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CYBER - SOCIALIZATION AND GENERATION Z: PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

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Abstract

In the era of rapid digital transformation, cyber-socialization has emerged as a fundamental factor in shaping the personality and communicative patterns of Generation Z. This study investigates the socio-psychological impact of digital environments on intergenerational communication, specifically focusing on the differences between students (Gen Z) and teachers. Through a quantitative study of 100 respondents in Tashkent, the research explores how internet usage intensity correlates with communicative competence and interpersonal distancing. Results indicate a significant "digital divide" where Gen Z prioritizes virtual interaction, leading to cognitive dissonance during face-to-face communication with older generations. The findings suggest that controlled digital literacy and psychological intervention programs can bridge this gap.

Keywords: cyber-socialization, generation z, intergenerational communication, digital natives, communicative competence, social adaptation.

Introduction

The modern global information landscape has fundamentally altered human social existence, giving rise to "cyber-socialization"a new form of integration into society. For Generation Z, born into an environment saturated with digital technologies, the virtual world is no longer just a source of information but the primary arena for self-expression and social interaction.

Global studies suggest that the difference in value systems and communicative preferences between Gen Z and previous generations is complicating the "digital gap". Youth spend an average of 6–8 hours daily in online environments, which affects cognitive processes and emotional intelligence, often leading to a decline in face-to-face communication skills. In Uzbekistan, where youth constitute a significant portion of the population, understanding the transformation of traditional "mentor-student" and "parent-child" relationships under the influence of cyber-socialization is a matter of strategic social importance.

The objective of this research is to study the socio-psychological characteristics of Generation Z's cyber-socialization and its impact on intergenerational communication, providing practical recommendations for optimizing these interactions.

Literature review

The conceptualization of cyber-socialization requires a multifaceted examination of how digital environments redefine the traditional boundaries of human development. Fundamental to this discourse is the work of V.A. Pleshakov, who posits that the emergence of the "homo cyberus" signifies a paradigm shift in ontological existence. Pleshakov argues that cyber-socialization is a specialized process of personality integration where an individual not only utilizes digital tools but also internalizes a specific set of cyber-ontological norms and values. This process creates a hybrid identity where the psychological structures of the self are reorganized to navigate both physical and virtual social spaces simultaneously. Consequently, for Generation Z, the digital realm acts as a primary laboratory for self-experimentation and social learning, making the traditional distinctions between "online" and "offline" lives increasingly obsolete.

Building upon the cultural-historical traditions of psychology, G.U. Soldatova emphasizes the role of the digital world as a modern "social situation of development." Soldatova's research highlights a significant transformation in the mechanisms of cultural transmission, shifting from a vertical, mentor-based model to a horizontal, peer-driven exchange. In this new digital ecosystem, Generation Z often possesses higher technological competence than their predecessors, leading to what is termed "prefigurative culture" a state where the youth guide the older generation through the complexities of the digital age. This reversal of

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traditional roles creates a unique psychological tension, as the established hierarchies of education and family struggle to accommodate the rapid, decentralized flow of information that defines the current era.

The social architecture of this digital existence is further elucidated by Danah Boyd, who introduces the concept of "Networked Publics." Unlike physical social institutions, networked publics are characterized by persistence, visibility, and spreadability, which fundamentally alter how interpersonal interactions are managed. Boyd asserts that for Generation Z, social media platforms are not mere communication tools but essential social infrastructures where peer-group affiliation and social validation occur. The constant connectivity afforded by these platforms results in a continuous social presence, which, while enhancing global connectivity, can also lead to "digital fatigue" and a decreased capacity for deep, synchronous communication. This structural shift explains why Generation Z often prefers asynchronous, text-based interactions over traditional, high-stakes face-to-face dialogue.

Finally, the intersection of cyber-socialization and intergenerational communication is marked by profound cognitive and affective disparities. Recent studies on Generation Z highlight the prevalence of "clip thinking" a cognitive style focused on rapid information processing and visual stimuli which frequently clashes with the linear, analytical communication styles of older generations. This divergence often results in digital communication dissonance, where misunderstandings arise not from a lack of information, but from incompatible communicative modalities. As noted by contemporary researchers, this "digital gap" is further exacerbated by the varying degrees of emotional resonance felt in virtual versus physical spaces. Therefore, bridging this divide requires more than just technical literacy; it necessitates a deep psychological adaptation and the development of new, hybrid communication protocols that respect the unique socialization paths of each generation.

