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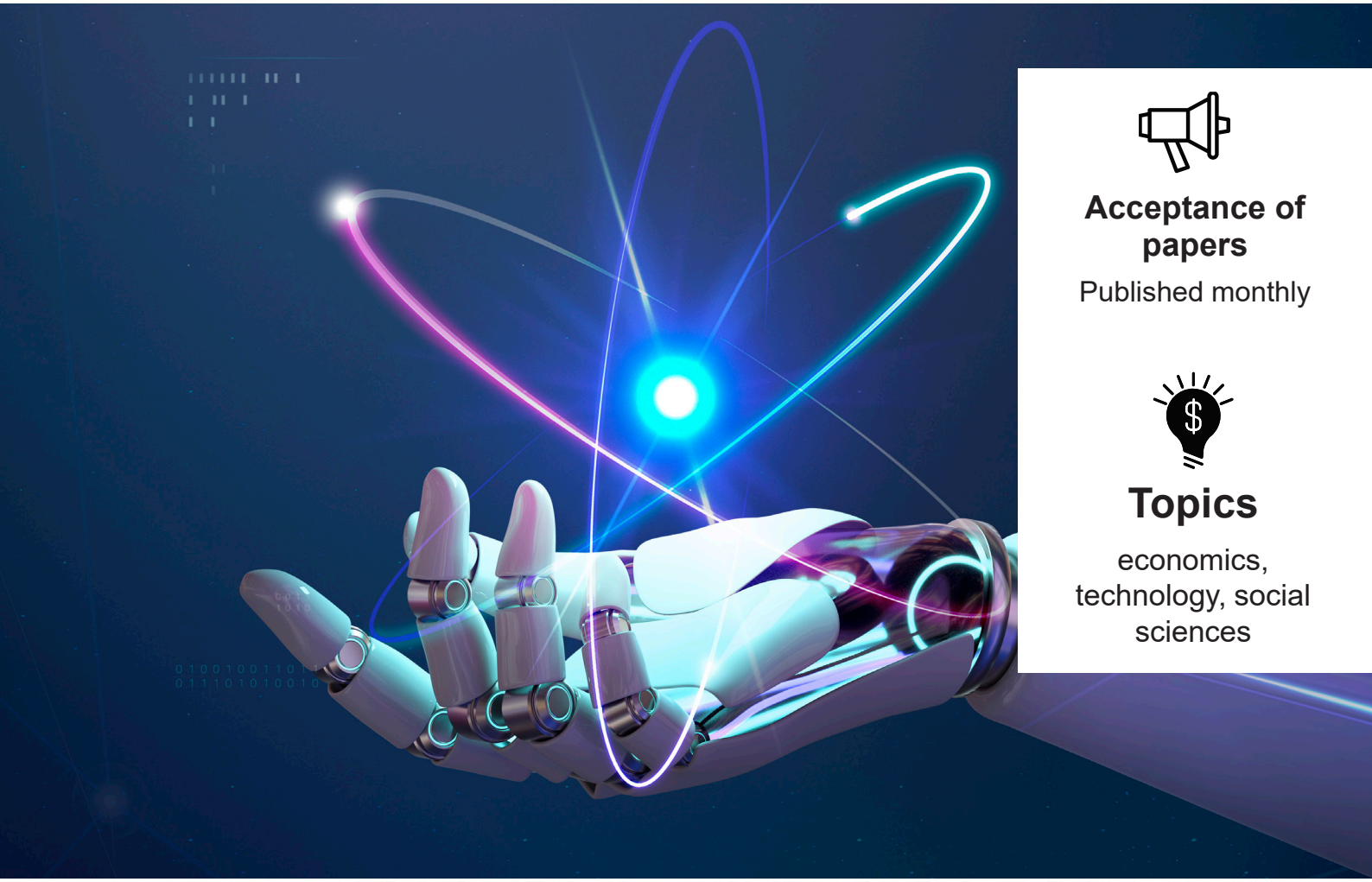

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GADGETS AND VALUES: HOW DOES THE VIRTUAL WORLD IMPACT THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH?

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Abstract: This scientific article comprehensively analyzes the impact of digital technologies, in particular gadgets and the virtual environment, on the upbringing, psychological development and social value system of young people. In the course of the research, the impact of excessive use of gadgets on the psychology of young people was studied based on the results of a survey, observation and psychological diagnostics conducted among 2,600 students. The results of the study showed that young people are experiencing a decrease in attention, social isolation, Internet addiction and transformation of values. The article also highlights the global manifestations of the problem based on comparison with international studies and develops psychological and pedagogical recommendations aimed at reducing the negative impact of gadgets on the upbringing of young people.

