

Online Social Networks as Means of Communication and Education of Modern Ukrainian Youth

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Abstract

The article examines the influence of online social networking on Ukrainian students in 2021. The author made an attempt to highlight attitude of contemporary young people to the influence of online networks on their life and activity. Popularity and application of social networks for the purpose of communication and education brings up the necessity for studying of the networks on mindsets of young people and their online communication. Thus, research is necessary to examine the influence of social networks within Ukrainian society, with the current article focusing on students' network activity. This article discusses the effects of social networks on lifestyles, communicative behaviors and education of young people both personally and socially by linking theory and practice. The purpose of the study was to explore not only the attitude of students towards social networks, but also the communicative and educational aspects of online networks. The study involved 17-19-year-old students of Ukrainian higher educational institution. In terms of data collection, the author used a questionnaire. Author also managed to identify preferred topics for online communication and analyzed them.

Key words: social networks, online communication, education, young people, Ukraine.

1. Introduction. Social networks in the life of young people.

Young people are socially oriented, i.e. it is natural for them to communicate and be socially active. That's why they always look for connections with others, and want to be members of a community [11]. Their desire for social relationships can be satisfied in a peer group relationship, from which they get emotional support. This peer group relationship involves reciprocal acceptance and recognition. A young person's individual values can largely be confirmed in this peer group relationship. Peer groups play the crucial role of both a reference group and a support group [31, p. 130].

Young people have always been looking for ways to connect and network with each other. Nowadays, at the age of digital media, young people have found ways to be socially active via the internet, which is possible due to functioning numerous social networking platforms and apps.

Over the last decade social networks turned out to be new forms of interaction among young people who are quite receptive to new forms of communication. Social networks serve as easy and convenient instruments for communication over the geographical distances and time zones. The Internet effectively helps young people expand their communication circles, share information, build social relationships, become more knowledgeable etc. An online social network (OSN) is a social structure

made of individuals (or organizations) that can be called as “nodes”, and the links that are the different types of relationships/interdependency, established between nodes [20, p. 287].

Social network is alternately known as a virtual community. A social network is a website that unites people, bringing them together to talk, share ideas and interests, or make friends [4]. Unlike traditional networks, social networks contain content created by hundreds of different people.

Online Social Networks (OSNs) demonstrate a significantly rapid growth nowadays. According to S. Kemp (2021) [14, p.75], the number of active users of the major OSNs are the following (in millions): Facebook – 2,853 mln., YouTube – 2, 291 mln., WhatsApp – 2 mln., Instagram – 1, 386 mln., Weixin / WeChat – 1, 342 mln., Viber – 1, 169 mln., LinkedIn – 774,6 mln., TikTok - 732 mln., Telegram – 550 mln., Snapchat – 514 mln., Pinterest – 478 mln., Twitter – 397 mln., Quora – 300 mln.

The goal of online social networks is to provide young people with opportunities to interact with each other, share interests, build relationships by means of sharing video, pictures, music, chatting etc. There is an enormous number of online social networks though only few of them have become popular among young people. For instance, **Facebook** is the most popular social networking website on the Internet. It is a popular destination for users to set up personal space and connect with friends, share pictures, share movies, talk about what you're doing, etc. [4]. **YouTube** has become an excellent network of users sharing video blogs or vlogs and other exciting videos. **WhatsApp** came on the scene later than Facebook, but was able to draw attention of millions of people around the world by giving them the ability to communicate and share instantly with individuals and groups. A lot of young people are in favor of using **Instagram**, an online social network that allows users to share their pictures. **Viber** is one of the most popular instant messaging applications in the world, available for all major mobile devices and operating systems. Viber has been offering free call and messaging services to mobile users. **LinkedIn** is one of the best platforms for connection with current and past coworkers and potentially future employers. It is a platform that was born as a social network for professionals and companies. Its main objective is to put people in contact who are looking for work synergies and new professional or business opportunities. **TikTok** is a social video application that allows its users to share short videos. It offers plenty of stickers, filters and augmented reality features to add to your videos. **Telegram** is an instant messaging network that is available across platforms in more than eight languages. However, Telegram has always focused more on the privacy and security of the messages you send over the internet by using its platform. **Pinterest** is a photo sharing and visual bookmarking social media site or app that enables young people to find new ideas for their projects and save them [28]. **Twitter** is another service that allows users to post 140-character long posts from their phones and on the Internet. It is an exciting way to find out what's going on around the world.

