Role of Media in Addressing the Socialization Problems of the Younger Generation: The Case of Kazakhstan

ULBOSSYN M. YESSENBEKOVA[1], ONGAIGUL I. TURZHAN[2], KULNASH A. KOSHANOVA[3], ISKAKH D. YEGEMBERDIYEV[4], & BEGIM K. KUTYM[5]
[1,2,3,4]L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan
[5]Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan

The article examines the cultural and educational mission of modern media related to the spiritual and cultural education of youth in Kazakhstan. Over the past two decades, the socialization problems of Kazakh youth have been removed from the state's social policy agenda. Methods of comparative and complex analysis were applied in this study. To define acute youth problems, the study analyzed television projects and printed materials related to different periods of media activity in Kazakhstan. Several sociological measurements were used to reveal the needs of the television audience. The study defined the key socialization factors and institutions of young people. The article describes the role of media in establishing social standards of behavior, communication, and activity that directly affect the process of socialization. The study analyzes the activities of TV channels performing a cultural and educational function. The need to strengthen the editorial policy of media resources, focusing on socially significant issues with priority given to social and educational broadcasting, became an essential conclusion of the study. The results of the study allowed to compile an average portrait of the young generation, as well as to identify the key characteristics for the correction of life strategies.

Keywords: Media, youth socialization, social policy, television, institutions, socialization, cultural image, Kazakhstan

The relevance of the subject of study is due to the need for a scientific understanding of the role of modern media in youth socialization. Media play an essential role in forming a personality, as well as spiritual and cultural education. In the contemporary world, information and knowledge become vital resources allowing the state to pursue its social policy.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the influence of media on modern youth and the formation of traditional values in society. The media of Kazakhstan, in particular national television channels, became the object of the study. The subject of this study is the formation of the mission of television in the socialization of the younger generation.

The analysis of empirical data, the comparative and dialectical approach to the study of processes taking place in the youth environment, the impact of media content on the youth audience form the methodological basis for the study. The objectives of the research involve the analysis of the role of media in establishing social standards of

Correspondence to: Ulbossyn M. Yessenbekova, Department of Teleradio and Public Relations, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, 2, Satpayev Street, Astana-010008, Republic of Kazakhstan.

behavior, communication and activity that directly affect the process of socialization, and the justification of the need to fill the media with cultural and educational content. The results of this study can be recommended for the media to develop editorial policies.

Literature Review

The issues of theory and practice of media in modern society are well studied by such scholars as Firsov (1977) and many others. Sappak (1963) and Zasurskii (2001) consider television "an important tool for the production of cultural forms" – they define the nature of television, determine its place and role in society, and attempt to predict its future development. Television plays a key role in managing socio-cultural processes and the emotional climate of entire cultures (McLuhan, 1997; Adorno, 1972; Lasswell, 1989). According to these authors, television changes people's attitudes, increases the cultural level of society, and plays a crucial role in moral and ethical development.

Numerous studies show that the spiritual and cultural level of society directly depends on the intensity of socialization processes and tools to influence individuals (Prauseet al., 2019; Dirþytë et al., 2017). Both society and individuals are influenced by factors and institutions of socialization. While factors of socialization that motivate an individual to take active action can be divided into micro-, meso- and macro-levels, socialization institutions include family, educational institutions, and mass media (Cohen, & Kennedy, 2000; Ritzer, 1998; Bogomolova, 2015; Grishkova, 2004).

With the development of communication technologies, the educational role and influence of media on the younger generation has significantly increased (Tejkalová et al., 2015; Al-Kahtani, 2018). As predicted by the Austrian and English philosopher Popper and Martin, the media become the dominant agent of socialization, which causes the vector of social development to shift from a closed type to an open society (Popper, 1992; Martin, 1990).

The works by Durkheim and Parsons are devoted to the understanding of socialization issues. They note that social influence and upbringing fix the typical characteristics of a child that are required in collective life. Both scholars see the essential socialization purpose in "the formation of individuals with stable value orientations and fundamental culture components" (Durkheim, 1938; Parsons, 2017). Based on the analysis of scientific works and empirical data, the article confirms the scientists' opinion on the importance of using collectivist mentality as a factor in increasing public confidence in the media (Lazarsfeld, 1996; Firsov, 1977; Yessenbekova, 2018b). The speed and depth of the development of modern civilization result in global evolutionary changes. In the industrial era, an individual was inextricably linked to a particular social group, which was subject to social norms and traditions. In the information society, the boundaries of social groups are blurred; its influence core is highly mobile (Karpova, 2019; Yessenbekova, 2015; Thompson, 1998; Danilova, 2017).

The social policy of Kazakhstan places great importance on the education of young people, their social well-being. Therefore, society is interested in using modern media tools and technological innovations in preserving national culture and traditions. These are well-studied issues (Yessenbekova, 2018a).

