YOUTH COMMUNITIES IN SOCIAL NETWORKS AS A TOOL FOR ORGANIZING EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH STUDENTS

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Abstract

Social media has become an integral part of our lives, and young people are among the most active groups on these platforms. The digital environment has significantly changed the form of communication. The study aims to identify the characteristics of content and initiatives within youth communities on social media platforms specifically designed to facilitate educational activities for students. Various online communication platforms such as VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Telegram, and YouTube were selected and analyzed for the study. The focus was on identifying formal youth communities, understanding their types, selection criteria, and the specifics of their formation. Based on expert interviews with deputy directors of educational work, educational consultants, and heads of schools and universities, several youth communities were found to share information about educational work with educational organizations through social networks. These include the Movement of the First (Russian children and youth leadership movement), the all-Russian public organization Russian Union of Youth, the all-Russian military-patriotic public children and youth movement Yunarmia, the all-Russian competition Big Break, the all-Russian public movement Volunteers of Victory, Mosvolonter, and the Young Traffic Inspectors of Russia. The article presents specific criteria for analyzing social network posts and then analyzes youth communities' official websites and channels to identify their content and activities. It also presents a comparative analysis of the characteristics of youth communities on the VKontakte social network based on the developed criteria. The research revealed that VKontakte is the most popular social network among youth organizations. It serves as a primary resource for engaging participants in educational activities and acts as a platform for connecting community members from different regions. The Telegram messenger essentially copies the content of the other platforms. The main content is about the activities of these organizations, such as news about competitions, promotions, events, and posts about the activities of youth organizations. The article's authors conclude that the social networks of youth organizations are professionally managed by different teams of specialists who adhere to individually recognizable styles of design and brand books. These networks offer various activities to organize educational work for students.

Keywords: *social networks, educational work, content, youth communities, youth organizations, online communication, students*

Character education is an essential aspect of the pedagogical process in educational institutions that implement programs from general education to secondary vocational education. Its main goal is to fulfill the state mandate to provide quality education in a modern context.

The adopted Development Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2025 and the Law of the President of the Russian Federation on the educational component of education define "character education as an activity aimed at personal development, creating conditions for self-determination and socialization of students on the basis of sociocultural, spiritual and moral values, as well as rules and norms of behavior accepted in Russian society in the interests of the individual, of the family, society and the state, the development of patriotism and civic spirit among students, respect for the memory of the defenders of the Fatherland and the deeds of the heroes of the Fatherland, for law and order, for working people and the older generation, mutual respect, respect for the cultural heritage and traditions of the multinational people of the Russian Federation, for nature and the environment" [1].

The steps taken at the state level have led to the creation of educational teams dealing with character education, which include the deputy director of educational work, the advisor to the director of education, a social pedagogue, a school principal, a pedagogical psychologist, and mentors. All team members solve a number of tasks in the field of character education, including those related to the communicative activity of children and adolescents in social networks and the support of this activity. Young people are often active in online communication, where formal and informal youth communities are formed. Social networks have become a new platform for youth interaction, shaping individual experiences and peer relationships [2]. Nowadays, a large proportion of young people spend most of their free time on social networks and often see them as a source of "positive emotions" [3]. Young people are attracted to social networks and online communities because of the following priorities: Freedom of virtual communication, interactivity of communication and its dialogical nature; the possibility of transforming an individual position into a public one by using the media resources of a social network; the relative safety of online communication; the possibility of adapting virtual communication, correcting mistakes in the presentation of one's position and self-presentation; self-expression, self-presentation, self-development in virtual reality; finding partners and friends in online communities; gaining self-confidence [4].

In the digital education environment, there are various approaches and methods for the development of character education [5]. Educational institutions are increasingly incorporating social networks into their educational activities.

Educational institutions offering general and vocational secondary education programs have introduced programs for academic activities that involve collaboration with formal youth associations, organizations, and movements. These associations are usually established institutions with defined structures, rules, and fixed memberships. They can be formal organizations initiated by various government agencies or informal groups that have emerged from individual initiatives and were later formalized [6].

A study conducted by the Laboratory of Educational Infrastructures of the Research Institute of Educational Sciences of the Moscow City Pedagogical University included youth communities, organizations, and associations that actively interact with schools, including through social networks and Internet platforms.

The criteria for selecting youth communities to study their interaction with educational organizations as part of the study were as follows:

1. Formal communities.

2. The number of participants is 100,000 or more.

3. Presence of regional divisions or multiple divisions in a metropolitan area.

4. Communities focused on social, patriotic, recreational, volunteer, and extracurricular activities.

5. Communities are present on the Internet (with their own websites and pages on social networks).

6. A clear social mission.

7. Promoting an active civic and patriotic attitude or other socially significant public issues (e.g., promoting a healthy lifestyle, environmental awareness, cultural engagement, and volunteering).