There is no doubt that popularity of social networks can be explained by a number of its advantages, such as promptness, the accessible format of the presented information, the public nature and accessibility of the interface, the possibility of the instant and global dissemination of information, the ability of users to express opinions and discuss news [21, p. 70]. Each user can be both the creator of the information and its user.

In addition to a wide range of communicative aspects, social networks and their functioning create the so-called virtual culture as a new type of culture, which is formed at the intersection of conceptual worlds and spheres of different nations, reality and virtuality as different spaces of human activity, different world images [15].

Social networks are constantly used by young people. The United Nations Organization (UNO) uses the terms youth and young people interchangeable to mean age 15-24. The UNO defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States [7]. In our research we also use the terms youth and young people applied to Ukrainian students aged 17-19.

The aim of the paper is to highlight the role of social networks in the life of young Ukrainian people. The paper examines such important functions of social networks as communication and education. The paper also highlights the question of young people communicative habits via social networks, their online interests, incentives and priorities. In addition, it reflects on a question as to what extent the functioning of social networks represents effective means in the sphere of education. Spheres of young adults' online interests are also discussed in the paper.

The article gives a short overview on online social networks and their influence on young people communication, including their hobbies and interest, their educational level, the application trends of online technology both in social networks, and in education. It also provides some pedagogical solutions for the problem under discussion.

We specifically seek to answer the following questions:

- What social networks are predominantly used by young people?
- What is the intensity of social network use?
- How efficient are the social networks?
- What are the reasons for using social networks?
- What is students' opinion about their communicative skills?
- How do students assess social networks from educational and communicative point of view?

2. Literature review. It is essential to investigate what other scholars have written in relation to this topic, so this literature review has been produced to summarize existing knowledge and to provide a contextual background.

M. Mason traced the influence of social networks on children and young people. The scholar distinguished the reasons of popular networks use, experiences young people have and contact risks associated being online [19]. Communication and education aspects were less important in comparison with risks and dangers young people can face being online and applying social networks. M. Anderson and J. Jiang (2018) research [1] indicated that Facebook is no longer a dominant online social network for teens (in comparison with the results of 2014-2015). Besides, the survey conducted by the scholars also finds there is no clear consensus among teens about the effect that social media has on the lives of young people today. Minorities of teens describe that effect as mostly positive (31%) or mostly negative (24%), but the largest share (45%) says that effect has been neither positive nor negative (May 2018).

More of it, J. L. Hamilton, J. Nesi, & S. Choukas-Bradley (2020) stressed the implications of social networks for adolescent development and mental health in the context of COVID-19., with attention to the ways in which social networks may be

especially helpful for teens in the midst of physical distancing practices, as well as how social network behaviors can negatively impact teens' physical and mental health during this time [10]. The scholars paid no attention to educational aspects of online social networks.

H. Baglari, M. Kumar Sharma, P. Marimuthu and N. Suma (2020) distinguished the pattern of social media use among youth. They also managed to identify implication for social media literacy. The researchers came to the conclusion that young people are significantly addicted to using social networks. Life style disturbance in academics and daily life activities was seen secondary to social media use (99.7%). 62.3 % reported social media helped in communication with others and 75% shared information, videos, images through Social Media (2020) [2].

R. Edwards (2014) highlighted benefits of social networking websites for young people. This study found that there are a number of significant benefits associated with the use of SNS including: enhanced learning opportunities; facilitating supportive relationships; identity formation; not to mention its contribution towards the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of young people [8]. Nevertheless, observation of educational role of social networks would add to the value of the research.

A. Kusuma (2020) studied the impact of social media on youth. The study draws a conclusion that social media also has a paramount impact on students and youth to consider human nature and adversely becoming greedy and fanatical [17]. Thus, social media is being utilized for the construction and as well degradation of people from all backgrounds of life.

