

How are social media changing the lives of young people?

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Abstract: This article analyses the positive and negative impacts of social media on the lives of young people. In particular, it highlights problems such as young people becoming absorbed in virtual life, distancing themselves from reading books, disruption of sleep patterns, negative effects on mental health, addiction to useless content, and cyberbullying. At the same time, the article also shows the positive aspects of social media in terms of education, learning foreign languages, and communicating with people who are far away. Solutions such as teaching young people to use social media in moderation, promoting reading habits, and strengthening parental supervision are proposed.

Keywords: social media, young people, virtual life, internet addiction, reading books (book reading), mental health, cyberbullying, useless content, education, youth upbringing

Introduction. In today's fast-paced world, it is no secret that social media are also accelerating. Social networks are not only changing the world but also significantly affecting the lives of young people. So, how exactly are they influencing young people's lives today? Are the positive aspects greater, or are the negative sides increasing? For example, young people who spend all day in front of screens are seeing their academic performance decline and are facing various health problems. In general, this creates a number of issues. In this article, I want to reveal how online platforms are affecting the lives of young people - in other words, the reasons why the younger generation is gradually becoming a victim of virtual life - and I want to emphasise that this problem can be prevented.

Main Body. As I mentioned above, because we live in the information age, young people are slowly turning into victims of virtual life. This is especially observed among adolescents aged 10 to 17. Because they spend all day on online communication platforms such as Instagram, Telegram, Facebook and others, they forget about their studies. In R. Asronova's research "The impact of social media on the behaviour of young people", 26.9% of young people stated that social networks have a negative impact on their morals. The study also noted that many young people spend most of their free time precisely on social media [1-4]. For example, 85% of young people are

not interested in reading fiction or have become distanced from reading books. It has been said since ancient times that a person who reads fiction and scientific books sharpens their thinking, gains self-confidence, learns to think independently, expands their imagination, and can quickly find solutions to unexpected problems. Moreover, they learn to show respect for others - that is, good manners - from books as well. If I take myself as an example: instead of spending time on the phone or social media, I devote more time to reading fiction [5-6]. Because my mind calms down, my heart becomes peaceful, and most importantly, my self-confidence grows. I can find solutions to problems quickly. However, when I downloaded Instagram and Facebook for two months, thinking I would communicate with my friends, the communication took a back seat and I spent a lot of time watching useless videos. In particular, the "boastful" life bored me [7-8]. The daily self-promotion, even posting what they ate, bothered me. The worst part was that after seeing all this, I began to feel dissatisfied with my own life. Sociological research conducted in 2025 found that "virtual communities" created on social media strongly affect young people's social identity and mental state [9-10]. Researchers noted that young people often compare the artificial life on the internet with real life, leading to psychological pressure. Furthermore, according to studies, 31% of young people feel pressure to become popular on social media.

Secondly, young people's excessive activity on social media is causing sleep disorders. In other words, staying up all night scrolling through their phones, playing useless games, or texting friends leaves them feeling weak during the day. Their sleep schedule is disrupted, headaches occur, and concentrating becomes difficult. Regarding this, researchers have noted that excessive internet use leads to nervousness, psychological imbalance, and negatively affects mental health.

Thirdly, instead of gaining useful knowledge, young people are getting addicted to useless content. Short videos like TikTok and Instagram reels quickly distract attention. Some inappropriate content negatively affects young people's worldview, thinking, and behaviour. Pointless trends or useless challenges steal their time. In her article, R. Asronova mentioned that Facebook has 750 million users, Twitter 200 million, and Qzone 480 million. This shows how popular social media have become. Especially in recent years, because young people spend so much time on online platforms, various unpleasant incidents are occurring. For example, spreading rumours that damage a person's reputation or using artificial intelligence to alter images and mock people is becoming widespread. In addition, studies have specifically highlighted that cyberbullying, the spread of false information, and online social pressure negatively affect young people's mental health.

On the other hand, there are also positive aspects to social media. First of all, young people can obtain the knowledge they need while staying at home. For example, through YouTube, Ibrat Academy, Khan Academy, and Mutolaa apps, they have the opportunity to learn new languages. I myself am currently learning Russian through Ibrat Academy. The lessons are very well explained and provide free education. Research also notes that social media give young people the opportunity to express their opinions freely. In R.Asranova's study, 20.2% of respondents said that social media allow them to speak freely.

Conclusion. In conclusion, social media are significantly affecting the lives of young people today. Used in moderation, they are beneficial, but excessive use leads to virtual addiction, psychological pressure, and wasted time. Therefore, teaching young people to use social media consciously is one of the important tasks of our time.

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