ABSTRACT

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The Influence of the Virtual Space on Formation of Identity

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Background:

Due to dynamic cyber revolution of the global network Internet, the modern person is learning the new areas of life every day in cyberspace, which is one of the powerful agents of socialization. The virtual space provides the ample opportunities for self-expression and unleashing of the potential of personality, realization of qualities and characteristics, experiencing emotions and playing roles, that are frustrated in the real life. However, there are the risks of excessive immersion in the virtual space, which can negatively affect on the formation of identity of personality. That is why recently, the increasing number of scientists are turning to the study of virtual reality and of impact of the Internet space on the personality.
The aim of the study: to explore the features of identity's formation of the students depending of the degree of their immersion in the virtual space.

Methods:

Theoretical (analysis and synthesis of the psychological literature); empirical (pilot study, statistical analysis). 75 students who is studying at the Psychological Faculty.

Results:

In psychological researches the most scientists define the identity as the dynamic system of ideas of the personality about Self-image, which is formed in the process of self-knowledge and self-acceptance of the individual and his acceptance by others significant to him. Virtual identity (VI) – is a social identity, the manifestation of one's "Self" in the computer-mediated globalized world of online communities, social networks, websites, and virtual worlds (Lobanova-Shunina, 2015).

The results obtained indicate that the virtual space allows to construct the identity that has the ideal qualities and characteristics. The construction of the virtual identity most often occurs by reason of the individual's dissatisfaction with his real identity or is the consequence of identity crisis. So far as the Self-ideal is built from the ready-made set of virtual material, the virtual identity is secondary and its structure is devoid of uniqueness. However, the ability to create the different Self-images in the virtual space leads to the formation of the mutable, unstable identity, herewith the virtual identity can distort the real identity (Soldatova & Pogorelova, 2018).

Back (2010) and Wilson (2012) deny the construction of an alternative identity and consider that the healthy person strives for the authenticity and self-actualization both in real life and in cyberspace. The attractive electronic tools of self-presentation, allow users to construct easily and freely the symbols that reflect the real identity of their personality. The virtual space is regarded not as the space for building the virtual identity, but as the means of creating the virtual shell of the real identity of the personality.

The empirical research shows that depending of the purposes, conditions of activity and time spent in the Internet, the virtual space can have both positive and negative impact on the formation of personality of identity. On the one hand, the virtual communication gives the experience of analysis of one's own successes and failures in interaction, the ability to identify oneself with one's ideal, to test various roles of oneself, to experiment with one's own identity expanding opportunities of self-knowledge and self-development. On the other hand, the students who are overly immersed in the virtual space are distinguished by contradictory of Self-attitude, the disharmony of Self-image, the deformation of Self-concept, their identity is reoriented exclusively to the individual level, the identification mechanisms of formation of social identity are destroyed.

However, the degree of positive or negative impact of the virtual space on the personality depends largely of the success of primary socialization, namely, of the social norms and values assimilated by the personality in the real society and ability to control the time spent in the virtual space. It is the individual characteristics of the personality that are the criterion for the critical assimilation of the Internet-culture and the condition for the formation of prosocial identity.

Conclusions:

It is concluded that by abusing being in the virtual space, the immature personality can learn the programmed decisions and the ready-made patterns of behavior, which destructively affects the formation of identity, deforming the Self-concept and can cause the identity crisis. In so far as the excessive immersion in the virtual space negatively affects the formation of identity, it is necessary to have the effective system of measures to harmonize the personality, expand his ability to establish the constructive relationships with others, as well as formation of adequate motivation to use the virtual space.

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