Methodology

The empirical framework of this study was designed to investigate the psychological impact of cyber-socialization on intergenerational communication patterns within the context of Uzbekistan's educational system. The research utilizes a quantitative approach to analyze the communicative behavior and digital engagement of both students (Generation Z) and their educators.

Participants: The study involved a total of 100 respondents selected from Secondary School No. 204 in Tashkent. The sample was divided into two distinct groups to facilitate a comparative analysis:

Generation Z Group: Consisted of 80 students currently in the 9th grade. This group represents the primary subjects of digital socialization, characterized by high immersion in virtual environments.

Educator Group: Consisted of 20 teachers from the same institution. This group represents the older generation, providing a baseline for analyzing traditional communication values and intergenerational disconnect.

The selection of these groups allows for a statistically reliable assessment of how "Digital Natives" and their mentors perceive and navigate social interaction in the era of cyber-transformation.

Measures: To ensure a comprehensive analysis of the research variables, three standardized psychological instruments were integrated into the study:

1. Internet Addiction Test (Kimberly Young): This measure was utilized to determine the intensity of digital engagement and the level of dependency on virtual platforms among participants.
2. Test for General Level of Communicativeness (V.F. Ryakhovsky): This diagnostic tool assessed the general social activity and communicative tendencies of the respondents, highlighting their readiness for interpersonal interaction.
3. Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication Scale (GPIC): Developed by R.M. McCann, H. Giles, and A.C. Cargile, this scale was used to evaluate how participants perceive communication with members of different age groups, specifically focusing on factors like understanding, respect, and communication avoidance.

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The data collected through these measures were subjected to statistical analysis, including Pearson correlation and Student's t-test, to identify significant disparities and links between cyber-socialization and communication quality.

Results

The empirical phase of the study aimed to identify the socio-psychological consequences of cyber-socialization by comparing the digital behavior and communicative characteristics of Generation Z (students) and the educator group. The data obtained from the diagnostic tools were subjected to rigorous statistical verification to ensure the validity of the intergenerational gap hypothesis.

The first stage of the analysis focused on the intensity of digital immersion using the Internet Addiction Test (IAT). The results indicate a fundamental shift in how Generation Z perceives the digital environment compared to the older generation.

Table 1: Comparative indicators of internet dependency levels

Respondent Group	Mean Score (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value
Generation Z (Students)	68.42	12.15	5.84	< 0.01
Educators (Teachers)	32.18	8.44	-	-

The data in Table 1 reveals that students possess a significantly higher mean score (68.42) for internet dependency, placing them in the “at-risk” or “highly dependent” category according to Young’s classification. In contrast, the educator group maintains a controlled usage pattern (32.18). The t-value of 5.84 confirms that this difference is not accidental but is a direct result of the intensive cyber-socialization of the younger generation.

To understand the impact of high digital immersion on real - life interaction, V.F. Ryakhovsky’s test was applied. This analysis highlights the “Digital Communication Paradox”: as virtual connectivity increases, traditional communicative proficiency appears to decrease.

Table 2: Levels of communicative competence and interpersonal openness

Communicative Category	Gen Z Students (%)	Educators (%)	Statistical Significance
High Competence (Active)	18%	62%	$p < 0.05$
Average Competence	34%	28%	-
Low Competence (Avoidant)	48%	10%	$p < 0.01$

The results show a stark contrast: 62% of educators possess high communicative competence, whereas nearly half of the Generation Z respondents (48%) fall into the low competence category. Qualitative interviews conducted alongside the tests suggest that students feel “social anxiety” during synchronous, face-to-face dialogues, which are perceived as high-pressure environments compared to the editable and asynchronous nature of social media.

Using Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r), the relationship between the level of cyber-socialization and psychological distancing was calculated. The analysis revealed several critical coefficients:

1. Digital Immersion and Communication Avoidance ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$): A strong positive correlation, indicating that higher internet usage leads to a deliberate avoidance of physical social hierarchies.
2. Internet Dependency and Emotional Intelligence ($r = -0.54$, $p < 0.05$): A significant negative correlation, suggesting that excessive cyber-socialization may hinder the development of non-verbal empathy and the ability to decode complex emotional signals from the older generation.