As part of the research, expert interviews were conducted with deputy directors of educational work, educational counselors, and supervisors of Moscow schools and secondary vocational education institutions. According to the data from the expert interviews with school staff, the most important interactions take place with the following communities:

– Rosmolodezh is a federal agency for youth affairs in Russia that focuses on supporting and developing youth initiatives, facilitating the social adaptation of young people, and implementing state youth policy. It also supports voluntary and charitable initiatives and organizes various events and programs for young people. The agency actively cooperates with public youth organizations and initiatives. Rosmolodezh is also engaged in socio-demographic research to understand better the needs and problems of young people in Russia [7];

– the Russian Movement of Children and Youth (будьвдвижении.рф) is an organization founded to develop and support youth in Russia. Its goals include the protection of the rights and interests of children and adolescents, forming patriotic feelings and civic positions, and developing young people's creative and intellectual abilities. The movement organizes various events, including competitions, festivals, seminars, and training courses, which serve the development of young people. It is also involved in charitable causes and

helps children and young people in need. It is one of the most active and dynamic organizations in Russia [8];

– the Russian Union of Youth (RUY) (ruy.ru) is a non-profit and non-political organization whose goal is to help young people in their comprehensive development and realize their potential in all areas of social life. RUY implements numerous programs and projects for young people, creates conditions for developing talented youth, and implements programs and projects to develop civic activity and patriotic education. RUY is a large team that unites more than 1 million people in 73 subjects of the Russian Federation [9];

– Yunarmy (yunarmy.ru) is an all-Russian public movement founded to promote patriotism, civic awareness, and military-patriotic knowledge among children and youth throughout Russia. The movement aims to awaken the young generation's interest in the history of Russia, its heroes, and its culture. Yunarmy organizes various events such as military-patriotic games, forums, actions, and other active projects. The movement is characterized by its bright red flags, distinctive uniforms, and frequent public appearances. Participants in the movement can be recognized by a bright red beret [10];

– Big Brake (bolshayaperemena.online) is a public organization that brings children and young people together. It allows them to change themselves and the world around them, make friends, receive support from mentors, and participate in competitions. The organization also conducts various activities aimed at personal development, discovering potential, and sharing experiences [11];

– the Russian Schoolchildren's Movement (RSM) (рдш.рф) is an association that brings together pupils and students to promote their development and the realization of their potential in the public space. The organization carries out various activities aimed at personal development, unlocking potential, and sharing experiences. It also helps students to solve problems related to education and career [12];

– the Victory Volunteers (волонтёрыпобеды.рф) is an organization that brings together young people who honor the memory of the heroic deeds of their ancestors and pay tribute to the significance of the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War. They actively participate in various activities aimed at preserving and passing on historical knowledge and help organize events dedicated to the Great Patriotic War [13];

– the Mosvolonter (mosvolonter.ru) is a public movement that unites volunteers in Moscow who strive to help and support various population groups such as children, youth, veterans, and people with disabilities. The movement is actively involved in multiple projects and actions aimed at preserving and passing on historical knowledge and helping to solve problems in the social sphere [14];

– the Young Inspectors (юидроссии.рф) is an organization that conducts educational programs in schools to improve road safety. The program includes lessons in which children learn the rules of the road, the basics of road safety, and the practical skills they need to move around the city safely. Children who complete the training are awarded Young Inspector status and can help teach

traffic rules to their peers and adults. The Young Inspectors also carry out various activities to improve road safety, such as competitions and campaigns [15].

Character education work is carried out in both online and offline formats. To prepare and organize this work, the directors receive information through social networks and distribute it to their deputies, who then pass it on to curators, class teachers, and children. [16]. The social communities are open, and it is possible to view information about the organization or the results of the event at any time.

There are different approaches to analyzing social networks.

The first is phenomenological, as social networks show that they have become a part of everyday life due to the extent of use, the increase in participants, and the time spent on social networks. Everyday life is precisely what is being researched using this approach. "Ordinary, everyday knowledge and its dissemination in a particular social group in a particular historical and cultural context has become the main object of research. Each social group defines its social reality based on typification of phenomena: 'Members of society come into contact and are sure that other members of the group see the world in the same way, and this becomes the starting point of interaction" [17, p. 41]. In this framework, the activities of youth communities in social networks are examined through the lens of congruence between the value orientations of young people, adolescents, young adults, and the respective youth communities.

