

## THE RISKS OF RUSSIAN YOUTH SOCIALIZATION IN THE ERA OF COMPUTER AND NETWORK TECHNOLOGIES

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### Abstract

The modern Russian youth is immersed in computer and network technologies, which are becoming a new, powerful channel of communication in the information society. The depth of penetration of such technologies into the life of young people and degree of their influence on socialisation process determines the importance of studying and analyzing their socialisation potential and socialisation risks youth.

**Keywords:** socialisation, youth, socialisation potential, socialisation risks, computer and network technologies, expert survey, social institutions, propaganda, Internet.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The modern Russian youth is immersed in computer and network technologies, which are becoming a new, powerful channel of communication in the information society. The depth of penetration of such technologies into the life of young people and degree of their influence on socialisation process determines the importance of studying

and analyzing their socialisation potential and socialisation risks and risks for social health in relation to this socio-demographic group (Gafiatulina, 2015; Gafiatulina, et al., 2019).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodological basis of the study is the theory of generations Y and Z. The theory treats the modern young people as representatives of generations Y and Z, especially associated with computer and network technologies. Generation Y remembers the world without ubiquitous information technologies and observed the formation of modern society. Generation Z has been surrounded by computer and network technologies since birth and cannot imagine the world without them. Thus, these technologies are becoming an integral part of young people's life and have a characteristic impact on their socialisation. In this study the young people are considered as a special social age group, characterised by the rapid process of socialisation, understanding of the world and society, formation of values, ideas and worldview. To analyse the power of socialisation potential and riskiness of computer and network technologies environment, there was conducted a study based on expert survey among Russian network media professionals with a total audience of many millions and the data of studies undertaken by large sociological organisations.

## **RESULTS**

The study concludes that computer and network technologies have a powerful socialisation potential because the young people use this communication channel to get important information and a wide range of networking communications has penetrated into the life of modern man. This potential is the basis for a number of key socialisation risks associated with detachment from traditional social institutions, false authoritativeness, relevance of negative propaganda and suggestion.

## **APPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

The results will help to better navigate the issues of socialisation riskiness in the modern social environment, full of computer and network technologies and to develop some measures to reduce, predict and prevent the risks of modern Russian youth socialisation.

## **NOVELTY/ORIGINALITY OF THIS STUDY**

The importance of computer and network technologies in the life of modern society has for a long time been at the forefront of the global scientific and research interest. At the same time, versatility, breadth and diversity of these technologies often results in segmental knowledge that relates only to a specific isolated problem. Therefore, to analyze the nature of riskiness, there is a need to study the essence of computer and network technologies comprehensively, in all their manifestations and variations: online and off-line format, information and gaming resources, private and wide-format communications in the network. This analysis leads to identification of the key socialisation risks, non isolated or individual, which complement each other and, in

the course of in-depth research, unfold into the whole complexes of less significant risks associated with almost all the aspects of modern human life in the current information society.

## INTRODUCTION

The topic of youth socialisation has always been one of the most difficult and profound problems of sociology (Ponomarev. et al., 2019). It is particularly acute in the modern information society subjected to global computerization and networking. The scientific community faces a new challenge in providing supportive environment for youth socialisation by the profound and pervasive penetration of computer and network technologies into human life. The high degree of popularity, versatility, development and frequency of use of these technologies are the basis of their socialisation potential and a factor of risk. For the Russian youth, this situation provides the causes and factors of innovative risks - systematic vulnerability to the threats caused by the modernization itself, due to irrational use of scientific and technological progress and the process of industrialization.

Despite the constant and numerous studies of socialisation processes, as well as the aspects of computer and network technologies, these areas are so voluminous and multifaceted that for a qualitative analysis of their essence it is necessary to constantly conduct new deep researches. At the moment, the scientific community faces a number of questions due to combination of these two large areas regarding the factors and aspects of computer and network technologies socialisation potential power, the degree of potential manageability, the benefits of its rational use and the socialisation risks of its irrational use.

A sociological study of these issues has not only social and scientific, but also practical significance in the search for the ways to reduce the risks of information society high-tech resources and development of projects to rationalise this socialisation potential.

## CRITICAL REVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

The problem of Russian youth socialisation is revealed in many scientific works, including the foreign ones. Some aspects of the modern Russian youth socialisation are already the subject of research. Thus, special attention is paid to patriotism (Volkov et al., 2018; Volkov et al., 2017), social behaviour and mental programs (Lubsky et al., 2016; Lubsky et al., 2016a). The scientific literature also covers the riskiness issues of young people socialisation associated with the spiritual crisis and security in the modern era (Vereshchagina et al., 2018; Vereshchagina et al., 2016) and some aspects of young people social health (Vereshchagina et al., 2015). At the same time, the diversity of computer and network technologies, their rapid development and the depth of connection with the social life requires a new research and new approaches to identification and analysis of modern technologies socialisation risks.