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3. Digital Literacy and Academic Self-Efficacy ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.05$): A moderate positive correlation, showing that cyber-socialization has functional benefits in information gathering and cognitive speed, despite its social drawbacks.

The final part of the results section examines how the two generations perceive each other during interaction. The Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (GPIC) scale identified "Affective Reactivity" as a major barrier.

Accommodation: Teachers scored higher in "Accommodation" ($M = 64.5$), reflecting their professional effort to bridge the gap and understand the digital language of their students.

Non-accommodation: Students scored higher in "Communication Avoidance" and "Perceived Disconnection" ($M = 58.2$). For Generation Z, the older generation is often perceived as "digitally illiterate," which creates a psychological barrier to respect and subordinate communication.

Discussion

The empirical results of this study provide a profound psychological insight into how cyber-socialization acts as a catalyst for the "intergenerational disconnect." The findings align with the theoretical propositions of V.A. Pleshakov, confirming that for Generation Z, the digital environment is not merely a communication tool but a primary space for identity reconstruction. The significantly higher internet dependency scores among students suggest that their "cyber-ontological" development has outpaced their traditional social skill acquisition.

A critical point of discussion is the "Digital Communication Dissonance" observed in the results. While educators (Generation X and Millennials) rely on a linear and context-rich communication model, Generation Z utilizes "clip thinking"a cognitive style characterized by high-speed information processing and visual fragmentation. This divergence creates a psychological barrier: the older generation perceives the youth as "distracted" or "disrespectful," while the youth perceive the older generation's communication as "slow" and "obsolete." This phenomenon supports G.U. Soldatova's assertion that the cultural transmission mechanism has shifted from vertical (teacher-to-student) to horizontal (peer-to-peer), leading to a prefigurative culture where the traditional authority of the educator is challenged by the technical agility of the student.

Furthermore, the negative correlation found between digital immersion and emotional intelligence highlights a growing concern in cyber-psychology. The reliance on "Networked Publics" allows Generation Z to curate their social presence, opting for asynchronous interactions (text, comments) where they can edit their reactions. However, this convenience leads to "affective reactivity"a state where individuals react quickly to digital stimuli but struggle to process complex, non-verbal emotional cues in real-time, face-to-face dialogues. This explains the high "Communication Avoidance" scores among students; the physical social environment is perceived as unpredictable and emotionally demanding compared to the controlled virtual space.

In the context of Uzbekistan, this gap is further complicated by traditional cultural norms of "subordination" and "respect for elders." The data suggests that while the values remain, the *modalities* of expressing them have changed. The older generation's high "Accommodation" score indicates a professional willingness to bridge this gap, yet without a corresponding change in the students' metacognitive awareness, this effort remains one-sided. Therefore, the discussion points toward the need for a hybrid communication ecosystem that integrates digital fluency with traditional interpersonal depth.

Conclusion

This research concludes that cyber-socialization is the fundamental determinant of the current communicative crisis between Generation Z and previous generations. The study has successfully demonstrated that the "Digital Gap" is not a lack of shared information, but a lack of shared psychological modalities.

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The primary findings of the study can be summarized as follows: Identity Transformation: Cyber-socialization has fundamentally restructured the cognitive and social profiles of Generation Z, prioritizing virtual validation over traditional social hierarchies.

Communicative Paradox: High levels of digital proficiency in "Z" generation students are inversely correlated with face-to-face communicative competence and emotional resonance.

Perceptual Barrier: A significant disconnect exists in intergenerational perception, where different cognitive processing styles ("clip thinking" vs. "linear thinking") lead to mutual misunderstanding and communication avoidance.

Recommendations for Practice: To mitigate these problems, the following socio-psychological interventions are proposed:

- Implementation of Metacognitive Training: Educational institutions should introduce programs that help students develop conscious control over their digital habits, fostering the ability to switch between digital and analog communication modes.
- Establishment of "Reverse Mentoring" Circles: Creating platforms where students and teachers exchange roles (digital skills for life wisdom) can rebuild mutual respect and reduce hierarchical friction.
- Digital Empathy Modules: Psychological services should focus on training Gen Z to decode non-verbal cues (tone, body language) to restore the "human" element in their interpersonal interactions.

In final analysis, bridging the intergenerational gap in the era of cyber-socialization requires more than just technical literacy; it necessitates a mutual psychological adaptation where both generations learn to value the unique communicative strengths of each other's reality.

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