Recent researches in Ukraine demonstrate approaches used by scholars in the following spheres: political and civic activity of Ukrainian youth; business communication etc. T. Savrasova (2017) [26, p. 104-113] discussed the role of social networks in development of Ukrainian young people civic activity. She presented the results of her own theoretical and research reflection on the structure and characteristics of the civic activity associated with the Ukrainian youth. The results of the analysis suggested that the level of the Ukrainian young people's civic activity and its further development were directly dependent on the use of online social networks. Many young Ukrainians who regularly used social networks were highly active in terms of the civic matters. L. Morska and I. Simkova (2020) stressed the importance of linguistic and pedagogical aspects in communication of Ukrainian schoolchildren in social networks [21, p. 67-81].

Young people draw attention of numerous scholars (Zheng & Cheok, 2011; Notley, 2009; Subrahmanyam and Lin, 2007; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008; Jung-Lee, 2009;), who raised important questions about the frequency of the networks used and the motivations behind them. The researchers justified the relevance of studying this age group due to the fact that young people are inclined to express themselves through virtual communication systems while the social networks are rapidly growing. Studying social networks, used by young people, is logical considering they prefer these communication forms to other traditional means as they offer direct personal contact [6, p. 16].

In 2011, Zheng and Cheok (2011) analyzed young people's use of social networks and found out that in 2008 only 30% of the young people from Singapore made use of social networks, while by 2011 99% of young people between 7 and 24 years of age had become social network users [32]. Another side of this issue was connected with

detection of factors that explain the use of social networks. In this regard, Notley (2009) identified key factors affecting the use of social networks by young Australians. Applying a narrative methodology, the author established an explanatory theoretical model composed of four dimensions: personal interests, necessities, relationships and technological competencies. The scholar suggested that social networks serve as a tool to facilitate social inclusion [23].

Subrahmanyam and Lin (2007) [29] examined the relationship between adolescent online activity and well-being. K. Subrahmanyam and P. Greenfield examined adolescents' relationships with friends, romantic partners, strangers, and their families in the context of their online communication activities. The authors showed that adolescents were using these communication tools primarily to reinforce existing relationships, both with friends and romantic partners [30]. More and more they are integrating these tools into their "offline" worlds, using, for example, social networking sites to get more information about new entrants into their offline world.

S. Jung-Lee (2009) [13] examined four hypotheses to explain social outcomes of online communication among adolescents: displacement, increase, rich-get-richer, and social-compensation hypotheses. The study examined which hypothesis was supported, considering differences in social ties (time vs. quality of social relationships; parent-child relationships; friendships; school connectedness).

According to the report released in 2021 by Common Sense Media on social media's effects on teens, about half of the 1,500 young people surveyed said social networks are very important for them in order to get support and advice, feel less alone, and express themselves creatively, as well as for staying in touch friends and family while social distancing. And 43 percent said that using social networks makes them feel better when they are depressed, stressed, or anxious [24].

It is mainly through social networks that the young generation gets information. Further, it is peer group members (friends) who provide this information. This transmission of information is an act which allows them to share something emotional. The young generation gets social recognition in social media space too, which means that this sort of communication functions as social capital. What counts most for them is to be linked. It augments their subjective happiness [12, p.1436].

According to relational maintenance theory, when one person recognizes another as someone to whom he or she can give support, and someone from whom he or she can receive support (such as sending icon images, sending cute stickers, giving Likes in Facebook), even if these acts look trivial, they can lead to emotional reliance, as this reciprocal act becomes a ritual for them. Sharing images conveys the meaning of reciprocal recognition. One is judged and evaluated by others; one exists only in the eyes of others [18, p. 8].

Online social networks lay the foundation for individuals to interact by stage-managing their own lives, which are displayed openly in the form of the wide variety of information that people post on the site. Cardon thinks that, the Facebook platform, for example, favors interactions "between individuals who know each other or are in similar social circles" [5, p. 3; 22].

