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**PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN DECISION-MAKING:
FEATURES OF THE DIGITALIZATION OF MODERN
CHILDHOOD**

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the videoblogosphere as a potential environment for children's participation in decision making. The videoblogosphere is defined as one of the main tools for digitalization of modern childhood, being one of the forms of leisure of modern youth, replacing television. The latter, according to a number of studies, is losing popularity among children. This niche is occupied by video sharing platforms such as YouTube. Today videoblogging is a large and serious channel of influence on the audience. Video bloggers form consumer preferences of their viewers, being opinion leaders. All ideas and values that they convey affect the attitudes of the audience, especially young people. Based on the analysis of the results of the survey, the author of the study concluded about the role of the modern Internet environment, in particular the video blogosphere, in the ability to express their own position among children and adolescents. The scientific novelty lies in the fact that the author analyzes the empirical data of a sociological study aimed at studying the place of children and youth in the decision-making process, given the high level of digitalization of modern childhood. It is digital reality that is becoming the place where modern children get the opportunity to independently express their opinions and participate in making various decisions. The main conclusions of this study can be used in scientific and pedagogical activities when considering the issues of overcoming the contradictions of the child's socialization in the modern Internet space.

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Keywords: Internet, video blogosphere, children's participation, childhood



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1. Introduction

The issue of children's participation is increasingly being discussed in both scientific and public discourse. The fundamental factor in the emergence of this problem in Russia can be called the adoption of such an important state document as the National Strategy for Action in the Interests of Children for 2012–2017. The National Strategy was approved by the Decree of the President of Russia on June 1, 2012. The main purpose of this document was to determine the main directions and tasks state policy in the interests of children. Six main sections were identified in the National Strategy, which reflected the most significant spheres of children's life: 1. Family policy of saving children; 2. Availability of quality education and upbringing, cultural development and information security of children; 3. Child-friendly health care and a healthy lifestyle; 4. Equal opportunities for children in need of special state care; 5. Creation of a system of protection and provision of rights and interests of children and child-friendly justice; 6. Children are participants in the implementation of the National Strategy. It was this document that laid the foundation for the formation of the vision of children as full-fledged participants in the solution of issues that directly relate to their life in one area or another. Prior to that, children were considered as subjects mainly within the framework of family law, when it was a question of the child's right to express his own opinion on family issues affecting the interests of the child (choice of place of residence in a situation of parents' divorce, consent or disagreement with the choice of adoptive parents, etc.), compulsory consideration of this opinion when the child reaches the age of 10 years (RF IC) (Abrosimova, 2020).

Russia has accumulated some experience in assessing child participation and child inclusion activities. Colleagues under the leadership of I.E. Kalabikhina presents the results of a study of models of children's participation in decision-making processes on issues affecting their interests in two Russian cities that have joined the UNICEF “child-friendly cities” initiative - Moscow and Krasnodar (Filipova, 2017; Filipova & Skrypnikova, 2019; Kalabikhina & Kuchmaeva, 2016; Odinokova & Rusakova, 2019). Separately, the topic of participation of adolescent children was touched upon in their works by Frishman and Stulova (2016).

The topic of child and youth participation has been studied in detail by foreign researchers. Most foreign works interpret the participation of children in decision-making as a process associated with the ideas of personal development and active participation in society. Hart (1992) in his work "Children's participation: from visibility to civic participation" identifies several levels of children's participation in decision-making, ranging from the practice of manipulating adult children, children's opinions, the appearance of participation and ending with the independent development of decisions by children.

Speaking about the participation of children in various spheres of their life, we must not forget that we are dealing with representatives of generation Z (Burns et al., 2008) Representatives of modern childhood are formed by the media environment and huge amounts of information, they have a different type of thinking, they are simultaneously physical and virtual realities, digital technologies have surrounded them since childhood, and the Internet is an integral part of their parents' lives (Black et al., 2011).

2. Problem Statement

The image of modern childhood is also rapidly changing. Representatives of the new generation are shaped by the media environment and advertising, they have a different type of thinking, they are able to address several sources of information at once and are simultaneously in physical and virtual realities. The question of the possible positive and negative consequences of such changes is still open, but it can already be said without exaggeration that the Internet and its many services have become as important agents of the socialization of children and adolescents as families and schools.

3. Research Questions

The signs of immersion in the digital space are most clearly manifested in the younger generation. At the same time, experts in the field of adolescent and child psychology believe that the active use of digitalization means is a symptom of a new disease - "Internet addiction"

But even here a certain specificity of modern children and adolescents should be noted: data from Google's research: "What's cool for Gen Z" reflect the fact that today's children are not only mass consumers of video content, but also actively create it on their own. Pew Research Center reported that YouTube is a key platform for Gen Z to create content on their own. According to a CommScope poll, the most attractive profession for Gen Z is the popular video blogger. 37% of respondents dream of a YouTube career (Google Research: What's Cool for Gen Z, 2020; How Gen Y and Gen Z..., 2019).

It should be understood that the issue of children's participation should be considered not only in the context of real life, but also in the so-called online mode. It is the network that gives children the freedom that allows them to fully feel their significance and autonomy from the decisions of adults.

The aim of our study was to study the ideas of adolescents about the main reasons for the entry of children and adolescents into the video blogosphere as a space for formulating their own position.

