Internet communication is not that at all" and expressing preferences - "I am for live communication", "I prefer more personal communication", and reflecting on the issues of the discussed topic, expresses emotionally colored judgment, summarizing - "Live communication is lost, online communication is an ersatz of live communication, it will not replace it. And people have become afraid to communicate live. This is bad." Indeed, the current opportunity to implement various behavioral practices of virtual communication and to carry out active interaction in two spaces - digital and real, allows us to consider the model of socialization that closely combines them as the most acceptable at the moment.

The successful process of socialization of an individual becomes possible in the case of his active participation in socially significant activities, introduction to a new social action and activation of individual initiative, allowing to consider him not as a passive contemplator, but as a subject of social relations, capable of implementing system solutions and giving impetus to development. The realization of civic initiatives at all times testified to the absence of social indifference of young people to socially significant processes. In modern conditions, the Internet space has become a platform for expressing the civic activity of young generations.

The surveyed young people are oriented towards practical and active participation in socially useful activities on the Internet. Therefore, answering the question, "Have you had to initiate any collective actions in the last 2-3 years?" the following number of respondents gave a positive answer: 37.4% of respondents "Solved someone else's problem", supported the undertakings of others - 32.6%, they "Realized someone else's idea, initiative", and 30.9% "Realized their own idea, initiative". Regarding the possibility to "Solve problems in various spheres of our society through the activity of a large number of people on the Internet" opinions were divided in the following numerical combinations: 73.2% of respondents gave a positively colored answer with regard to charity, 58.1% pointed to such an opportunity to solve problems in ecology, 51.9% - in the sphere of education, for 51.6% of respondents such area was medicine, 51.3% agreed that the activity of a large number of people in the Internet environment allows to defend the rights and freedoms of citizens, as for the opportunity to solve problems in the sphere of international politics, the respondents (56.7%) thought that activity in the information space alone is not enough, with which, in principle, one cannot disagree. The position on this issue is also strengthened by the clear confidence of respondents that by participating in various kinds of civic activities on the Internet it is possible to achieve the desired results and "attract more people to civic engagement", 60.5% of respondents are sure of this. 74.1% of the respondents - the predominant part - are firmly convinced of the possibility of the digital environment to "raise citizens' awareness of society's problems", 45.2% believe that it is possible to "Solve society's problems by influencing the authorities", and 40.1% believe that it is possible to "Form a strong civil society". Initiative, energy of young people, positive behavioral practices of joint cooperation, collective problem solving, implemented in the digital environment, complemented by the conviction of young generations in the limitless possibilities of the Internet and actively engaged by them in solving problems, contribute to the formation of personal qualities with a system of value positions and attitudes, at a level that allows us to talk about an actively ongoing process of socialization.

The open-ended question of the online questionnaire addressed to our respondents regarding what they "had to do on the Internet in the last six months to a year" provided the following answers: the interviewees can "Propose an initiative", "Apply to the online offices of different agencies", "Discuss current issues", "Participate in discussions on various topics", express their civic position by "participating in voting on political and socially important issues", "Find assistance programs and like-minded people". The interviewees are sure that the information field "Provides a platform for expressing one's

opinion, informs about the events taking place in the country" and "there is an opportunity to write a post on a social network that will be seen by thousands of people". Thus, the digital environment as an effective, dynamic basis for socialization, simultaneously integrates and stimulates various types of social activity of young people.

The mechanisms of social inheritance, social memory, mentality, refracting in personal perception, characterize the process of socialization in many respects. For example, Russian mentality has always been characterized by collectivity, with its special form of solidarity, consolidation and cohesion, especially manifested in times of challenges and threats.

The desire to find out the presence of the quality of collectivism in the system of personal characteristics of young people was the reason for the inclusion in the online questionnaire of the author's research of the question formulated as follows: "There are people who are ready to unite with other people for any joint actions if their ideas and interests coincide. And there are people who are not ready to unite with others for joint actions, even if their ideas and interests coincide. To whom would you refer yourself?". 46.4% of the respondents convincingly answered that they consider themselves to be in the group of those who are ready to unite, 16.8% - to those who are not ready to do so, and 36.8% found it difficult to express their point of view on the question.

Despite the fact that among the respondents who were ready to unite in numerical terms there was not an absolute percentage majority and among the respondents there was a sufficient number of those who found it difficult to answer, the presence in the answers of the desire to unite for joint actions, indicates such a vector of information flow within the intergenerational transmission, which still contributes to the transmission and inculcation of youth quality, which has an enduring value. And the dialog of representatives of different generations is able to form their harmonious interaction, to increase the value of intergenerational communications. All the more so, with public opinion approving and the state supporting youth ideas and proposals, every second respondent in a survey conducted by VCIOM believes that middle-aged people (51%) should lead the projects initiated by young people rather than they themselves (VCIOM, 2022).

#### **4. Conclusions**

Young generations are coming to understand the role of collective efforts in solving a significant number of tasks, and the Internet space with its possibilities is seen by young people as an effective means of realizing civic engagement. Motivations that can influence the decision to participate in online activities are often public goals, along with undoubtedly present and personal interest. Therefore, when in one of the questions of the questionnaire young people were asked to specify what could be the decisive moment for their active participation in online activities, the answers that should be cited as the most indicative of the expression of the respondents' civic position were received:

"To achieve wide publicity of any problem", "The need to tell about their actions, to try to get a reaction from the authorities and society", "The desire to highlight their position", "Refuting false information", "The problem concerns my region, city", "The problem is ignored by the official media". It is no less important that respondents do not just limit themselves to discussing problems online, but with varying frequency, they also "participate in events aimed at solving social problems that they learned about on the Internet" (60.1%), which cannot but testify to a fairly high level of youth activity.

In general, it can be stated that the process of formation of values and strategies of youth behavior, their decisions and actions, occurring under the influence of many factors and affecting all aspects of life in modern society, is now largely determined by how effectively it is held and organized in the digital space of socialization.

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