3. Methodology. A cross-sectional mixed methods study design was used, in which a survey was administered to 72 young people, students, in the ages of 18–19. Among methods used in the research we find useful the following ones: a case study

of Ukraine; use of secondary data; comparative analysis. The empirical study was carried out at the National University of Ostroh Academy in 2021. The research sample involved 72 students aged 17 to 19 (whose major was philology, foreign languages and literatures). Data gathering was conducted in September of 2021. The empirical research involved the use of several methods of inquiry and research techniques.

The case method of Ukrainian youth social media application provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, its components, actors involved etc. So, it is used to provide description of youth interests from the point of view of social network usage in Ukraine in 2021; their convictions, hobbies and priorities; effectiveness of the networks; forms of communication; description of functions and time consumption.

Secondary data analysis (official statistics) provided us with data regarding young people social network usage due to the age factor, frequency of use, their priorities. We used it to have an opinion about general picture of young people interests, taking in consideration previous studies about social networks and their influence on young people.

Comparative analysis is used in the study of young people social network application within the period under discussion. The comparative approach furthered our understanding of youth involvement in online social networks in Ukraine, a role of young people in its functioning. Empirically, it reinforced attempts at working out criteria for assessment of young people usage of social networks and highlight differences (similarities) in attitudes of young people towards them as means of communication and education in 2021.

For studying the role of social networks in the lives of Ukrainian young people the author's own questionnaire "Online Social Networks as Means of Communication and Education of Modern Ukrainian Youth " was used; this data allowed to identify the nature of the attitude to social networks, the amount of time spent in the online space and the use of Web sites in the process of educating young people.

The results of diagnostics were subjected to statistical analysis with qualitative interpretation and a systematic generalization using statistical methods of data processing.

4. Research results.

The results of the analysis of the questionnaire provided an opportunity to identify social networks that were used by Ukrainian students. For example, in Diagram 1 it is shown that Ukrainian first year students use a wide range of social network. Telegram (100%), YouTube (97,2%), Instagram (94,4%), Pinterest (72,2%) and Facebook (66,7%) dominate among students, while TikTok (38,9%), Twitter (27,8%), Snapchat (25%) are used less. The least frequent were WhatsApp (13,9%), Viber (11,1%), V kontakte (5,6%), Classmates (2,8%), and LinkedIn (2,8%).

Scholars indicate that Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram were reported to be the most actively used social media platforms in Ukraine among those aged 18 to 39 years in January and February 2021 [9]. But our research indicates that young people in higher educational institution, aged 17-19, have more actively used Telegram, YouTube and Instagram, leaving Facebook behind.