Scientific works by Mikhailov and Vartanyan focus on the linkages between the educational level of youth and its unsuccessful socialization. Their studies provide a detailed analysis of the mutual influence of various social factors (education, microenvironment, and intellectual level) and deviant forms of youth behavior (Mikhailov, 2014; Vartanyan, 2006).

According to the authors' observations, young people actively participate, suggest ways to preserve the aboriginal culture, language, and traditions, social and national development. The voluntary participation of young people in the program of spiritual revival and modernization of public consciousness can be called a phenomenon (Yessenbekova, 2016; Zobov, 2000). This topic requires further study.

The literature review confirms the importance of using collective mentality as a factor in increasing public confidence in the media (Lazarsfeld, 1996; Firsov, 1977; Yessenbekova, 2018b).

Methodology

The methodological base of the study draws upon scientific concepts on the activities of mass media and the history of television. The authors studied the archives of the state television channels Kazakhstan, Khabar, and other periodicals, along with the archives of international scientific publications. This review allowed concluding that the Kazakh academic foundations have few studies on the practical implementation of the cultural and educational mission of television, which justifies the relevance of this research.

The authors used methods of historical, complex, and comparative analysis. The researchers analyzed television projects and their scenarios, studied the development stages of the cultural and educational activities of Kazakh television. When working with the archives related both to the history and the current state of Kazakh media, the authors applied comparative analysis.

The critical empirical research materials include the nationwide television network, results of the television audience surveys and ratings conducted by TNS Central Asia, as well as sociological studies on the audience perception of television programs in Kazakhstan.

Results

The formation of personality is influenced by several institutions and factors (Figure 1), while the nature and extent of their impact depend on the following circumstances: social status, the strength of social ties, education, age, etc. Various intrapersonal, interpersonal, and external factors that motivate people are involved in solving social problems (Oganisjana et al., 2017).

As Isaeva correctly notes, "a person is the ultimate social unit, the bearer of which is subject to the action of social laws, and at the same time has a certain freedom. The process of personality formation is determined by society through social standards of behavior, communication, and activity. Therefore, a person can be considered as an accumulator of socially significant information" (Isaeva, 2005).

This article attempts to contribute to the study of the cultural and educational mission of modern media in Kazakhstan. The authors do not tend to idealize the state of youth issues in Kazakh society. These problems are the same as in other countries: education, employment, social issues, delinquency among children and adolescents. To confirm this theory, let us consider one of the studies on the problem of alcohol consumption among young people. The study was conducted by the Aman-Saulyk Public Fund and the Almaty Management University (ALMAU) in October 2018. The survey was done without the participation of state or quasi-state structures. Students from 10 universities of the Almaty city (Kazakhstan) were interviewed in the course of the study. A total of 773 respondents were interviewed, including 388 men and 385 women in the age of 18-25 years. The results
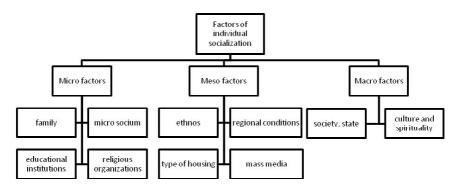
Figure 1. Factors of individual socialization

of the survey surprised both the researchers and society. It turned out that 38% of respondents tried alcohol for the first time under the age of 16, 37% – at the age of 16-18 years old, 20% – at the age of 18-21 years old, and only 5% tried alcohol for the first time when they were older than 21.

At the same time, 5% of respondents admitted that they drunk alcohol daily, or almost daily, while 15% of respondents drunk alcohol once or twice a week and 29% -– several times a month. Another 29% of respondents claimed they drunk alcohol only on holidays and festive occasions, and 22% of respondents drunk alcohol very rarely, no more than once or twice a year. At the same time, 27% of respondents admitted that they had trouble after drinking alcohol. Among the most common problems, the respondents indicated conflicts with the family members and friends – 41.5%; conflicts with strangers – 38.5%; other – 13.6%. The "other" option involves severe hangover, injury, loss, breakage, or damage to things.

During the study, the respondents themselves suggested effective measures to combat alcohol use. The most popular suggestions included tightening regulations on the sale of alcoholic beverages, and being in a drunken state, clarifying the dangers of alcohol, increasing the number of free sports sections, promoting a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, the researchers have revealed several alarming signs among young people that civil society needs to study and address jointly with the government bodies (Results of Sociological Research, 2019).

The media play the most significant role in imposing negative behavioral stereotypes and in establishing a new "permissible scale." Their influence is commensurate with the impact of family pedagogical institutions. In Kazakhstan, 2019 was declared the Year of Youth and 2020 – the Year of the Volunteer. The state is trying to promote youth movement, its renewal, reformatting youth relations with state and society. All this happens in the context of a sharp struggle between the traditional and modernized models of socialization. Globalization and sociogenesis of the Kazakh nation in the youth environment affect the change in value orientations, contributing to their revaluation. The gap between the needs of the younger generation and the possibilities of meeting them becomes noticeable (Grossberg et al., 2008; Williamson, 1993).

