

THE IMPACT OF MASS MEDIA ON THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL FORMATION OF YOUTH

Rustam Akhundjanovich Begmatov
Tashkent Institute of Textile and Light Industry

Abstract

The article briefly describes the influence of mass media on the spiritual and moral formation of youth.

Keywords: Mass media, information security, openness of mass media, education of the younger generation, cultural-moral and spiritual values.

Introduction

In today's world, mass media (MM) is considered a significant factor in shaping the spiritual and moral outlook of youth. The internet, television, social networks, and other media platforms play a major role in defining the worldview, value systems, and behavioral norms of the younger generation. This article aims to analyze the impact of mass media on the spiritual and moral development of youth, examining both its positive and negative aspects. The goal is to evaluate the influence of mass media and propose effective strategies for guiding youth in the right direction.

Youth hold a special place in the scientific, technical, industrial, cultural, and spiritual advancement of society. The upbringing of youth is one of the most critical issues at the state level. It is well-known that state youth policy encompasses a system of socio-economic, organizational, and legal measures implemented by the state to support and develop youth. This policy not only protects the rights and legitimate interests of young people but also undertakes comprehensive efforts to foster their civic spirit and strengthen their sense of patriotism. The principles of cultural-moral and spiritual values, intergenerational continuity, and the priority of family upbringing serve as the foundation for these efforts. The primary task today is to raise youth who are capable of contributing to the country's development, approach life responsibly and proactively, love their homeland, take pride in their history, honor their language and culture, and respect their traditions. Only then will our youth become leaders who protect their homeland, preserve their nation's identity in the era of globalization, safeguard their language, and create a new history for our people. The state is implementing specific measures to improve the lives of youth, ensure their rights and interests, contribute to economic development, and provide opportunities for education, vocational training, and professional development. By creating all necessary conditions for youth to study, work, acquire knowledge, and showcase their abilities, we are ensuring that, alongside the entire nation, youth are the builders of a New Uzbekistan. As noted, "The upbringing of the younger generation

has always been of great importance in all eras. However, in the 21st century, this issue has truly become a matter of life and death” [1]. The implementation of state youth policy embodies these measures and serves to ensure their effective execution. Youth associations are the driving force behind this system, and strengthening their activities and potential contributes to improving youth lives in all aspects, increasing their political literacy, achieving economic independence, acquiring cultural knowledge, fostering self-development, and advancing societal progress. Youth are an active social stratum in any society. Today, addressing the most pressing issues in youth policy—such as education, healthcare, economic development, participation in political platforms, youth culture, civic society, and more—requires scientific efforts to implement these priorities, which include specific demands related to youth.

Materials and Methods

Globally, significant theoretical and scientific research on the role of mass media in societal development is rapidly advancing. In particular, the role of mass media in addressing complex social issues, shaping public consciousness in modern society, and influencing the spiritual and moral development of individuals has been extensively studied. In Uzbekistan, reforms in the mass media sector have elevated the importance of print media and television. As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized, “Freedom of information and the press, the ability of citizens to freely express their will, and the transparency and openness of state institutions have become one of the quality indicators of New Uzbekistan” [2]. Through mass media, local authorities and businesses address issues step-by-step, communicating solutions to the public, which directly contributes to transforming the appearance of our regions and increasing people’s confidence in a better future. The policy of openness, enabling every citizen to contact state governance bodies or social media profiles via electronic devices or mobile phones, is becoming widespread. This underscores the need to scientifically study the factors enhancing the role of mass media in society, as well as its propaganda and advocacy mechanisms. As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted, “Considering the growing threats around us—religious extremism, terrorism, drug addiction, human trafficking, illegal migration, and the so-called ‘mass culture’—the deep meaning and importance of these words become even clearer. Indeed, the upbringing of youth remains an ever-relevant and critical issue. Today’s rapidly changing world opens new and great opportunities for humanity and youth” [3]. In the context of national progress, fostering the spiritual and intellectual development of youth and raising enlightened individuals has become a priority in Uzbekistan. This is a key component of ensuring social stability and enabling youth to actively participate in the country’s reforms. As Q. Quronboev stated, “In the conditions of building and developing a just, democratic society, ensuring socio-political stability alongside the establishment of spiritual and moral values in the public consciousness transforms people’s worldviews and contributes to Uzbekistan’s national development” [4].