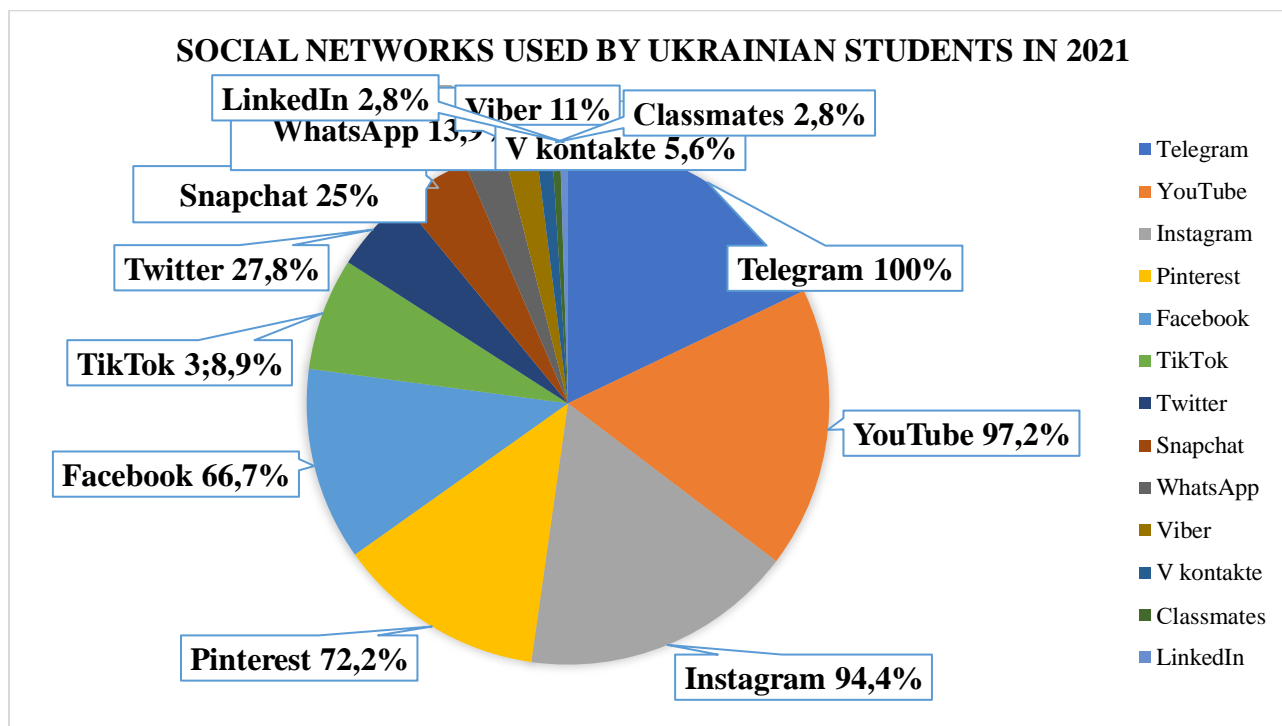


Diagram 1: Social networks used by Ukrainian students in 2021.

Source: own processing.

Diagram 2 demonstrates social network priorities among young people. Despite numerous social networks Ukrainian students are rather deliberate. According to the criterion of “time spending”, they arranged and selected social networks the following way. The most attractive networks were Telegram (88,9% of the respondents), Instagram (86,1% of the respondents), YouTube (47,2%). Less popular due to the criteria of time spending turned out to be TikTok (27,8%), Twitter (5,5%), Pinterest (5,5%), WhatsApp (2,8%), Classmates (2,8%) and Snapchat (2,8%) (Diagram 2).

In general, the results of the research on the use of social networks by Ukrainian students in relation to the presented criterion indicate that the surveyed students were more interested in using Telegram and Instagram. The above-mentioned platforms fit interests and demands of young people of the surveyed age. The former is a cloud-based instant messaging (IM) system, which is fast, simple, secure and free. According to statistics, Telegram has over 500 million monthly active users and is one of the 10 most downloaded apps in the world [25]. It can be used to send photos, videos, and different types of documents in addition to regular messages. The latter is Instagram, which is also attractive for students. Their choice coincides with statistics. It is one of the world’s largest social media platforms, with 1.4 billion monthly users [27], Instagram offers an easy way to connect through images and videos. Telegram and Instagram are the most popular social networks worldwide as of July 2021, ranked by number of active users [14, p. 75]. In comparison with other social networks, Facebook was not so popular as Telegram and Instagram amongst users aged between 17 and 19.

SOCIAL NETWORKS WHERE STUDENTS SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME

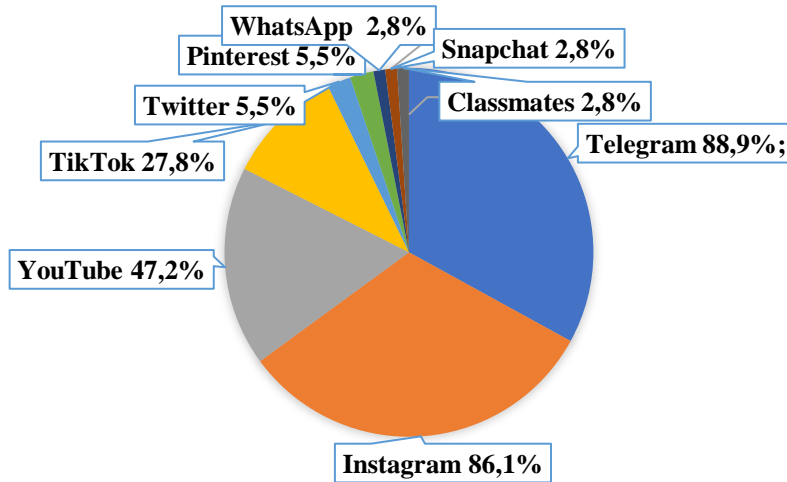


Diagram 2: Social networks where students spend most of their time.
Source: own processing.

