

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This thesis provides a scientific substantiation of psychological and pedagogical technologies aimed at developing a culture of social media use among primary school students. The purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive approach that fosters safe, responsible, and critical social media usage skills within the digital environment. The methodology is based on the integration of developmental psychology, media literacy, and educational upbringing, as well as diagnostic methods and elements of pedagogical experimentation. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the proposal of a system of indicators linking social media behavior with self-regulation, empathy, and information evaluation criteria, as well as in the development of a technological model based on cooperation among teachers, parents, and children.

Keywords

primary school age; social media; media literacy; digital safety; self-regulation; pedagogical cooperation; critical evaluation of information.

Introduction. In the context of digital transformation and the expansion of the global information space, the level of social media use among primary school students has increased significantly, exerting a substantial influence on their cognitive development, emotional well-being, and social behavior. At this stage of development, characterized by the intensive formation of psychological processes and active socialization, there is a growing need for a scientifically grounded approach to fostering a culture of social media use.

At the same time, uncontrolled and purposeless use of social media may lead to negative consequences such as decreased attention span, information dependency, cyberbullying, and psychological instability. Therefore, the development of psychological and pedagogical technologies aimed at cultivating conscious, safe, and culturally appropriate social media use among young learners has become an important educational and social task.

This situation highlights the development and implementation of effective psychological and pedagogical technologies aimed at fostering conscious, safe, and purposeful social media use skills among primary school students as an urgent scientific and practical issue.

During primary school age, a child's social experience, behavioral norms, and communication culture are formed intensively. At this stage, children still rely on adult supervision while simultaneously demonstrating an increasing desire for independent decision-making. The digital environment, particularly social media, provides children with extensive opportunities for communication; however, it also exposes them to risks such as distraction, inappropriate content, disclosure of personal information, aggression or discrimination in virtual interactions, manipulative information, and the influence of advertising.

Therefore, the concept of a "culture of social media use" should not be interpreted merely as a set of technical skills. Rather, it should be understood as an integration of psychological resilience, adherence to ethical norms, self-regulation, and competencies for critically evaluating information. This thesis examines the psychological and pedagogical technologies for developing a culture of social media use from this comprehensive perspective and explores the scientific foundations for adapting these technologies to the primary school environment.

In the psychological development of primary school students, voluntary attention, self-control, elements of reflection, and the internalization of social norms gradually become stronger. At the same time, emotional reactivity and sensitivity to external evaluation remain high. Mechanisms of rapid social approval through "likes" and comments often serve as powerful motivators for children. Furthermore, the design of digital platforms is specifically intended to encourage continuous engagement, frequent returns, and short-term reward cycles, which can quickly deplete the self-regulatory resources of young users.

Consequently, pedagogical intervention should focus, on the one hand, on strengthening students' volitional and metacognitive capacities and, on the other hand, on developing social-emotional skills, including empathy, online and offline communication etiquette, and peaceful conflict-resolution strategies. This approach

seeks to establish stable internal rules that manifest themselves as an individual's "digital etiquette."

To substantiate the structural components of a culture of social media use, three interrelated dimensions were identified: the cognitive-informational dimension, the social-emotional dimension, and the regulatory-behavioral dimension.

The cognitive-informational dimension encompasses age-appropriate elements of media literacy, including the ability to distinguish between information sources, understand the intentions behind advertisements and content, perform basic fact-checking activities, and comprehend concepts related to personal data and privacy.

The social-emotional dimension includes respect, empathy, positive interaction in online communication, sensitivity to issues related to cyberbullying, and the skills necessary to seek help when needed.

The regulatory-behavioral dimension is characterized by practical behavioral skills such as maintaining healthy screen-time routines, applying "pause-and-reflect" strategies, controlling impulses, making conscious decisions when selecting content, and seeking assistance from adults in problematic situations.