In this regard, the article reveals a number of provisions concerning the key socialisation risks based on the analysis and interpretation of empirical information obtained as a result of an expert sociological survey and on the modern aspects of Russian youth socialisation in conditions of global computerization and networking society.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

A set of empirical information sources, including the results of a sociological study on the socialisation of Russian youth in the era of computer and network technologies conducted by the authors in 2018 by online survey using personal invitations sent to Russian-speaking experts in the field of network media technologies provided the basis for scientific study of computer and network technologies potential. In the survey there took part 35 experts. The representativeness of the research is provided by the audience of subscribers and experience of the experts. The experts were selected among practicing network media professionals (bloggers, vloggers, administrators of YouTube channels and communities, etc.), with an average audience from 10 thousand to more than 2 million people, and the total number of subscribers from the resources about 12.5 million people. The selection criteria were as follows: the level of popularity on the Internet; practical work and experience in their field; the presence of specific public and mass media activities in the network; Russian-language author's resource and work with Russian youth audience.

The study is also based on the results of public opinion polls on a representative all-Russian 2015-2019 sample conducted by Public Opinion Foundation (POF, 2016; POF, 2018; POF, 2015; POF, 2019) and Russian Public Opinion Research Center (RPORC, 2018; RPORC, 2016). In this study there were also used the methods of statistical and interpretative analysis of empirical data.

In the modern Russian discourse, the problem of socialisation risks of modern Russian youth is revealed in a number of scientific works that somehow relate to the theory of generations Y and Z, for which the information and communication impact of computer and network technologies is extremely important (Kulakova, 2018). Thus, these technologies have a powerful socialisation potential, based on the regularity and activity of the use of these technologies by theyouth and on their connection with young people's life and interests (Chvanova et al., 2017; Botnikova, Skitnevskaya, 2017). That is why the computer and network technologies can significantly affect the social health of the young people (Gafiatulina et al., 2018), leading to both positive and negative results of socialisation, due to socialisation risks associated with information in the network (Karabanova, Molchanov, 2018) and the transfer of communicative activity of an individual in the network (Tarkhanova, 2017).

Unfortunately, in modern conditions, when most of the high-tech computer and network resources are used for commerce, leisure and entertainment (which also invariably leads to commerce), the implementation of the true target - cultural, educational, scientific and educational impact on the young people is practically not carried out. This leads researchers to consider the risks of innovation - the systematic vulnerability to threats caused by modernization itself, due to irrational use of scientific and technological progress and industrialization process.

On the basis of these data, along with the socio-psychological characteristics of Y and Z youth generations there can be identified the key socialisation risks that entail a large number of smaller, more specific risks associated with a range of human activities: health, family, professional, economic, political, ideological risks, etc.

The youth is a special age group, the psychosocial specificity of which is manifested first of all in rapid personality formation, life and social inexperience, the search for ideological orientations, active formation of values and norms. So we can conclude that the main directions of socialisation risks for the youth are associated not

only with intensity and depth of contacts with traditional social institutions (as a deliberately constructive, historically established social actors); but with formation of false authorities and relevance of any information or its sources (aimed at negative impact and taking advantage of young people's life inexperience), negative propaganda and suggestion against young people (as the youth actively absorbs environmental information and communication content in the process of socialisation).

## RESULTS

The empirical evidence shows that young people actively use the full range of computer and network resources. To the question "What computer and Internet resources are actively used by young people nowadays?" the smallest number of experts answered "News sites and media" (25.65%), followed by "Forums, communities, chats" (48.45%) and "Video games and sites on this topic" - that is more than a half (68.4%). The largest number of the respondents chose the option "Social networks" (96.9%), which is quite logical, due to the overall popularity of this type of resources among the young people. It should be noted that the resource type "social network" today is quite complex and includes all the other options. This indicates that social networks have become a kind of information and communication aggregator for all the kinds of youth sources.

The question "Are the young people actively studying important information on political, economic and social developments in the country and the world on the Internet?" differed opinions of the experts. The total options of "It is a permanent phenomenon" (2.85%) and "It happens often" (31.35%) chose 34.20% of the experts; the version "It happens rarely" - 39.9%, respectively; and "Almost not" — 25.65%.