Social networks play more and more important role in the lives of young people, so students spend significant amount of time online. Daily usage of young people varies. 42% of respondents use social networks from 2 to 4 hours daily, 33% of surveyed spend more than four hours using social networks. 19% spend from 1 to 2 hours daily and 6% use social networks up to one hour (Diagram 3).

DAILY USAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

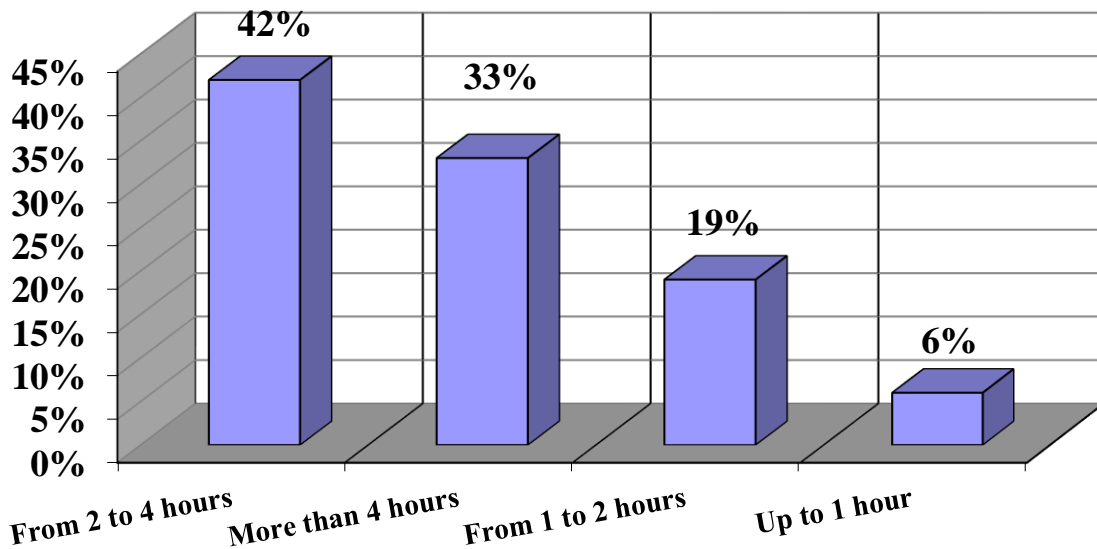


Diagram 3: Daily usage of social networks.
Source: own processing.

Daily usage of social networks is closely connected with interests of young people and their studying, but most of all, it indicates that young Ukrainians are really interested in social networks and the content they provide. Diagram 4 reflects attitude of young people towards social networks. 62 % of respondents are positive about social networks, because they are convinced that the networks are absolutely helpful. 35% of respondents are neutral and 3% suppose that it depends on the situation and interlocutors you communicate with (Diagram 4).