Furthermore, social networks can be seen as a pseudo-environment, a different reality in which the desired image of everyday life is broadcast (W. Lippman, E. Bernays) [18, 19]. The concept of pseudo-environment in social networks refers to a constructed reality often embellished and partially invented by users. Due to this perception, communities for young people today increasingly strive to conduct most activities offline and face-to-face, avoiding exclusive communication on social networks.

Everyday communication and self-presentation in social networks can also be analyzed using Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach, where the social network is a theater and the users are actors. The interaction between them is a way of overcoming intrapersonal contradictions and unfulfilled needs [20].

When determining the methodology for analyzing social networks to identify the characteristics of content and activities of youth communities, it is important to understand that almost 50% of active Internet users in Russia use social networks daily. For this reason, social networks and their users are currently the subject of the highest academic interest for psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists. Social networks reflect various aspects of human life, including avatars, posts about daily life, emotional reactions, inclusion in groups, and comments. Consequently, social networks, as an object of sociological research, are a very complex and multi-layered phenomenon.

To analyze the content and activities of youth communities on social networks, we focused on the study of popular online communication platforms in Russia. Specifically, we examined the two largest Russian social networks,

VKontakte [21] and Odnoklassniki [22], as well as the popular messenger Telegram [23] and the world's best-known video hosting YouTube [24].

VKontakte is Russia's most popular social network and has developed into a comprehensive social environment deeply integrated into young citizens' daily lives [25]. With over 82 million monthly users, this platform offers significant potential for brand advertising. The website enables various companies to create groups and public pages to post messages, publish photos, videos, and audio recordings, and organize real-time broadcasts. In addition, targeted advertising opportunities make it easier to attract users from different communities. The age structure of the audience ranges from 15 to 45 years. VKontakte is also a hub for civil society and political information [26].

The social network Odnoklassniki has more than 40 million users, 10–15 years older than the audience of VKontakte and Telegram. The average age of the audience is 30–60 years old. Odnoklassniki maintains strict moderation, meaning there are hardly any spammers and bots on the platform. Users of this network rarely go to additional third-party resources. However, strict moderation poses a challenge for advertising services and products. Nonetheless, users can create their own communities or groups on the platform. Brands and participants within the social network can engage in various activities, such as messaging, quizzes, surveys, and exchanging branded stickers and gifts. Advertising on the platform often takes the form of interactive games that effectively attract customers and users.

Telegram is currently one of the most popular messengers in Russia, and it has over 700 million active users. The user base covers a wide age range, with the average age between 14 and 50. This platform enables the exchange of messages and the creation of thematic channels and groups. The Russian-language Telegram hosts around 300 thousand channels, with users generally subscribing to 10–15 channels each. The most popular channel categories include news, entertainment, education, and political content. 75% of all users, including teenagers and young adults, use Telegram to keep up with the latest news.

YouTube is a well-known video hosting platform where users can watch and upload video content and create live streams. The primary audience in Russia consists of people between 18 and 34. With over a billion users, YouTube is a platform for individuals to express their creative ideas, share opinions, showcase talents, connect with like-minded people, and stay informed about global events and activities. The platform supports communication in 76 languages and allows users to connect with others from different linguistic backgrounds.

Social networks were found for the following youth communities:

Russian Movement of Children and Youth, Movement of the First. The organization is officially represented on the social networks VKontakte and Telegram. All-Russian public organization Russian Union of Youth: The organization has official accounts on VKontakte and Telegram;

All-Russian military-patriotic public children's and youth movement Yunarmia. The organization has official accounts on VKontakte, Telegram, and Odnoklassniki and has a channel on YouTube;

All-Russian competition Big Break;

All-Russian public and state children's and youth organization Russian Schoolchildren's Movement (RSM) (the organization is currently being restructured by merging with the Movement of the First). The organization has official accounts on VKontakte, Telegram and YouTube;

The all-Russian public movement Victory Volunteers. The organization has official accounts on VKontakte, Telegram and YouTube;

The Mosvolonter organization is officially represented on VKontakte and Telegram; The Young Traffic Inspectors of Russia has official accounts on VKontakte, Telegram, and YouTube.