These opinions indicate not the difference in activity of information consumption among the young people, but the difference in understanding of "information importance degree", as evidenced by the experts who chose the option "Almost not" - 25.65%. Thus, the young people are studying information on the Internet of political, economic and social sense, but the degree of real importance of this information is questionable.

The consumption of information necessarily leads to its assimilation and further use both in computer and network environment, and in the external environment. The experts state, that the knowledge gained on the Internet is used by young people in life: "Constantly" - 37.05% and "Sometimes" - 42.75%, which is an absolute majority compared to "Rarely" - 17.1%. These data correlate with the frequency of youth discussions of news and information from the Internet with the nearest environment. The absolute majority of the experts chose the option "Very often" (65.55%), compared to "Not often" (25.65%) and "Rarely" (5.7%).

This information is followed by the questions directly related to the risks of computer and network technologies, based on their active information and communication usage by the young people. The first topic is relevance and credibility. On the issue of the greatest popularity and authority for youth on the Internet, the most experts pointed at "Well-known bloggers" (94.05%), which is logical, because if social networks are the place of aggregation of all the kinds of information and communication, bloggers (i.e. media personalities) are the ones engaged in this aggregation. Along with them, many experts noted the option of "Large communities" (68.4%), which also refers us to social networks and similar resources; and only a



quarter of the experts noted "Official sites" and "Thematic sites" (25.65%), which correlates with the thesis of aggregation and aggregators.

According to the experts, young people are guaranteed the authority of the source of information (see table. 1) by "Number of readers" (i.e. audience) – 65.55%; "Positive assessments" – 51.3%; "Feedback from friends" – 34.2% and "Lack of criticism" – 11.4%.

**Table 1. Credibility of the Source of Information**

What do you consider to be the guarantee of authority of the source of information on the Internet for the young people?	Experts
Number of readers	65.55%
Positive assessments	51.30%
The lack of criticism in the comments	11.4%
Feedback from friends	34.2%
Other option	11.40%

At the same time, most experts agreed that the guarantee of information reliability on the Internet are primarily "The author of the material" and "The resource where the material is published" (48.45%). In the second place is "Source of publication" (37.05%) and in the third place - "References to evidences" (34.2%). Thus, the aggregators themselves, whether a "place-resource" or "media personality-author" become information reliability guarantee if they have sufficient authority. The authority is characterised as a large audience and positive assessments by the same audience. As a result, there is a vicious circle of mutual credibility, popularity and reliability.

The second theme is social institutions and their contacts with the young people in the context of computer and network globalisation. In this study, we talk about traditional social institutions, and first of all about family, education and culture. The first question concerns the competition of the Internet with these institutions (see table. 2).

**Table 2. Competition between the Internet and Social Institutions**

Can we say that the Internet has become a leading competitor of the family, cultural and educational institutions in leisure activities for the young people?	Experts
Definitely yes	57%
Not yet, but soon will be	17.1%
They are approximately equal	11.4%
Definitely not	5.7%
Hard to say	8.55%

Most experts on the Internet's leadership in this competition said "Definitely yes" (57%), and in both cases the second most popular answer is "Not yet, but soon will be" (17.1%); while only 5.7% answered - "Definitely not". These data correlate with the second question, specifically concerning the Institute of education. Most experts believe that the Internet is already a leader in competition with educational institutions in terms of youth knowledge about life and the world (37.05%), and in the second place there is an option "Not yet, but soon will be" (28.5%), with only 14.25% - "Definitely not"

answers. This indicates the lack of use of modern technologies by traditional social institutions in their youth socializing activities. The other social actors have done better and managed to capture attention of the young people. This is also confirmed by the data on separation of youth from the older generation by computer and network technologies, where the vast majority of the experts have chosen the option "Separated significantly, but not completely" (57%), "Completely separated" (11.4%), "Separated, but not very much" (22.8%), and only 2.85% answered - "Almost not separated".

The third theme is negative propaganda and suggestion. It should be noted that the original meaning of the term "propaganda" - translation of ideas, norms and beliefs - is devoid of any colour, but is usually perceived in a negative way. In our case, propaganda is considered to be an integral part of the modern society and socialisation, specifically the "negative propaganda" (i.e. destructive) - as a risk factor. The question "Is it possible to artificially create conditions in the Internet environment and video games to influence the youth's development?" gave a quite clear result. The vast majority of the experts agreed that "It is possible" - 59.85%; and more than a third chose the option "Probably possible" - 34.2%. This suggests a real possibility of controlled socializing impact with the help of computer and network technologies and largely correlates with other issues.