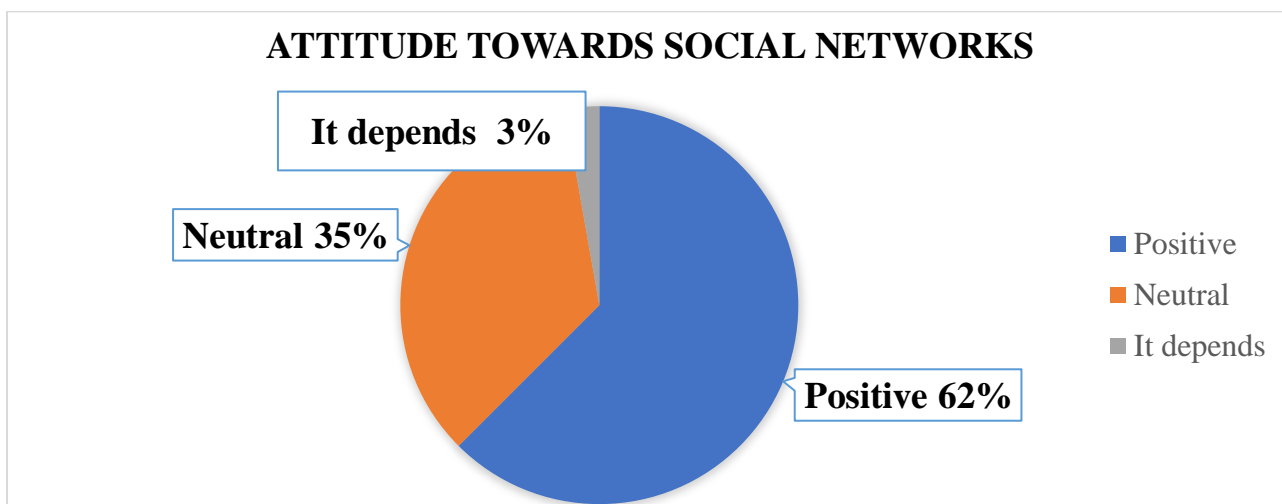


Diagram 4: Attitude towards social networks.

Source: own processing.

Despite the fact that Ukrainian young people use a lot of social networks they are convinced that some of them are more efficient than others. From the point of view of effectiveness Telegram and Instagram are the most effective. 88,9 % of respondents supported Telegram while 72,2% of respondents consider Instagram to be quite effective. 13,9% of respondents chose Twitter, 13,9% were for Viber, 11,1% stood for Facebook, 2,8% supported TikTok and 2,8% chose Messenger as the most effective social network. This or that social network was selected due to the options offered that coincided with young people interests (Diagram 5).

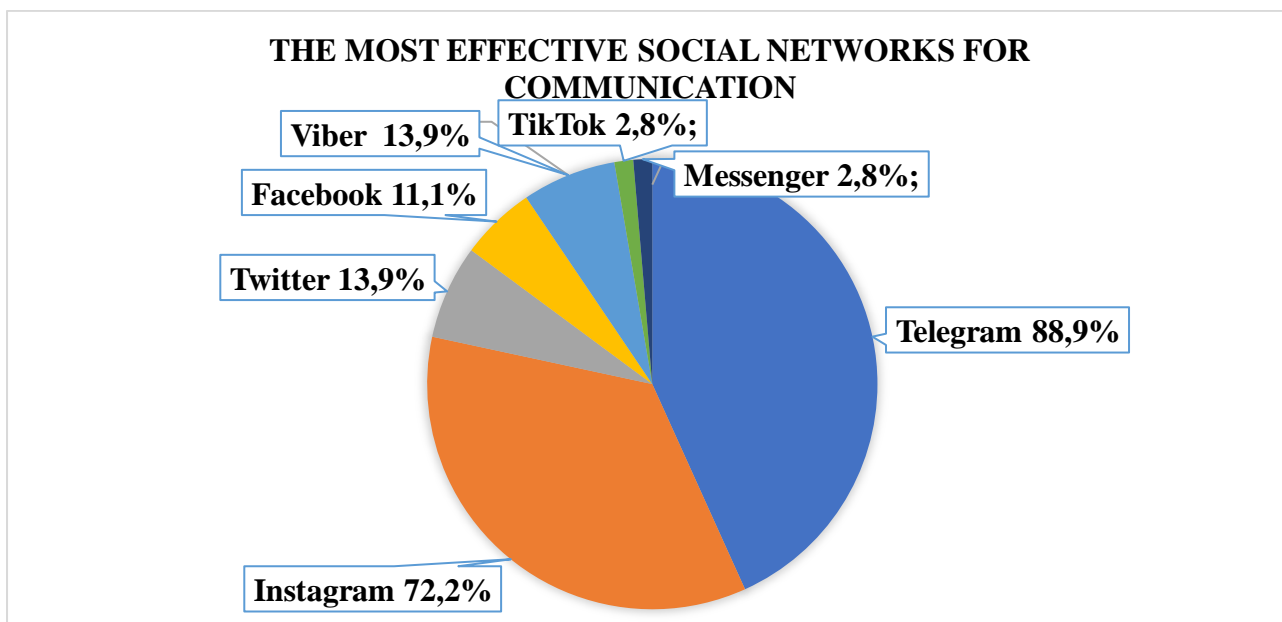


Diagram 5: The most effective social networks for communication.