In all cases under consideration, the authors managed to establish the following pattern: producers of the Kazakh television channels, which are funded by the state, do not consider their audience's opinion. Perhaps they underestimate the intellectual needs of the youth audience. Most young people prefer entertaining content, that is, music and comedy programs or sitcoms. Surveys of the audience's opinion and analysis of publications

on social networks show that young people of Kazakhstan want television to enrich their lives and allow them to see the world in a new way.

Complex analysis of the research materials has allowed for the following conclusions. First, for objective reasons, Kazakh youth is a vulnerable structure, with an uncertain orientation and social status resulting from the age-specific transitional youth phase. Secondly, an essential feature of the Kazakh youth social structure is its openness, vibrancy, and plasticity to environmental changes, its susceptibility to profound transformational processes in society. Third, these qualitative characteristics play a fundamental role in the media plan on the formation of conditions and mechanisms for the socialization of the Kazakh youth. Fourth, all this plays a decisive role in rethinking youth's life strategies and establishing social and value ideals of Kazakh youth as part of preserving the national mentality.

Discussion

Recently, there have been several attempts in Kazakh society to reduce the imbalance between the requirements of Kazakh youth and the conditions for their satisfaction. In this regard, the media play an essential role. They can promote the educational aspirations of youth, popularize the spiritual, cultural, and moral values of the Kazakh people. Their success also depends on the socially responsible behavior of the youth themselves.

New state social policy is aimed not only at solving the educational problems of youth but also at solving the problems of vocational training and competence in a competitive environment of the labor market (Sofoklis & Megalokonomou, 2016). Let us illustrate this with the sphere of education. The state annually allocates 4.9% of GDP for the sphere of education and science. Secondary education in Kazakhstan remains compulsory and free. The country annually allocates from 30 to 70 thousand educational grants for studying at the national universities (How Many Educational Grants Were Allocated in Kazakhstan, 2019). In 1993, the state established the "Bolashaq" program, aimed at training personnel and specialists for priority sectors of the economy in leading companies and world universities (The "Bolashaq" Program: Results and Forecasts, 2019). Public policy fosters a cult of education and professionalism among the younger generation. All this indicates the priority of education and science. However, the question of the program's effectiveness remains open (Sam, 2018).

The problems of youth and their inclusion in the processes of policy formation are discussed at high-level international institutions. These issues were reflected in a speech on the UN policy: "young people should take an active part in decision-making and shaping the policy on which their future directly depends" (Speech of the UN Secretary-General, 2019).

At this stage of development, society fully understands the importance of giving specialized and professional character to youth socialization. Spontaneous socialization cannot provide the necessary parameters for the preservation and reproduction of national values and the spiritual traditions of the people (Driouchi & Gamar, 2017). Therefore, the efforts of society and the state aimed at youth socialization require a comprehensive informational impact on young people.

Based on this ideology, apart from the dissemination of information, society wants modern media to perform such educational functions that will develop young people's skills in a systematic and meaningful perception of information.

Conclusion

The article considers the cultural and educational mission of television in the spiritual and cultural education of youth in Kazakhstan. The authors understand that the modern world of digital standards is changing rapidly (Batkovskyet al., 2019; Blatovaet al., 2019). Today, in addition to traditional functions – to inform, educate, and entertain – television develops in the fourth direction -– to surprise. In this context, the researchers suggest several recommendations that will help media managers and public structures better realize the educational and enlightening purpose of television. First, state television channels must set high standards for themselves, increase the efficiency of their efforts, and their usefulness to society. This can be achieved if they offer audiences original and creative programs. Second, it is necessary to define clear criteria for assessing TV channels by using the following indicators: expert assessment of television content, the audience's opinion on TV shows and the level of confidence in the information; the social significance of the content, and its intellectual quality. Finally, in addition to ratings and audience shares, the system of measured parameters and analysis of the television channel's audience must include parameters of the audience's attitude and the level of confidence in the information, along with the intellectual quality of television products.

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Ulbossyn M. Yessenbekova (Cand. Sci. of Phil., Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan, 2003) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teleradio and Public Relations at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Republic of Kazakhstan. Dr. Yessenbekov's research interests include: trends in the development of modern mass communications, human in the information society.

Ongaigul I. Turzhan (Cand. Sci. of Phil., L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan, 2006) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teleradio and Public Relations at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Republic of Kazakhstan. Dr. Turzhan's research interests include: journalism, PR-technologies, new media.

Kulnash A. Koshanova is a senior lecturer in the Department of Teleradio and Public Relations at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Republic of Kazakhstan. Her research interests include: public-private partnership, human in the information society, journalism.

Iskakh D. Yegemberdiyev is a PhD candidate in the Department of Teleradio and Public Relations at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Republic of Kazakhstan. His research interests are trends in the development of modern mass communications, PR-technologies.

Begim K. Kutym is a student in the School of Sciences and Humanities at Nazarbayev University, Republic of Kazakhstan. Her research interests are communications technology, human in the information society.