Regarding the frequency and effectiveness of the use of different methods and conditions in the Internet environment and video games to influence the development of young people, the opinions of experts are somewhat divided, but we can trace a general trend: the options "Often and effectively" (28.5%) and "Rarely but effectively" (19.95%) received the total majority - 48%. At the same time, the options "Often but ineffective" (14.25%) and "Rare and ineffective" (8.55%) - a total of only 22.8%; "Not used at all" - 0%. 28.5% found it difficult to answer this question.

The question of actual implementation of propaganda and agitation is very interesting as well (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Use of Propaganda and Agitation**

Are the Internet resources and computer technologies used to carry out propaganda and agitation?	Experts
Yes, it is an ongoing process	74.1%
Yes, quite often	17.1%
Yes, but rarely	8.55%
Hardly used	0%
Hard to say	0%

The overwhelming majority of the experts agreed that computer and network resources are constantly used for propaganda and agitation (74.1%); the number of experts who noted the frequency of these processes (17.1%) can be added to them; and only 8.55% chose the "Rare" option. The experts had no difficulty in responding, which indicates the actual use of propaganda and agitation methods, even though their frequency and effectiveness are difficult to assess.

The question about the vector of these processes of influence on young people, agitation and propaganda is also raised: how positive or negative are they? The experts

were asked about the information and socio-psychological security of the young people (see Table. 4).

**Table 4. Information and Socio-psychological Security**

How do you assess the level of information and socio-psychological security of young people on the Internet?	Experts
Ultimate	0%
Quite high	19.95%
Mid	37.05%
Low	42.75%
Hard to say	0%

Most experts believe that the level of information and socio-psychological security of young people on the Internet - "Low" (42.75%), and 37.05% - "Mid"; only 19.95% answered "Quite high" and 0% - "Ultimate". At this level of security, the results of the answers to the question "How do you assess the cultural, spiritual and educational state of the Internet in relation to the modern Russian youth?" were somewhat expected, namely: the leading one - "Poor" (45.6%); in the second place "Critical" (19.95%); in the third "Average" (17.1%); and only 15.25% - "Good".

This leaves no doubt both in the high level of socialisation potential of computer and network technologies, and in significant level of their riskiness. The resolution of this situation depends on a deep analysis of the relationships between the modern society and the surrounding technologies, identifying the key risks and finding ways to solve them in realities of the information society.

## DISCUSSION

The theoretical interpretation of the empirical results of sociological research allows us to identify a number of key risks of young people socialisation in the era of global computerization and networking. The expert survey allows to look at the problem of socialisation of the Russian youth from a new angle, considering the experience of specialists with thousands of audiences in the network, which form information and communication resources themselves.

Thus, the basis of risk is the huge socialisation potential of computer and network technologies, expressed primarily by the constant use of the entire range of these resources by the young people. Along with news sites (25.65%), forums (48.45%) and video games (68.4%), social networks (96.9%) are confidently in the lead, which become a kind of information and communication aggregators of all the above mentioned resources (with the exception of video games, most of which are considered to be separate resources).

At the same time, POF studies show that a significant part of Russian citizens regularly spends free time "at the computer and on the Internet" - (41%), as well as about 64% of Russian citizens use the Internet daily, which coincides with the data of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center - 62%, while among the young people from 18 to 24 years this share exceeds 95%. Along with the network study of diverse information, the use of knowledge in life and discussion of this information with the immediate environment by the youth, we can conclude that the personal formation of



young people and their socialisation is inextricably linked to communication, in which they are involved in the network. Such a high potential of computer and network technologies leads to the high risk.

The key risk of creating false credibility and relevance is seen in the high popularity of well-known bloggers among the young people (94.05%) and large communities (68.4%). At the same time, we can observe an interesting picture in the criteria for determining the reliability and quality of information, mainly based on the author of the material (48.45%) and the publication resource itself (48.45%), as well as in the criteria of credibility, where are leading the audience of the resource (65.55%) and positive assessments (51.3%). This leads to the phenomenon of mutual popularity, credibility and reliability, which generates a risk of abuse of trust and attention of the young people. These provisions correlate with the are leading of Russian Public Opinion Research Center on trust in the Internet resources: respondents from 18 to 24 years gave the following answers: "Yes" - 28%; "Rather yes" - 36%; "Rather no" - 15%; "No" - 14%.

