

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND VALUES IN THE DIGITAL AGE: TRANSFORMATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the impact of digital technologies, social networks, and the global Internet on modern family relationships and traditional family values. The study examines both positive and negative consequences of technological progress on the quality of communication between family members, child-rearing, and intergenerational dialogue. In particular, the transformation processes in Uzbek society are comparatively analyzed based on the scientific views of foreign and local scholars. In conclusion, practical recommendations are developed for preserving family values and forming digital hygiene in the face of digital threats.

Keywords: family relationships, digital age, transformation, family values, intergenerational communication, digital hygiene, phubbing, social networks.

Since the second decade of the 21st century, all spheres of human life, particularly the family system—the most vital social institution—have been impacted by digital technologies. The internet, smartphones, and social media platforms have become an inseparable part of daily life. While this process has facilitated global information exchange and remote communication on one hand, it has introduced profound changes to the internal family environment and the traditional value system on the other.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, digitization processes are also gaining rapid momentum. Values traditionally central to our society, such as family cohesion, respect for elders, face-to-face communication, and collective responsibility in child-rearing, are now facing the pressures of "virtual reality." Therefore, scientifically studying the transformation of family relationships in the digital age holds both theoretical and practical urgency.

Currently, global and local (Uzbekistan) indicators, demographic profiles, and key trends among social media users have shifted significantly. Today, social networks are no longer just tools for communication; they have evolved into a global digital ecosystem. Total number of users: The number of active social media users worldwide has reached 5.66 billion, accounting for approximately 69.9% (more than half) of the planet's population. Time spent: An average user spends 2 hours and 21 minutes per day on social networks. Multi-platform usage: Modern users no longer confine themselves to a single network. On average, an individual actively uses 6 to 7 different social platforms throughout a month.

Ranking of Popular Platforms

Table 1

Social Networks Platforms	Number of Users
Facebook	3.07 Billion
Instagram	3.00 Billion
WhatsApp	3.00 Billion
YouTube	2.58 Billion
TikTok	1.99 Billion
Telegram	1.00 Billion

In Uzbekistan, the infrastructure of the internet and social networks is developing rapidly, with the number of users reaching record levels:

Internet Users: The total number of internet users in the country has exceeded 32 million.

Social Media Audience: The combined overlapping audience of all social networks in Uzbekistan (accounting for individuals using multiple platforms) stands at 66 million.

The Dominance of Telegram: Telegram remains the absolute leader and primary means of communication in Uzbekistan, with its active user base in the country exceeding 28 million. It is followed by Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

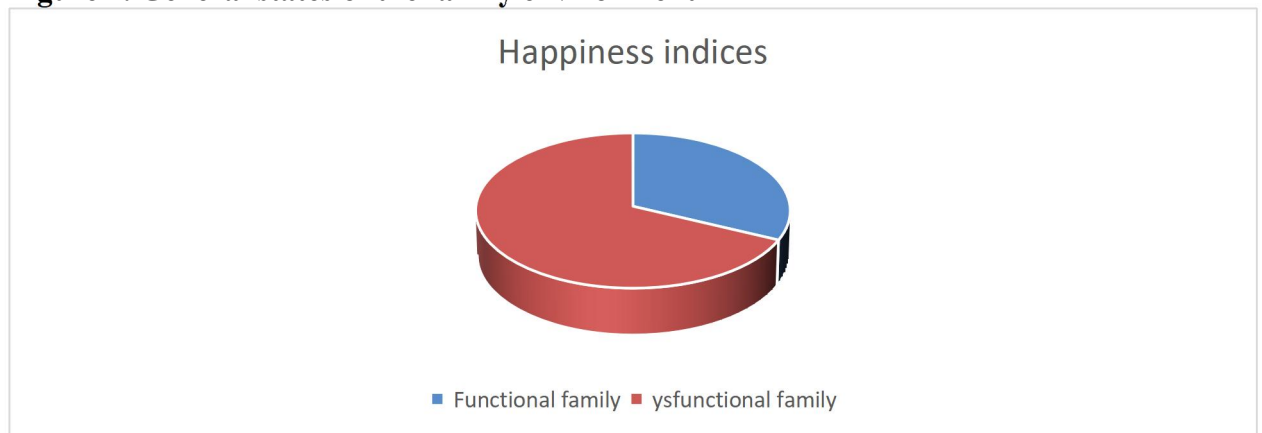
This indicates that individuals have reached a point where they can no longer conceive of their primary activities without gadgets. As a result, a gradual decline in interpersonal communication can be observed, which in turn triggers various socio-psychological problems.

The research methodology utilized systematic analysis, comparative-logical study, psychological observation, and a meta-analysis of scientific works by foreign and local scholars. To identify trend shifts in family values, statistical data and scientific conclusions from the "Family and Gender" Research Institute in Uzbekistan were compared with those from international research centers. When analyzing the impact of digital technologies on the family, researchers distinguish between two contrasting approaches: techno-optimism (viewing technology as a unifying factor for the family) and techno-pessimism (regarding technology as a factor that erodes relationships).

Modern research has identified several new phenomena that negatively affect family relationships:

- Phubbing: The act of snubbing a conversation partner in a social setting by focusing on one's smartphone. This phenomenon weakens the emotional connection between spouses as well as between parents and children.
- Digital Autism: A decline in face-to-face communication and socialization skills in children as a result of becoming attached to gadgets from an early age.
- The Generational Gap (Digital Divide): The widening chasm in worldviews, values, and language between the older generation (parents, grandparents) and children of the digital era (Generations Z and Alpha).

Figure 1. General states of the family environment



During the study, interviews were conducted with numerous families. Based on the results of these interviews and observations, it was determined that 32% of families consider their family to be stable, peaceful, and prosperous. Conversely, it was found that mutual disagreements arise in 68% of families. This situation indicates a lack of communication and interaction between parents and children.

In their research, Uzbek scholars M.G. Inamova and M. Inakov emphasize that Uzbek families possess traditional upbringing criteria that have long served as a protective shield against negative external influences. However, the digital space does not recognize national borders. Elements of "pop culture" (mass culture) on social networks are infiltrating the minds of young people, leading to a decline in the absolute authority of parents.

Sociologist X.A. Shayxov, in his works analyzing the transformation of Uzbek families under the conditions of globalization and information flows, points out that the increase in family divorces and a certain portion of domestic conflicts are linked to virtual life on social networks (such as flaunting one's private life, jealousy, and virtual infidelity). At the same time, the

positive aspects of the digital era cannot be denied. Remote work has provided opportunities for parents to spend more time with their children, enabled migrant families to stay connected despite the distance (via Skype, Telegram, and Zoom), and facilitated digital budgeting for households.

In conclusion, the rapid advancement of digital technologies in the 21st century has significantly transformed the structure and traditional value system of families, including those in Uzbekistan. While digital platforms like Telegram, Instagram, and TikTok facilitate global communication and remote work, they simultaneously introduce profound socio-psychological challenges.

The study reveals that 68% of surveyed families experience mutual disagreements, largely driven by a lack of parent-child communication and modern phenomena such as *phubbing*, *digital autism*, and the widening *generational gap*. Furthermore, the infiltration of global "pop culture" through virtual spaces is gradually eroding traditional family cohesion and parental authority.

Ultimately, analyzing these shifts highlights the critical need to balance the benefits of the digital era (techno-optimism) against its disruptive impacts (techno-pessimism) to preserve stable and harmonious family environments.

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