4. Purpose of the Study

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5. Research Methods

It should be understood that the issue of children's participation should be considered not only in the context of real life, but also in the so-called online mode. It is the network that gives children the freedom that allows them to fully feel their significance and autonomy from the decisions of adults. Representatives of the new generation are shaped by the media environment and advertising, they have a different type of thinking, they are able to address several sources of information at once and are simultaneously in physical and virtual realities. The question of the possible positive and negative consequences of such changes is still open, but it can already be said without exaggeration that the Internet and its many services have become as important agents of the socialization of children and adolescents as families and schools.

New everyday Internet practices are emerging, which should be understood not only for interpersonal communication and group communication.

As mentioned above, modern children prefer to receive visual information, which is why the YouTube video hosting is so popular. The deep immersion of children and adolescents in the Internet environment, and precisely in the video blogosphere, does not imply exclusively passive consumption of broadcast information. The video blogosphere, being an alternative to the traditional society, provokes young Internet users to various kinds of activities. As mentioned above, modern children prefer to receive visual information, which is why the YouTube video hosting is so popular. The deep immersion of children and adolescents in the Internet environment, and precisely in the video blogosphere, does not imply exclusively passive consumption of broadcast information. The video blogosphere, being an alternative to the traditional society, provokes young Internet users to various kinds of activities.

Children shape content in two main ways: passive and active. In the first case, watching a video, child viewers participate in the formation of the popularity rating of video bloggers. The active method includes comments that children leave under the watched video, in which they can contact both the author himself and communicate with each other on the topic set in the video. The active method of video blogging includes the direct creation of video blogs, updating video content, establishing feedback with subscribers, etc. (Filipova & Skrypnikova, 2019).

The method of collecting empirical data was a questionnaire survey (Abrosimova, 2013). Within the framework of the VI Far Eastern Media Summit, held on June 13-15, 2019 in Vladivostok, on the campus of the Far Eastern Federal University, a survey was conducted with the participants of the TEEN Media Forum of Young Journalists (N = 239).

The processing of the questionnaires was carried out using the SPSS 19 version. Tables of frequency distributions of respondents' answers were compiled. This type of analysis is descriptive and allows you to get a general idea of the studied social groups and phenomena.

It should be noted that the study involved adolescents - active users of social networks, regular participants in various interactive events, press clubs, photo workshops. Some of the teenage respondents have their own video blogs and are actively working on the network to promote them.

6. Findings

It should be noted that open-ended questions are rather difficult in quantitative analysis, therefore, it is inappropriate to give the percentage distribution of answers in this case. This type of survey had slightly different tasks than understanding how many respondents answered in one way or another. The answers to this question should be considered more as a tool for forming a general picture of the vision of modern adolescents of the potential of the video blogosphere.

The coding of the capabilities of the video blogosphere was carried out along the axes of "acquiring new knowledge", "acquiring new skills", "the possibility of self-expression" and "the ability to express one's own opinion". Objectively, the axes - "the possibility of self-expression" and "the ability to express their own opinion" are synonymous. This is done in order to study the semantic content of these two groups in more detail.

The answers of the respondents in the framework of the axis "obtaining new knowledge" lie in the plane of the information function of the video blogosphere. Young Internet users objectively assess the information flow of the modern network and often use this resource for this very purpose. Answers such as "a quick and convenient way of obtaining information", "studying, obtaining new information", "learning a lot of new things, self-development", "something useful for children, some new knowledge" confirm this position.

The data obtained were mostly updated precisely on the modern time period. The epidemiological situation in which our country found itself, and as a result, the transfer of educational processes to a remote mode, allowed not only children, but also their parents to use the information potential of the video blogosphere to a large extent. A lot of respondents not only noted the informational function of the video blogosphere, but concretized the possibilities of this resource: "getting new skills", "you can learn new places and learn new science", "the opportunity to do something new, learn about the character of people, get new experience."

The most frequent formulations of answers to this question were as follows: "The opportunity to express their opinion, show talents", "Disclosure to people" "The opportunity to express themselves, self-realization, achieve goals" "Say what you think" "Children can express their opinion."

It is these answers from young respondents that confirm the fact that the Internet, and in particular the children's segment of the video blogosphere, allows modern children to activate independence, both in making decisions and in formulating their own position.

Initially, the Internet space allowed users to be freer in their statements, subject to a certain level of anonymity. At this stage, the inclusion of the Internet in children's everyday life no longer contains an element of anonymity. On the contrary, young Internet users want not only to formulate their views on certain situations, but also want to be heard: "the opportunity to express their opinion to people", "help to express their opinion, self-expression", "bring out their creativity to the masses, express the point vision, getting feedback."

7. Conclusion

The analysis of these answers reflects the fact that, despite the rather young age of the respondents, the respondents are very clearly aware of the potential of the Internet, in particular the video blogosphere as an opportunity for self-expression, an opportunity to be heard. It is the video blogosphere that children interpret as a territory free from the rules of adults, a territory of freedom of expression.

Children understand the importance of being able to take part in solving issues that affect their interests, they want their opinion to be heard. At this stage in the development of modern society, the Internet space should not be underestimated as a potential platform for children's self-expression. The participation of children in decision-making in close interaction with adults is very often slightly distorted. Children can often make decisions based on the opinion of an adult. It is the Internet environment that gives many children the opportunity to speak out and be heard. It is necessary to view the Internet not only as a frightening and unknown part of the life of our children, but also as a potential field for self-expression and self-realization of the younger generation.

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