Key words: gadget, virtual environment, youth psychology, internet addiction, social values, digital culture.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technologies in recent decades has radically changed the way of life of mankind. In particular, the widespread use of smartphones, tablets and other gadgets has become an important part of the lives of young people. Today, young people spend a large part of their day in a virtual environment. Communicating via the Internet, obtaining information, playing games and using social networks have become an integral part of everyday life.

American psychologist Jean Twenge notes in her research that depression, loneliness, and a decline in social connections among young people have increased since the advent of smartphones.

Sherry Turkle, a scientist who studies the relationship between technology and society, has scientifically proven that virtual communication reduces real human connections. Therefore, studying the impact of gadgets on the minds and value systems of young people is one of the pressing issues of modern psychology and pedagogy.

ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE ON THE TOPIC

There have been many scientific studies on the effects of gadgets on human psychology.

Nicholas Carr, a researcher who studies the relationship between technology and the human brain, argues in his famous work The Shallows that excessive use of the internet reduces a person's ability to think deeply.

Media theorist Marshall McLuhan, on the other hand, describes technologies as an extended form of human consciousness and argues that each new technology changes the cultural values in society.

According to studies conducted in South Korea and the United States:

45% of young people use smartphones for more than 6 hours a day, excessive use of gadgets can reduce academic performance by 20–30%, and internet addiction increases psychological stress among young people.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This scientific study aimed to study the level of gadget use among young people and its impact on psychological development and social values, and was conducted based on a comprehensive methodological approach.

The research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to deeply analyze the psychological state, social behavior, and attitude of respondents to the virtual environment. Statistical data allowed us to determine the relationship between the level of use of gadgets by students and their psychological state.

The confidentiality of all respondents' personal information was ensured during the research process. The survey was conducted anonymously and participation in the study was purely voluntary.

The study was conducted using a cross-sectional design. During the study, a structured questionnaire was developed to study the respondents' gadget usage habits, activity in the virtual environment, social relationships, and psychological state. The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions aimed at determining the level of adaptation of young people to the digital environment.

The questions covered the following main areas:

-duration and purpose of gadget use;

-level of use of social networks;

-attitude towards real and virtual communication;

-psychological state (stress, attention, sleep quality);

-value system and social behavior.

The research was carried out in several stages during 2025–2026.

In the first stage, the scientific literature was analyzed and existing theoretical approaches to the impact of gadgets on youth psychology were studied. In the second stage, research instruments were developed and pilot tested. In the third stage, a main questionnaire was conducted and data was collected from respondents. In the fourth stage, the collected data were statistically processed and analyzed.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

A total of 2,600 students participated in the study. Respondents were selected through random sampling from students studying in various faculties and areas of study.