The research has shown that each youth community studied has an official and extensive presence on VKontakte (see Fig. 1) and Telegram messenger. Some communities also manage their YouTube channels, while hardly any have an account on Odnoklassniki. This trend is likely due to Odnoklassniki's demographic focus on an older audience.
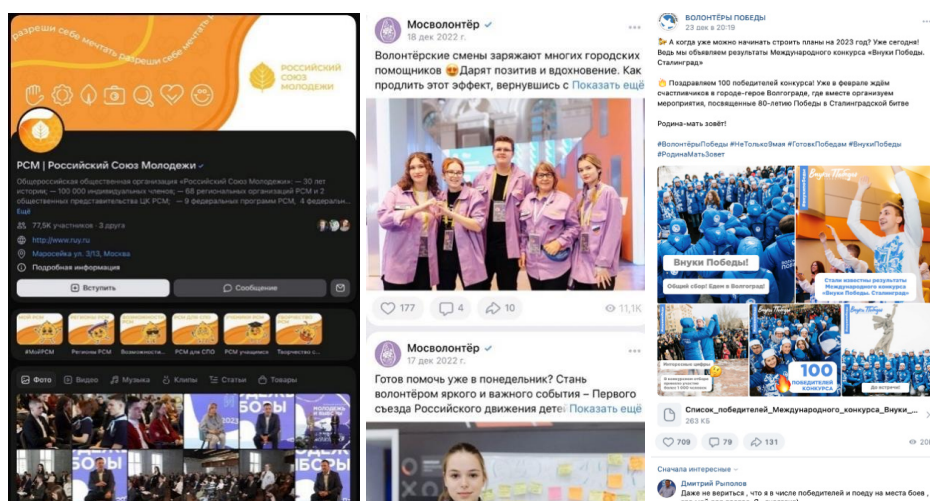

Fig. 1 Fragments of pages from youth communities in VKontakte

The following criteria were defined to analyze social networks and identify the content and activities of youth communities:

1. Consistency of the content with the youth community's purpose, main topic, and mission.

2. Relevance of the content to the interests and preferences of young people.

3. Frequency of content updates.

4. Specificity of the content:

4.1 Content that reflects the offline activities of the youth community: News about past events, announcements of competitions and events, and photo reports.

4.2 Exclusive content created for the social network: Contests and promotions organized on social networks.

4.3 Provide helpful information, greetings, videos, tutorials, and other content related to and/or not directly related to the activities of the community.

5. Level of audience engagement:

5.1 The number of comments under posts, likes, and reposts (reflect the viral aspect of content, i.e., the ability of content to spread widely without the author having to do anything because users themselves willingly share the publication with others);

5.2 Number of participants in competitions and campaigns.

All social media pages analyzed align with the youth communities' purpose, central theme, and mission. The content is targeted to the participants of the youth organizations, and the posts are published regularly. These pages regularly feature photo and video reports with detailed descriptions of official events and meetings organized as part of the youth organizations' activities, announcements, and results of competitions and initiatives. In addition, current news and project results, as well as publications about the offline activities of the youth organizations, are published. There are also regular online events and competitions, albeit to a lesser extent than the content described. Some of these campaigns and competitions require offline preparation, such as creating a video or drawing a picture. Content not directly related to the activities of the youth communities is also published. Subscribers actively participate in the proposed activities on social media sites, with quizzes and polls being particularly popular with subscribers.

The results of the analysis of social networks according to the developed criteria are presented in Table 1 Comparative characteristics of official youth communities in VKontakte:

Table 1

Comparative characteristics of official youth communities in VKontakte
(at the time of the survey)

Youth communities	Criteria							
	1	2	3	4			5	
				Specifics of the content			Degree of audience engagement	
	Relevance of the content to the purpose, topic, and mission of the youth community	Youth-oriented content	Frequency of content updates (number of posts per day)	Content that reflects the offline activities of the youth community	Eventfulness	Information related and/or not directly connected to the activities of the community	Number of comments under posts, likes, reposts	Number of participants in contests, promotions, etc.
Movement of the First	+	+	2–3	+	+	+	100–1500 likes, up to 100 comments, up to 30 reposts	Up to 1,500
Russian Union of Youth	+	+	2–3	+	+	+	40–500 likes, 150–800 comments, up to 10 reposts	About 600