This study employed qualitative and quantitative analysis methods. A literature review was conducted to examine scientific articles, books, and public publications on the impact of mass media on youth consciousness. Additionally, a survey was conducted among 200 young people aged 18–25 to study their media consumption habits, spiritual values, and the influence of



media content on behavioral changes. The survey results were statistically analyzed using SPSS software. The study separately examined the impact of social media (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) and traditional media (television, newspapers).

According to research, as of early 2023, there were 1.97 billion websites on the internet, with 12% containing pornographic content or serving as carriers of such material. Over 10,000 websites were found to promote self-harm and violence. The number of internet users worldwide has reached 6.16 billion, growing by 1.9% in a single year. Traditional information exchange and technologies are increasingly being replaced by digital platforms. Today, social networks are moving away from collectivism and promoting Western individualism in the minds of global youth. Amid information attacks that skillfully target youth consciousness and prioritize emotions over reason, fostering a healthy spiritual and intellectual environment that instills instincts of self-management, self-preservation, and aspiration for goodness is becoming increasingly vital. Strengthening national identity based on traditional cooperation, mutual respect, and human values among youth, drawing on the rich historical experiences of our ancestors and modern innovations, is considered essential. Continuously enriching this process while preserving our national heritage and fostering a healthy spiritual-moral environment is our duty.

Research Findings

According to expert analyses, mass media exerts both positive and negative influences on the spiritual and moral consciousness of youth:

Positive Impacts:

- Through mass media, youth gain knowledge about diverse cultures, moral values, and social responsibility. For example, content about ecological issues or charity campaigns increases social activism among youth.
- Educational content (e.g., scientific YouTube channels, online courses) supports the intellectual and spiritual development of youth.
- 65% of survey participants noted that positive social media posts improved their outlook on life.
- Mass media can promote ethical values, humanism, and compassion, fostering a sense of social responsibility and morality in youth.
- Enlightening content (e.g., popular science films, literary talk shows) broadens youth's worldviews and develops critical thinking.
- Positive role models (e.g., scholars, heroes) inspire youth and boost their motivation.

Negative Impacts:

- Inappropriate content on social media (e.g., violence, immoral behavior) can undermine youth's moral standards. 42% of survey participants reported encountering such content.
- Idealized lifestyles portrayed in media (e.g., luxurious lives, modeled appearances) lead to dissatisfaction and psychological stress among youth.



- Advertisements on television and social media promote materialistic values, which diminish spiritual values.
- Content glorifying violence, unconventional behavior, and materialism can lead to the formation of incorrect behavioral patterns in youth.
- Fake news and manipulative information reduce youth's ability to discern reliable information.
- The promotion of "ideal" lifestyles on social media can cause self-doubt, depression, and misplaced priorities among youth.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the impact of mass media is dual-natured, capable of being either beneficial or harmful in shaping youth's spiritual and moral consciousness. To enhance positive impacts, increasing educational and spiritually enriching content in mass media is essential. For instance, programs discussing ethical dilemmas or campaigns promoting social responsibility would be beneficial. To mitigate negative impacts, it is recommended to conduct media literacy training and implement mechanisms to filter inappropriate content.

The influence of mass media depends on youth's age, social environment, and media consumption habits. Therefore, further research is needed, particularly to explore the impact of mass media across different demographic groups and cultural contexts.

Conclusion

Mass media plays a significant role in shaping the spiritual and moral consciousness of youth. While it can promote positive educational and spiritual values, negative influences such as inappropriate content and the glorification of materialistic values also exist. To balance these impacts, enhancing media literacy, producing high-quality content, and teaching youth critical thinking are necessary. Further in-depth studies on the influence of mass media on youth consciousness will contribute to the development of a spiritually and morally sound society.

Today, Uzbekistan is home to citizens who shape their own destinies, understand their dignity, live worthy lives, and effectively utilize the opportunities available to humanity. "The spiritual and intellectual level of citizens, in turn, transforms the overall state of society" [5]. This process ensures that every citizen develops ideological immunity to withstand information attacks.

In general, it is no secret that information attacks infiltrate through tools that psychologically influence individuals and penetrate via various entertainment channels. Raising a culture of effective and vigilant information consumption among society is one of the most urgent and non-negotiable tasks of today. Only then will every step forward be productive, meaningful, and lead to the creation of a socially healthy environment free from various information attacks.

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