Analysis and Results

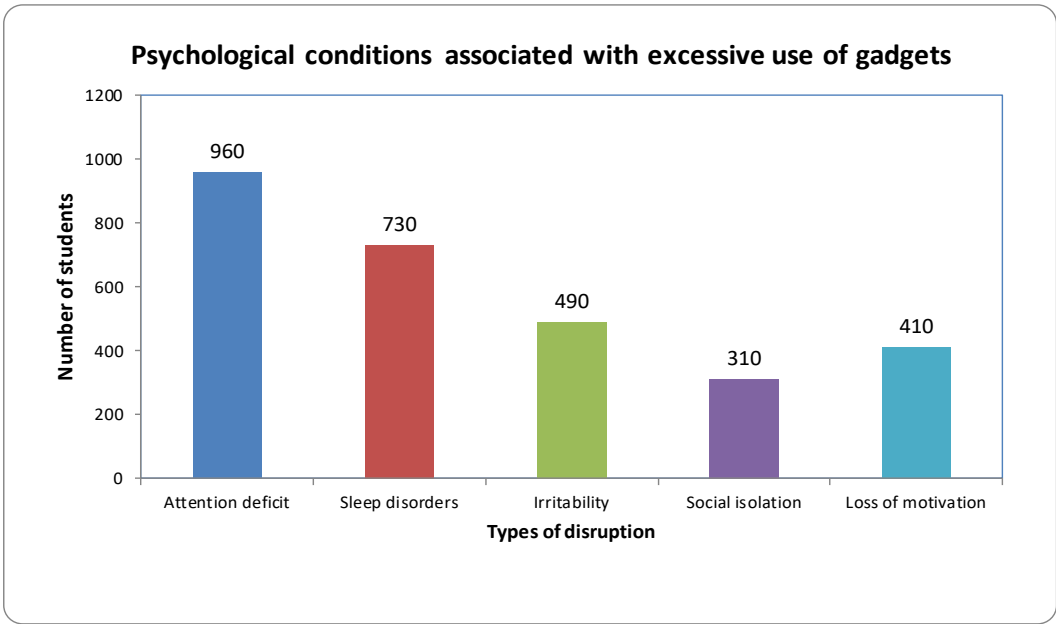

Figure 1. Duration of daily gadget use by students

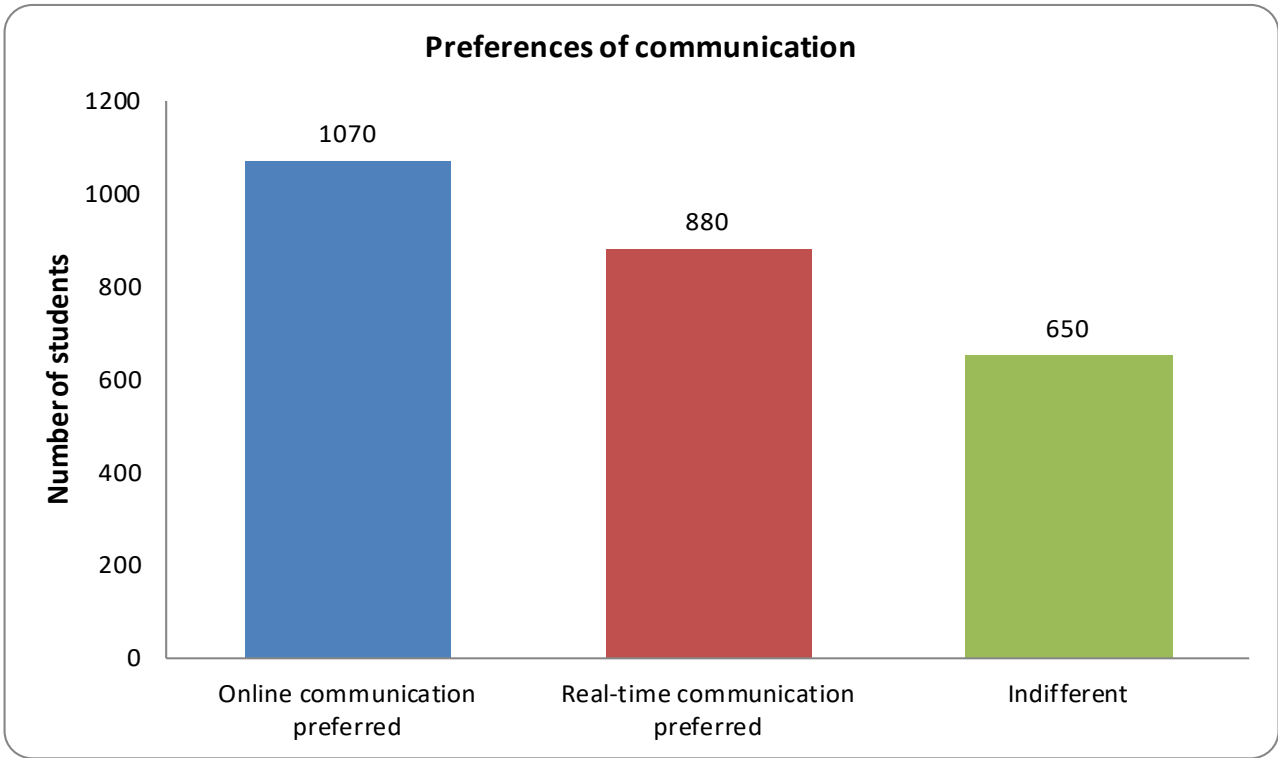

Figure 2. Psychological effects associated with excessive use of gadgets

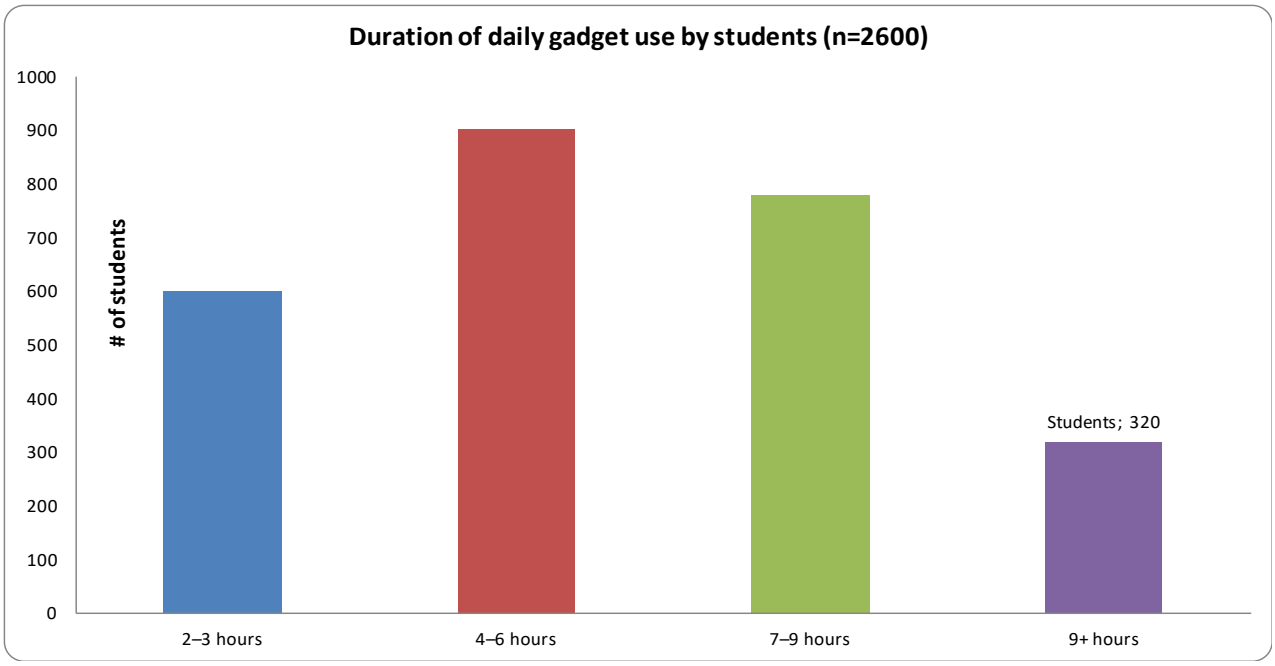

Figure 3. Students' communication preferences

The results show that a large proportion of respondents use gadgets for 4–9 hours a day. This is associated with problems such as decreased attention, sleep disturbances and social isolation. International studies also show similar results. The demographic characteristics of the respondents were distributed as follows:

1,350 female students (51.9%)

1,250 male students (48.1%)

The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years, with an average age of 20.8 years.

The following psychological diagnostic tools were used in the research process:

Internet Addiction Scale – to determine the level of gadget use.

Attentional stability assessment test – to study the ability of respondents to concentrate.

Social Communication Activity Scale – to determine the ratio between real and virtual communication.

The "Virtual Environment and Values" questionnaire, developed by a psychologist, is designed to assess young people's attitudes towards the virtual environment.

The internal reliability of these instruments was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the results were found to be in the range of 0.82–0.87, indicating that they are highly reliable.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The results of this study show that although digital technologies and gadgets have become an integral part of the lives of modern youth, their excessive use significantly affects the psychological development, social relationships, and value system of young people. The results of a survey and psychological analysis conducted among 2,600 students showed that a large proportion of young people spend several hours a day in a virtual environment, which has a negative impact on their ability to concentrate, emotional stability, and real-life social relationships.