This framework demonstrates that technologies designed to foster a culture of social media use should not be limited to the transmission of information alone. Instead, they must reinforce positive behavioral habits through emotional experiences and practical activities that encourage the consistent application of acquired knowledge and skills.

Psychological and pedagogical technology is understood as an educational process in which goals, content, methods, and outcome indicators are systematically coordinated, reproducible, and measurable. In the context of primary education, such technologies should be tailored to the developmental characteristics of children and enriched with games, storytelling, role-playing situations, visual materials, and brief reflective activities.

Furthermore, the implementation of such technologies requires cooperation among class teachers, subject teachers, school psychologists, and parents, as the actual context of social media use is often formed outside the school environment. From this perspective, the thesis proposes a three-level cooperation mechanism: at the school level, unified rules and an educational program; at the family level, a balanced model of supervision and support; and at the child level, the gradual development of self-regulation and responsibility.

The proposed technological model consists of three stages: diagnosis, formation, and reinforcement. During the diagnostic stage, students' digital habits,

screen time, preferred types of content, difficulties encountered in online communication, knowledge of online safety rules, and initial indicators of self-regulation are identified. When working with young children, diagnostics should not be limited to direct questionnaires; rather, it should include picture-based situational tasks, question-and-answer activities based on short stories, “true-or-false” cards, and triangulation through observations by parents and teachers. This approach enables researchers and educators to explore children's real experiences more carefully while reducing the fear of providing incorrect answers.

In addition, a brief diagnostic questionnaire for parents can be introduced to identify parenting styles regarding digital supervision (strict prohibition, indifference, or cooperation) as well as characteristics of the home digital environment, including the number of devices, existing family rules, and shared-use practices.

The formative stage is organized around four content modules. The first module, “Digital Safety and Privacy,” introduces age-appropriate concepts such as personal information, password protection, limitations on communication with strangers, recognizing suspicious links, and understanding the consequences of sharing geolocation data and photographs online.

The second module, “Critical Evaluation of Information,” develops source-verification habits through simple questions such as “Who is saying this?”, “Why are they saying it?”, and “How can we verify it?”. Activities include working with age-appropriate texts, advertisements, and news-like materials, as well as exercises that help children identify misleading images and headlines.

The third module, “Online Communication Etiquette and Empathy,” focuses on recognizing signs of cyberbullying, understanding the psychological consequences of offensive comments, embracing the principle that “there is a real person behind every screen,” and learning strategies for pausing and seeking help in situations of conflict. Research has emphasized the effectiveness of social-emotional learning approaches in achieving these objectives.

The fourth module, “Self-Regulation and Screen-Time Hygiene,” addresses topics such as time management, delaying responses to digital notifications, taking digital breaks, maintaining healthy sleep habits, and balancing study and leisure activities. Numerous studies have demonstrated the close relationship between self-regulation skills and academic achievement.

The modules are designed in an integrated manner, ensuring that each includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. In other words, the child learns the rule, experiences and understands the situation emotionally, and then applies the rule through practical activities.

Situational learning and role-playing activities constitute the methodological core of the technology, as it is difficult to develop stable behavioral habits in primary school children without linking abstract rules to real-life situations. For example, students may discuss scenarios such as “What should I do if a stranger sends me a message?”, “What happens if I post my friend’s photo without permission?”, or “Should I write a comment when I am angry?”. Through such activities, children learn to compare alternative decisions and evaluate their possible consequences.

In these situations, teachers do not immediately provide the “correct answer.” Instead, they ask guiding questions that help students independently identify cause-and-effect relationships, applying an age-appropriate version of the Socratic dialogue method. This approach stimulates the development of early moral reasoning skills and facilitates the transformation of external rules into internalized norms. At the same time, the likelihood of making mistakes is reduced because students are able to “test” their decisions within a safe educational environment before encountering similar situations in real life.