End of Table 1

Youth communities	Criteria							
	1	2	3	4			5	
				Specifics of the content			Degree of audience engagement	
	Relevance of the content to the purpose, topic, and mission of the youth community	Youth-oriented content	Frequency of content updates (number of posts per day)	Content that reflects the offline activities of the youth community	Eventfulness	Information related and/or not directly connected to the activities of the community	Number of comments under posts, likes, reposts	Number of participants in contests, promotions, etc.
Yunarmy	+	+	3	+	+	+	The average is 110 likes; Up to 10 comments; 44 reposts	150–5000
Big Brake	+	+	3	+	+	+	Average 250 likes, about 20 comments, about 30 reposts	100–3000
Russian Schoolchildren's Movement (to be merged with the Movement of the First)	+	+	6	+	+	+	400–450 likes per post; 17–20 comments; 120 reposts	400–6000
Victory Volunteers	+	+	2	+	+	+	300–400 likes; Up to 5 comments; up to 20 reposts	100–500
Mosvolonter	+	+	1–2	+	+/–	+	60–270 likes; Up to 10 comments; up to 20 reposts	–
Young Traffic Inspectors of Russia	+	+	1	+	+	+	118–150 likes; 5 comments; 55 reposts	70–200

General conclusions

VKontakte is the most popular social network among youth organizations, and it has a large amount of content and interactions with subscribers. In contrast, the Telegram messenger's content is identical to that of VKontakte, with fewer subscribers and less activity. The social network Odnoklassniki is practically not used by young communities, and content is published much less frequently.

The most popular social network among the official social networks of youth communities is the VKontakte page of the Movement of the First.

In the social networks of the studied communities, we can distinguish the main types of content that reflect the offline activities of the organizations:

News about competitions and campaigns, news about the events held, and posts about the youth organizations' activities outside of events and competitions.

Content promoting various activities (contests, quizzes, polls) is present in almost all social networks of the analyzed communities, although the number of posts dedicated to the offline activities of youth organizations is relatively different. Quizzes and polls are the most popular among subscribers, which could be due to the simplicity of the participation conditions.

For youth communities, their VKontakte pages are essential and influential resources for reaching and informing young people, encouraging them to participate in community activities, and bringing together representatives from various regions. These social networking sites are professionally managed by teams of specialists who adhere to a distinctive and recognizable design style.

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МОЛОДЕЖНЫЕ СООБЩЕСТВА В СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЯХ ДЛЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ВОСПИТАТЕЛЬНОЙ РАБОТЫ С ОБУЧАЮЩИМИСЯ

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Аннотация. Социальные сети стали неотъемлемой частью нашей жизни, и молодежь – одна из самых активных групп на этих платформах. Цифровая среда существенно изменила формат коммуникаций и формирует иную коммуникационную культуру. Целью исследования является выявление особенностей контента и деятельности молодежных сообществ в социальных сетях для организации воспитательной работы со школьниками. В процессе исследования были отобраны и изучены действующие площадки для онлайн-коммуникации: «ВКонтакте», «Одноклассники», «Telegram», «YouTube» – раскрыто описание формальных молодежных сообществ, выявлены типы, критерии отбора и специфика их формирования. На основе проведенных экспертных интервью с заместителями директоров по воспитательной работе, советниками по воспитанию, кураторами школ и колледжей определены молодежные сообщества, осуществляющие взаимодействие с образовательными организациями в рамках воспитательной работы через социальные сети: Российское движение детей и молодежи, «Движение первых», Общероссийская общественная организация Российский союз молодежи, Всероссийское детско-юношеское военно-патриотическое общественное движение «Юнармия», Всероссийский конкурс «Большая перемена», Всероссийское общественное движение «Волонтеры Победы», Мосволонтер, Юные инспекторы движения России. В статье определены критерии анализа страниц в социальных сетях, проанализированы официальные страницы и каналы молодежных сообществ в социальных сетях с целью выявления особенностей контента и деятельности сообществ, представлена сравнительная таблица характеристик молодежных сообществ в социальной сети «ВКонтакте» по разработанным критериям. Исследование показало, что «ВКонтакте» является самой востребованной социальной сетью среди молодёжных организаций, одним из главных ресурсов по работе с участниками молодежных организаций и вовлекающим в воспитательную работу, а также площадкой для объединения представителей сообщества из разных регионов; мессенджер «Telegram», в основном, полностью дублирует его содержание; основной контент, отражающий деятельность организаций офлайн включает: новости

о конкурсах, акциях, о проведенных мероприятиях, посты, освещающие активность молодежных организаций вне рамок мероприятий и конкурсов; наибольший отклик у подписчиков вызывают викторины и голосования. Авторы статьи делают вывод о том, что социальные сети молодежных сообществ ведутся на профессиональном уровне командой разнопрофильных специалистов в соответствии с индивидуальным узнаваемым стилем оформления, брендбуком и предлагают самые разнообразные мероприятия для организации воспитательной работы с обучающимися.

Ключевые слова: *социальные сети, воспитательная работа, контент, молодежные сообщества, молодежные организации, онлайн-коммуникация, обучающиеся*

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