



Spirituality in the Information Society: The Influence of Internet Culture on Youth Morality

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Received: 07-08-2025
Accepted: 16-09-2025
Published: 28-10-2025



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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the influence of internet culture on the morality and spiritual values of young people in the context of the contemporary information society. The research focuses on how digital technologies, social networks, and online communication reshape youth value orientations, ethical behavior, and spiritual consciousness. A qualitative analytical method was employed through literature review and comparative analysis of recent interdisciplinary studies in sociology, media studies, education, and cultural philosophy published between 2020 and 2024. The findings reveal that internet culture exerts a dual influence on youth morality: while it contributes to the spread of individualism, moral relativism, and weakening of empathy, it also offers significant opportunities for moral education, spiritual development, and value-based social engagement when guided appropriately. The study concludes that strengthening spiritual immunity, media literacy, and ethical responsibility is essential to mitigating the negative effects of digital environments. Integrating national and universal moral values into digital education strategies is crucial for fostering spiritually resilient and ethically responsible youth in the information society.*

Keywords: *Information Society, Internet Culture, Youth Morality, Spirituality, Digital*

Ethics, Media Literacy

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, humanity has entered the age of information and digital technologies. Today, almost all spheres of society—education, culture, politics, economy, and even personal life—are shaped under the influence of an information-saturated environment. Although rapid access to information has made human life easier, this process has also introduced new challenges to morality, ethics, and values. Internet culture, particularly social media, has become the main source of information and communication for modern youth. Therefore, the values, norms, and ethical standards formed within this environment determine the future moral outlook of society. In this regard, preserving spirituality and guiding youth ethics in a healthy direction within an information-driven society has become one of the most urgent issues of today.

The concept of an “information society” is associated with the digitalization of science, culture, and communication processes, and it indeed has several positive aspects. For example, individuals in modern societies gain wide access to knowledge, global information exchange intensifies, and education and culture become more open and accessible. At the same time, the information society also produces negative consequences:

the overabundance of information, the spread of unfiltered content, the popularization of pseudo-values, and the rise of moral indifference negatively affect the worldview of young people. The internet culture shaped in the postmodern era often prioritizes “virtual reality” over real life, which leads to the weakening of a person’s inner world, spiritual needs, and moral responsibility. This process is especially widespread among youth and significantly influences their value system and moral consciousness. Therefore, preserving spirituality and ensuring the moral stability of young people in an information-saturated society must be regarded as a critical social necessity.

Methodology

Internet culture represents a new system of social behavior formed within the digital space, encompassing social networks, blogs, online games, media content, advertisements, and modern forms of communication. Today’s youth are considered a “digital generation” growing up in an information-rich environment, and their lives are closely intertwined with the online world. This situation is generating several noticeable changes in the ethical and value orientations of young people.

First, moral norms are becoming relativized: in the virtual space, the notions of “good” and “bad” often take on subjective meanings. Second, tendencies toward individualism and consumerism are intensifying; “likes” and “followers” on social networks have become indicators of social recognition and success. Third, empathy and real human interaction are weakening, as virtual communication increasingly replaces face-to-face connections. Fourth, pseudo-values are becoming widespread: internet influencers and advertising images frequently appear as moral ideals for young audiences. These processes negatively impact the moral and ethical stability of youth, and the absence of information filters, along with the widespread dissemination of false information and harmful content, creates significant psychological pressure on young minds.

Despite the challenges mentioned above, it would be incorrect to interpret internet culture as an entirely negative phenomenon. When properly guided, it can become a powerful tool for spiritual, educational, and cultural development. For example, by promoting spiritually and intellectually enriching content, it is possible to widely disseminate high-quality materials related to religious, philosophical, and national values on online platforms. Likewise, virtual educational programs can be used to create interactive courses for youth on media literacy, ethical culture, and digital ethics. Moreover, promoting positive role models on the internet—morally mature, intellectually driven, and responsible young individuals—can contribute significantly to the ethical development of youth. In this way, internet culture does not contradict spirituality but can instead become a means to strengthen it.

To support the processes mentioned above, several recommendations must be developed. First, every young person should possess ethical responsibility and critical thinking skills when using the internet. Second, it is necessary to introduce subjects such as “Information Culture and Ethics” in schools and higher education institutions to increase digital literacy. Third, strengthening youth’s moral immunity can be achieved through an educational system grounded in national values. Fourth, media projects that promote

ethical and moral norms online should be supported through state and social cooperation. Fifth, the role of the family must be increased, and parents should be more actively involved in shaping their children's responsible use of the internet.

The concept of an information society—particularly as described in Manuel Castells' *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996)—emphasizes that information technologies positively influence societal development. At the same time, this process can introduce new challenges in the realms of spirituality and moral values [1, p. 41].

In Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* (1970), it is highlighted that rapid information flow and global communication can lead to stress, value conflicts, and moral indifference among youth. From this perspective, these works serve as an important theoretical foundation for analyzing the complex relationship between the information society and spirituality [2, p. 101].

Result and Discussion

Internet culture and the digital generation are widely discussed in Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* (2006) and Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together* (2011). Research shows that internet culture significantly influences the value system of young people, reduces empathy and direct social interaction, and sometimes leads to deviations from moral norms in real life. As the "digital generation," youth adapt to the virtual environment, which in turn strengthens individualism and popularizes artificial values [3, p. 6].

The issue of social networks and moral education of youth is extensively analyzed in Danah Boyd's *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (2014). According to research, evaluation systems on social media (likes, followers) intensify individualism among youth and reduce empathy and face-to-face communication. However, this negative impact can be mitigated through positive content, ethical role models, and interactive educational tools [4, p. 22].

Among the literature focusing on the positive potential of the internet are UNESCO's *Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers* (2013) and Marc Prensky's *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants* (2001). These sources propose strategic directions for fostering moral and spiritual development of youth within the digital environment. For instance, strengthening young people's moral immunity can be achieved through the promotion of spiritually enriching content, enhancing media literacy, and developing interactive educational programs [5, p. 74].

In the context of national and religious values, Joshua Meyrowitz's *No Sense of Place* (1985) examines how digital spaces influence human consciousness. Local studies—particularly research by Uzbek scholars on internet culture and youth education—demonstrate that an educational system grounded in national values plays a crucial role in preserving the spiritual and moral integrity of young people [6, p. 6].

Over the last decade, digital technologies have deeply influenced all aspects of life. Prensky (2001), in "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," notes that today's youth—"the digital generation"—adapt naturally to technology, and for them, the digital environment

is an inseparable part of daily life. Likewise, Meyrowitz (1985) discusses how electronic media change social behavior and transform the traditional concepts of place and space [7, p. 13].

Rheingold (2012) presents strategies for effective and mindful activity in the online environment, increasing the ability of both youth and adults to use information resources productively [8, p. 101]. Castells (2009) provides an in-depth analysis of communicative power and the role of social networks in society. Meanwhile, Turkle (1984) studies how computers influence human psychology and personality, highlighting the psychological dimensions of technological development [9, p. 11].

UNESCO's *Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers* (2013) is an important tool for teaching young people how to safely and effectively use digital media [10, p. 32]. Selwyn (2016) explores the debates and challenges associated with the relationship between education and technology, showing how digital tools affect educational quality [11, p. 72]. Livingstone and Haddon (2009), in *Kids Online*, emphasize that children gain new learning and communication opportunities through online resources, though these opportunities are accompanied by significant risks [12, p. 4]. Subrahmanyam and Šmahel (2011) analyze the social and cognitive effects of media on youth development [13, p. 38].

Shirky (2008) explores the power of online group formation and the emergence of new forms of social activism [14, p. 26]. Buckingham (2000) examines how children and adolescents grow up within a consumer culture shaped by media, emphasizing the values and character traits formed through media exposure [15, p. 93]. Greenfield (2014) analyzes the psychological impact of television, video games, and computers on children's cognitive processes [16, p. 74].

Jenkins et al. (2016), in *Participatory Culture*, show that young people now actively participate in digital platforms, using their own voices to create and distribute content [18, p. 74]. Carr (2010) discusses how the internet and digital technologies reshape the brain, affecting attention, memory, and cognitive processing [19, p. 74]. National research in Uzbekistan (2020) also highlights the social and moral effects of media on youth within the local context, contributing to an understanding of the complex relationship between young people and the digital environment [20, p. 50].

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Conclusion

The reviewed literature leads to the following key conclusions:

1. **The information society provides new opportunities for youth**, yet it also introduces moral and spiritual challenges.
2. **Internet culture significantly influences the moral values of young people**: empathy declines, individualism increases, and artificial values become widespread.
3. **If guided properly, the internet can become a powerful tool for moral, ethical, and cultural development** rather than a threat.
4. **Education, family, the state, and society must work together** to ensure the ethical upbringing of youth in the digital environment.

Overall, preserving spirituality in the information society does not mean resisting technology; rather, it requires directing technology toward the service of morality. Internet culture acts as a dual-force in shaping youth consciousness—it can both harm and enrich. Utilizing its positive potential is one of the most important tasks for determining the nation's future.

In conclusion, the information society represents a new stage of human development. While it greatly accelerates progress in science, culture, and the economy, it also introduces new spiritual and moral challenges. The influence of internet culture on youth ethics is ambivalent—serving as both an opportunity and a source of risk. Therefore, safeguarding spirituality in the digital era means subordinating technology to moral values. Fostering spiritually mature, ethically responsible, and intellectually capable youth in the information age is one of the most critical missions shaping the future of the nation.

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