Detachment from traditional social institutions is another key risk that stands out in the study. The experts tend to think that there is a significant competitive power of computer and network technologies, which are definitely leading in leisure activities for the young people (57%) and in obtaining knowledge about the world and life by the youth (37%), as opposed to traditional social institutions. From the point of view of the computer-interactive social system, this situation can be characterized not as a competition of traditional social institutions with a certain network environment, but as a competition in this environment with other social actors, which, unfortunately, prevail. These data correlate with the Public Opinion Foundation research, according to which the purpose of using the Internet by Russian citizens from 18 to 30 years is very wide: "reading news, articles on current topics" - 54%; "search for information not related to work and education" - 50%; "entertainment: movies, music, games" - 60%; "education, training" - 33%.

The key risk of negative propaganda and targeted suggestion was also reflected in the study. Most experts agree that computer and network resources make it possible to create conditions for influencing the young people (59.85%), these technologies are constantly used for the implementation of propaganda and propaganda (74.1%). At the same time, according to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center, the Russian youth often receives information from the network: from the news, analytical, official sites - 59%, from social networks and blogs - 64%; that corresponds to the latest data of the POF, where there lead the news sites (57%), forums and blogs (38%), as well as trust in network sources is higher than the total trust in television (45% vs. 23%). All these data correlate with opinion of the experts on the level of information and socio-psychological security of computer and network technologies, estimated as "Low" (42.75%) and "Mid" (37.05%), as well as with the assessment of cultural, educational and spiritual condition - "Bad" (45.6%) and "Critical" (19.95%).

Thus, the results of the study of computer and network technologies for high socialisation potential in relation to the Russian youth, as well as the key risks allow us to draw quite specific conclusions. The actual level of socialisation potential of these technologies is very high and grows every year, creating a significant competition, and sometimes completely displacing other channels of socialisation.

At the same time, there is no less high risk, which consists in a number of key risks that can lead to a range of negative consequences, which will negatively affect the

process of socialisation of the Russian youth in conditions of modern global computerization and networking.

## CONCLUSION

In the course of sociological research it was revealed that computer and network technologies are an important source of information and means of communication for the Russian youth in modern society. The consumption of important information and implementation of a wide range of communications allow us to talk about the high socialisation potential of computer and network technologies, which is confirmed by their deep penetration into many spheres of modern life. The unique features that communication acquires with the help of computer and network technologies make it possible to update information and its source at a new level, increasing its socialisation efficiency.

The features of Y and Z generations such as increased attention to the modern technologies and even a form of dependence on them, only strengthen these trends. Due to the information overload, the sources (social actors) able to break through this information and communication mass become the most relevant and get the highest status. The complexity of such factors and their computer and network resources turns them into information and communication aggregators who "know everything about everything and are always at the center of events".

The authority, large audience and positive assessments of these resources acquire a mutually supportive position, while the reliability and quality of information is largely determined by the status and authority of the resource itself. This leads to the key risk - formation of false relevance and credibility.

These results are correlated and exacerbated by the shift of attention and socializing communication of the young people from traditional social institutions to other social actors. The study shows the low competitiveness of traditional social institutions in comparison with the impact of computer and network technologies, in fact - with those social actors which more skilfully and effectively use these technologies. There is a dual situation: the young people need to implement socialisation activities of educational institutions, culture, family with the help of modern targeted computer and network projects and resources; but they cannot find such resources and are not involved in such projects, so they are socializing with the help of resources of other social actors, often alien, negative, destructive. This leads the Russian youth to the key risk - detachment from traditional social institutions.

Agitation and negative propaganda, according to the study, to a large extent and with high efficiency are implemented in the environment of computer and network technologies. Together with the above mentioned factors, the socialisation impact of a number of such resources is truly destructive, which is reflected in the assessment data of the current level of information and psychological security of the young people, as well as in the assessment of the cultural and educational status of the Internet. This leads to the key socialisation risk - negative propaganda and targeted suggestion.

As a result, we can conclude that the socialisation riskiness of computer and network technologies in relation to the Russian youth directly depends on the degree of usage rationality. It is based on competition of traditional social institutions, not with a certain immense and uncontrolled environment, but with other social actors. All that leads to the key socialisation risks of computer and network technologies, namely: 1) to

the formation of false relevance and credibility; 2) to detachment from traditional social institutions; 3) to negative propaganda and targeted suggestion.

To reduce the risk of these technologies in relation to the Russian youth it is necessary to develop a scientific concept and a model of a wide range of scientific, educational and cultural projects and resources, with the direct participation of traditional social institutions and civil society in order to implement their constructive socialisation activities.

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