The study found that excessive use of gadgets can cause psychological problems such as decreased attention span, sleep disturbances, social isolation, and decreased motivation among young people. At the same time, there is a possibility that ideal images created in the virtual environment can affect the self-esteem of young people and reduce their self-confidence. This, in turn, is an important factor affecting the psychological stability and personal development of young people.

However, the results of the study do not show that gadgets have only negative aspects. On the contrary, gadgets, when used correctly and purposefully, can enrich the educational process, expand access to global sources of knowledge, and serve the intellectual development of young people. Therefore, the main problem is not in the gadgets themselves, but in the insufficiently formed culture of their use.

In this regard, the formation of a culture of rational use of digital technologies among young people is an important pedagogical and psychological task. Organizing trainings in educational institutions on digital hygiene, Internet safety and media literacy will help young people develop skills in the conscious use of gadgets. In addition, the cooperation of parents, educators and psychologists is important in preventing young people from becoming excessively attached to the virtual environment.

Also, increasing the share of real social interaction, sports, creative activities, and cultural events in youth education will help reduce excessive dependence on gadgets. Psychologically, training aimed at developing attention, stress management, and strengthening social skills will help increase the psychological stability of young people.

In general, the upbringing of young people in the era of digital technologies requires new approaches. One of the important tasks of the modern education system is not to deny the influence of the virtual environment, but to consciously manage it, effectively use its positive potential and minimize its negative consequences. Therefore, a more in-depth study of the long-term impact of gadget use on the cognitive development, spiritual values, and social behavior of young people will remain an important scientific direction in future research.

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