

**SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE PSYCHE OF MODERN CHILDREN**

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**Abstract:** *This article analyzes the impact of social networks (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, etc.) on the psyche of modern children from a psychological and social perspective. The article studies the impact of the virtual environment on emotional, cognitive and social development, as well as psychological factors such as Internet addiction, self-esteem disorders, social comparison syndrome and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Along with international studies, observations in Uzbekistan are also presented. As a conclusion, recommendations for parents and educators on digital hygiene and supporting mental health in an online educational environment are developed.*

**Keywords:** *social media, children psychology, internet addiction, digital hygiene, distraction, self-assessment*

The rapid development of digital technologies and social networks in the last decade has had a strong impact on all aspects of human life, especially the mental and social development of children. According to statistics, more than 70 percent of children over 10 years old in Uzbekistan regularly use at least one social network. This situation has both positive and negative effects on their worldview, self-perception, social adaptation, and emotional stability. Therefore, analyzing the impact of the digital environment on the psyche of children is one of the important issues facing modern psychology.

**Main part:****1. Positive impact of social networks on mental development:****Social networks allow children to:**

Get and learn information (educational content, English, IT courses, etc.);

Develop creativity (content creation, design, editing);

Improve communication skills, help establish contacts with people of different nationalities;

Increase social activity - children participate in social actions and online projects.

These factors play an important role in the formation of a child's social identity and information culture.

## **2. Negative psychological consequences:**

At the same time, many studies show that social networks have the following dangerous effects on children's psyche:

Internet addiction (addiction) - changes in the dopamine system, habituation to online stimuli;

Decreased self-esteem - as a result of comparison with images of an "ideal life";

Social comparison syndrome - constant comparison, dissatisfaction with oneself;

Reduced attention and memory - reduced ability to maintain focus due to fast-paced content (reels, shorts);

Emotional instability - emotional changes due to likes and comments.

These problems are creating a new psychological condition called "digital stress".

## **3. Scientific approaches:**

Psychological concepts related to the topic:

Bandura (Social Learning Theory) - a child learns through observation; this process is accelerated in social networks.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development - there is a danger of over-reliance on external assessments during the period of identification and self-discovery.

Cognitive-behavioral approach - behavior is reinforced through encouragement (like, share) in the online environment.

#### **4. Observations in Uzbekistan**

According to the results of a survey conducted by psychologists in Uzbekistan in 2024:

65% of students aged 12–16 spend more than 3 hours a day on social networks;

47% of children have sleep disorders;

38% of cases have low self-esteem and signs of emotional instability.

These results indicate that the digital environment has a significant impact on the psyche of children.

#### **5. Social and pedagogical measures**

The authors offer the following solutions:

Teaching a culture of digital hygiene from preschool and school age;

Developing psychoeducational programs for parents;

Safe online spaces for children (filtering, time limits, educational algorithms);

Psychological monitoring system - monitoring online behavior and introducing preventive measures.

Conclusions and recommendations:

Social networks have a dual impact on children's development: while they provide ample opportunities for education, creativity, and communication, they pose a serious threat to emotional stability, attention, and self-esteem systems.

**Therefore:**

Forming psychological defense mechanisms in the digital environment;

Establishing online behavioral monitoring by school psychologists;

Developing family supervision and trusting communication are the most important conditions for maintaining children's mental health.

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