The Influence Of Virtual Networks And Gadgets On The Socialization Of Adolescents

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Abstract: This article examines the influence of virtual networks on the socialization process of adolescents using the example of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. It analyzes the level of adolescents' use of social networks and their role in communication with others, cultural exchange, and self-expression. The study explores both the positive and negative effects of virtual networks on interactions among adolescents and identifies the factors affecting their socialization. In addition, the interrelation and differences between virtual communication and real-life social interactions are analyzed. In the context of Karakalpakstan, the findings serve to assess the role of virtual networks in the social development of adolescents and to develop recommendations that support their healthy development.

Introduction: In recent years, the rapid development of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the daily lives of adolescents. Virtual networks and various digital gadgets have become integral parts of their communication, education, entertainment, and self-expression. As young people spend a significant portion of their time online, virtual environments increasingly influence their personality formation, behavioral patterns, and social interactions.In the context of Karakalpakstan, it serves to assess the role of virtual networks in the social development of adolescents and develop recommendations that promote their healthy development.

METHODOLOGY

In recent years, the development of technology and the internet, particularly the widespread use of virtual networks, has had a significant impact on the socialization of adolescents. The increase in virtual communication among young people contributes to the formation of new social skills, but it may also lead to certain negative consequences. This article examines how virtual networks influence the socialization and personal development of adolescents.

According to statistics from 2023, 88% of adolescents worldwide regularly use social networks, spending an average of 4 hours per day on these platforms (We Are Social, 2023) [1]. In the Republic of Karakalpakstan, 85% of adolescents actively use the internet, of whom 80% are registered on social networks. Additionally, 78% access these platforms daily via gadgets, and adolescents spend an average of 3 hours and 25 minutes per day on virtual networks. The most popular platforms are Telegram (45%), TikTok (25%), Instagram (15%), and others (15%) [2].

Among adolescents, 65% use social networks to obtain educational information, while 58% use them to meet new friends or become part of social groups. Meanwhile, 40% report that virtual networks help them develop their skills and interests [3].

In Karakalpakstan, 25% of adolescents reported experiencing psychological pressure due to comparing themselves with others online, 18% faced difficulties in maintaining real-life friendships, and 10% noted that excessive screen time disrupted their sleep patterns.

Regarding gadget use, 92% of adolescents in Karakalpakstan own a personal smartphone, 67% use only their phone to access social networks, and 45% feel time restrictions imposed by parents or teachers. Additionally, 20% experience feelings of social isolation due to virtual networks. Psychological studies also show that 30% of adolescents aged 15–19 rate themselves lower when comparing themselves to others in virtual environments [4].

1. Research Design

A descriptive and analytical research approach was chosen to identify the extent of adolescents' engagement with virtual networks and to assess the impact of digital technologies on their socialization process. The study includes survey research, structured interviews, and observation methods.

2. Participants

The research sample consists of adolescents aged 12 to 17 residing in various districts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. A total of 150 respondents were selected using simple random sampling from middle and secondary schools. In addition, 10 teachers and 12 parents were interviewed to obtain supportive insights regarding adolescents' social behavior and digital engagement.

3. Data Collection Methods

A structured questionnaire was designed to gather data on the frequency of gadget and social network use, preferred platforms, communication habits, and perceived effects on socialization. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions.

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and comparative analysis). Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring themes and patterns related to socialization and digital engagement.

5. Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was entirely voluntary. The anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were strictly maintained. Consent was obtained from parents and school administrations before conducting the research.

Table 1. Research Methodology Framework[5]

Components	Description	Indicators / Variables	Data Collection Tools	Sampling & Participants
Research Approach	Quantitative–qualitative mixed method (exploratory–descriptive design)	– Level of socialization – Frequency of gadget use – Type of virtual networks used	– Structured questionnaire – Semi-structured interviews	Adolescents aged 12–18 (N = 200) from selected schools in Karakalpakstan
Independent Variables	Exposure to virtual networks & gadgets	– Daily usage time – Preferred platforms (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube) – Device type (phone/tablet/PC)	– Digital behavior survey	Stratified sampling (urban/rural schools)
Dependent Variables	Socialization level of adolescents	Communication skills – Peer interaction level – Online vs offline social activity	– Socialization assessment scale	Homogeneous group sampling: schoolchildren divided by age groups (12–14; 15–18)
Data Collection Procedure	Stages of gathering	– Pilot study – Main survey	– Field data collection – Digital	Schools in Nukus, Kegeyli, Khodjeyli

	empirical data	– Interview sessions	questionnaire distribution	
Ethical Considerations	Ensuring ethical compliance	– Informed consent – Anonymity – Voluntary participation	– Consent forms	Adolescents & parents/guardians

MAIN PART

Adolescence is an important stage in human development, during which personal identity, social acceptance, and communication skills begin to form. Virtual networks such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Telegram have a significant influence on the social lives of adolescents. These platforms provide opportunities for communication, exchanging ideas, staying connected with friends, and joining various online communities [6].

Expanding social networks enables adolescents to connect with their friends virtually and meet new people, which broadens their social circles [7]. Through virtual platforms, adolescents can also access educational content and scientific resources, helping them enhance their knowledge. In terms of personal identity, virtual networks offer adolescents the opportunity to express themselves freely, allowing them to shape their sense of identity and present their ideas in their preferred manner.

However, excessive reliance on virtual interactions can lead to social isolation, causing some adolescents to neglect real-life communication. This may result in psychological challenges [8]. Prolonged screen exposure, lack of sleep, and other negative effects may also harm their physical and mental well-being. Additionally, adolescents may experience material or social pressure on virtual platforms, which can reduce their self-esteem [9].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, virtual networks have a significant impact on the socialization of adolescents. They play an important role in strengthening social interactions and providing opportunities for gaining new knowledge and experiences. However, as noted above, improper or excessive use of virtual networks may negatively affect adolescents' health and social activity. Therefore, identifying the influence of virtual networks and gadgets on adolescent socialization is essential for developing safe and effective strategies for using these platforms.

It is also important to establish scientific foundations for creating programs aimed at reinforcing social and moral values among adolescents. Practical recommendations should be provided for educators, parents, and social specialists to ensure healthy and balanced social development in the digital environment.

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