Working with parents is considered a separate component of the formation process. Practical experience shows that if school-based educational efforts conflict with digital habits established at home, children may find themselves caught between two different sets of norms, resulting in unstable outcomes. Therefore, brief seminars and training sessions for parents are proposed, along with examples of a “family digital agreement,” age-appropriate screen-time schedules, and educational rather than purely technical approaches to content filtering. In this regard, the principles of “discussing together” and “choosing together” are emphasized instead of relying solely on prohibition.

Excessively strict parental control may encourage children to use digital media secretly, while parental indifference may increase exposure to risk factors. The optimal approach is to build mutual trust through communication, transparent rules, and the gradual development of independence. Teachers and school psychologists are encouraged to advise parents to listen to children without blame and, in problematic situations, to seek solutions collaboratively rather than relying on intimidation or punishment.

At the reinforcement stage, the primary objective is to ensure the transfer of acquired skills to various school subjects and extracurricular activities. For example, activities in language classes aimed at identifying an author’s purpose and understanding the meaning of a text can be linked to the “Critical Evaluation of Information” module. In art classes, the concept of “personal boundaries and permission” may be explored through drawings and storytelling. During

homeroom or character education sessions, the class's shared rules of "online etiquette" can be reviewed and reinforced.

The transfer mechanism helps children understand that behavior on social media is an extension of general social norms and values. As a result, the potentially harmful perception that "different rules apply online" is reduced. During this stage, brief reflective discussions are conducted using questions such as "What have I learned?", "When did I experience difficulties?", and "What will I do next time?" in order to strengthen self-monitoring and reflective skills.

As a scientific innovation within the framework of this thesis, a system of evaluation criteria and indicators is also proposed. Within the cognitive-informational dimension, assessment criteria include knowledge of online safety rules, the ability to distinguish personal information, recognition of suspicious content, and the performance of basic source-verification activities. Within the social-emotional dimension, criteria include the use of respectful language in online communication, empathic responses, the ability to recognize cyberbullying, and readiness to seek help when necessary. Within the regulatory-behavioral dimension, indicators include planning screen time, limiting impulsive responses to notifications, reducing distractions during learning activities, and applying a "pause and consult" strategy in problematic situations.

To ensure age appropriateness, priority is given not merely to what children "know," but to what they are able to demonstrate in practical situations. When interpreting results, it is important to recognize that self-regulation develops unevenly during primary school years and is influenced by family circumstances and individual temperament. Therefore, the assessment process should be developmental rather than punitive.

The theoretical foundation of the study draws not only on international approaches to digital competence and media literacy but also on classical theories emphasizing the role of social environment and communication in personality development. In the educational process, it is emphasized that pedagogical technology requires clearly defined objectives, appropriate instructional tools, and outcome evaluation through diagnostic indicators.

Contemporary research on the effects of digital environments on children's psychological development and learning processes highlights the complex relationships among screen time, sleep quality, attention, and self-regulation. Consequently, educational interventions should move beyond simplified prohibition-based models toward balanced approaches grounded in psychohygiene and self-regulation. Research also demonstrates the effectiveness of social-emotional learning and the promotion of a positive school climate in preventing

cyberbullying and online aggression, thereby providing methodological support for the collaborative dimension of the proposed technological model.

Conclusion

Developing a culture of social media use among primary school students is a complex psychological and pedagogical task that simultaneously requires the development of informational knowledge, social-emotional competencies, and self-regulation habits. The proposed technological model offers practical opportunities for implementation in educational institutions through the consistent integration of diagnostic, formative, and reinforcement stages, the comprehensive content of its four modules, and mechanisms based on cooperation among teachers, parents, and students.

The criterion-based assessment system makes it possible to evaluate outcomes not only in terms of knowledge acquisition but also through observable behavioral changes reflected in situational decision-making, communication etiquette, and healthy screen-time management. As a result, students are expected to develop a sustainable culture of safe and responsible participation in digital environments, critical engagement with information, and the preservation of humane values in online communication.

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