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USING DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND TOOLS TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES AMONG YOUTH VIA MEDIA

Researcher at Namangan State University
Abrorbek Rustamovich Rakhmonov
Raxmonovabror0101@gmail.com

Abstract: This scientific article analyzes the role of modern media and digital platforms in addressing the social issues faced by youth, as well as the mechanisms through which they exert influence. It also examines issues such as ensuring youth employment, improving the quality of education, strengthening cybersecurity, preventing online fraud, and preserving national values, while formulating scientific proposals to enhance digital literacy among young people.

Keywords: Media tools, digital platforms, youth, social issues, education, cybersecurity, online fraud, national values, digital literacy.

INTRODUCTION: Youth constitute the most active segment of society—a driving force that ensures future progress and prosperity and consistently leads the way in creating innovations and inventions. Their broad worldview, deep thinking, and acquisition of modern professional skills—further developed under the influence of media and digital platforms—have laid the foundation for them to become a socially active segment of society. This process expands the horizons of young people's thinking and facilitates their adaptation to global changes. However, the rapid advancement of the Internet and information-communication technologies, alongside the swift evolution of smartphones and modern AI-driven technologies, brings not only positive changes to the lives of young people but also a range of serious negative consequences and threats.

Consequently, today's youth face various acute social issues—such as unemployment, barriers to quality education, exposure to destructive information, and the influence of harmful vices. The speed and unregulated nature of the modern information flow inevitably impact the mental well-being of young people. Ultimately, there is a risk that the national culture, art, values, and traditions inherited from our ancestors over millennia are being perceived by some young people as mere relics of the past, thereby losing their educational significance. Therefore, examining the social issues facing youth through modern media and digital tools, forecasting social trends, and ensuring the rational and effective use of social networks—which have become an integral part of daily life—rank among today's most pressing tasks.

The Role of Information Exchange and Digital Technologies.

In the past, people seeking to address social issues primarily relied on placing announcements in newspapers, magazines, and print publications, or submitting formal petitions and appeals to relevant government agencies. This process was often time-consuming and carried out in stages, with the resolution of the problem largely depending on the personal approach or inclination of the officials in charge. Today, however, any societal issue can be instantly highlighted via social media, compelling responsible authorities to respond promptly and find a solution.

Citizens no longer need to wait in long lines at government offices; instead, they can unite in online groups within the digital space to bring issues to public attention and monitor their successful resolution. This, in turn, fosters greater transparency in the dialogue between state bodies and the public. As a result of advancements in the Internet and information technology, media has become one of the most powerful tools for addressing social issues in society. However, the notion that the widespread adoption of digital technologies grants society absolute, unrestricted freedom is incorrect; no matter how transparently the network operates, every state maintains a

certain level of control over the digital environment to ensure its information security. A case in point is the temporary restriction of internet access implemented to ensure security following the severe unrest in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in 2009.

Opportunities for employment and mastering modern professions.

The rapid advancement of science, technology, and digital platforms is opening up unprecedented opportunities for young people regarding education and employment. In particular, digital platforms have created a virtual labor market offering limitless possibilities for finding decent work and securing employment. Consequently, alongside traditional professions, young people now have the chance to master modern digital fields and earn high incomes. Areas such as freelancing, blogging, influencing, mobilography, programming (IT), and digital marketing have become highly popular among youth today, contributing to the improvement of their socio-economic well-being.

Public and private platforms—such as OLX.uz, HeadHunter (hh.uz), and ish.mehnat.uz—which actively list vacancies and job openings in the digital space, serve as vital bridges for youth employment. Young people who once wandered from organization to organization in search of work, clutching paper diplomas, now have the opportunity to work remotely from the comfort of their homes, free from excessive bureaucratic hurdles. According to official statistical data from the Youth Affairs Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 342,000 young people were registered as unemployed in 2024; notably, 24 percent of those aged 16–24 were found to be neither employed nor enrolled in education, indicating that much work remains to be done in this area.

Issues regarding digital education and the school system.

Sociological studies indicate that insufficient digital literacy among some young people, a lack of proficiency in foreign languages, and inconsistent internet speeds in remote areas create significant challenges in fully utilizing the potential of digital platforms. For instance, in March 2024, experts from the Institute for Macroeconomic and Regional Studies under the Cabinet of Ministers conducted a large-scale social experiment to thoroughly assess the actual state of general education schools across the country. The findings revealed that 25 percent of schools lacked modern sports facilities and that some educational institutions were forced to operate on two or three shifts.

Furthermore, an assessment of the teaching workforce revealed that only 53.7 percent of teachers hold a specific qualification category; additionally, while 71.6 percent of the computer equipment in schools is connected to the internet, the remaining 28.4 percent has no connection at all. These figures indicate that challenges remain to be addressed in the digitalization of the educational process. Fundamentally improving the quality of education depends not merely on textbooks or classroom equipment, but also—and directly—on teachers mastering digital pedagogical technologies and on the availability of high-speed internet in schools. Notably, international research conducted in partnership with Finland's "Eduten" and UNICEF has empirically confirmed the high effectiveness of digital educational platforms in developing students' logical and mathematical thinking.

Spiritual threats and the transformation of national values.

Rapid globalization and the proliferation of social media are facilitating the influx of various alien cultures, moral norms, and lifestyles into our society. Consequently, a casual attitude toward our national values—and a tendency to dismiss them as outdated—is being observed among some young people. In particular, the devaluation of the concept of the sacred family in the minds of young people, the rise in divorce rates, and shifting attitudes toward military service—a duty incumbent upon young men—represent serious moral challenges facing society.

At the same time, the dominance of the digital environment is gradually displacing traditional games, folk melodies, and traditional art forms from the daily lives of young people, replacing them with smartphone-based online games and virtual entertainment. Although digital technologies connect youth to the global information space, promoting national craftsmanship, ancient customs, and our spiritual heritage through modern formats (such as social media and engaging videos) has become critically important today; otherwise, we risk losing our national identity.

Cybersecurity and the threat of online fraud.

The process of highlighting societal issues via digital platforms and overseeing their positive resolution follows these logical stages:

The number of users who viewed the post highlighting the issue (e.g., reaching thousands of followers);

The speed at which the information was shared with other users across the network (reposts and their rate of spread);

The real-world changes resulting from the raised issue and whether a solution was found;

Shifts in public opinion and attitudes, as well as the views of others regarding the matter;

The prompt and official action taken by relevant government agencies and organizations, including their legal response.

However, as social networks and digital platforms evolve, cybercrimes—particularly instances of online fraud—are rising sharply. Statistics indicate that a lack of digital literacy among citizens is often the root cause of these cybercrimes. Specifically, factors such as the excessive naivety and gullibility of victims (71.4%), low levels of legal and information security literacy (6.9%), and other issues significantly increase the risk of young people falling prey to online scammers.

Today, digital technologies and media tools have become an integral part of our daily lives and activities. The wise, conscious, and safe use of these modern technologies by young people lays the foundation for their development into well-rounded, mature individuals. Based on the aforementioned analytical insights, the following practical recommendations have been deemed appropriate:

Conclusion: Further strengthening cooperation among families, schools, local communities, and youth organizations to meaningfully organize the leisure time of schoolchildren and university students, and to actively involve them in sports, IT centers, and vocational training clubs;

Enhancing the digital literacy of students in general education schools and higher education institutions, and regularly organizing specialized courses, seminars, and training sessions on cybersecurity;

Providing financial and moral support—through state and public organizations—for the creation of positive media content that promotes our national values, traditions, and history in engaging, modern formats that appeal to young people.

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