Source: own processing.

Social networks are inseparable from communication and communicative skills. A questionnaire offered included the question about young people communicative skills whether they changed or not and most of the respondents were convinced that their communicative skills changed for better (79%). 18% were sure that their

communicative skills haven't changed at all and 3% supported the idea that their skills have partially changed (Diagram 6).

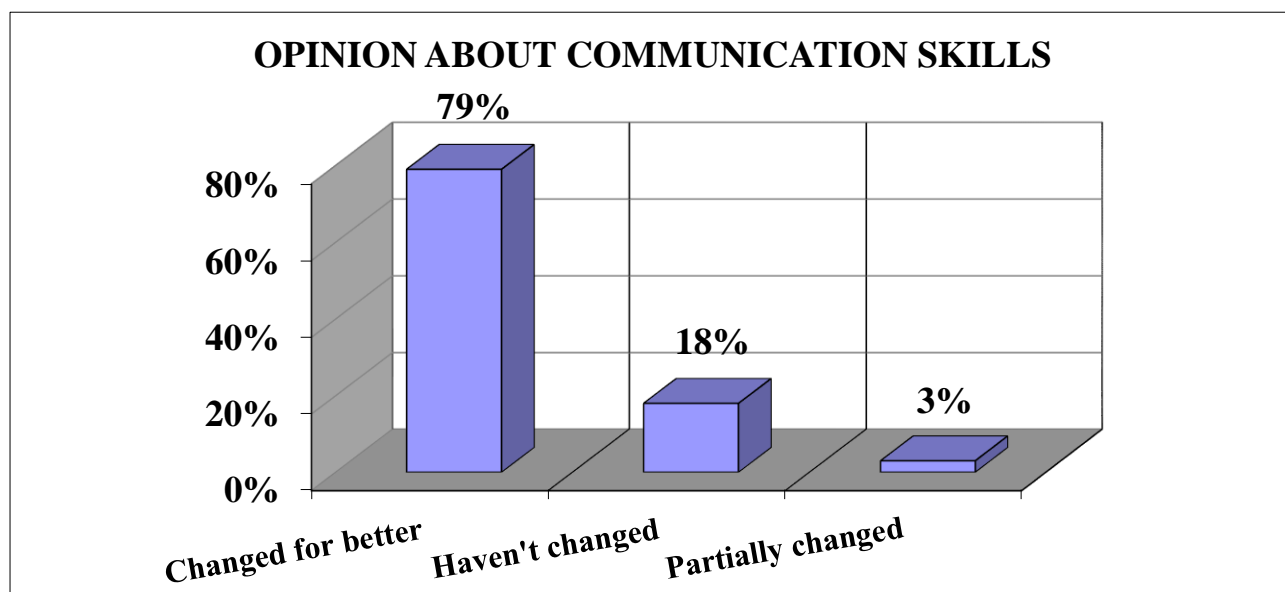


Diagram 6: Students' opinion about their communication skills.

Source: own processing.

Another question related to communicative skills was about changes. Students were asked about quite definite changes they could observe as a result of social networks using. The answers were different ranging from idea formation to communication with their peers. 63,9% stated that it has become easier to communicate with peers. 44,4% stressed that they formulate ideas faster, 36,1% have learnt how to express ideas, 36,1% came to the conclusion that their thinking processes have accelerated and only 1,4% of respondents said that nothing has changed in their communication while using social networks.

Not less important and interesting were the results of the analysis of the most popular topics for online communication. Due to students' priorities the topics were selected the following way: 93% supported the idea about *music* as an appropriate topic for communication, 83,3% selected *leisure*, 82% of respondents were sure it was *relationships*, 40% were sure it was *love*, 25% selected *sport* as a topic for communication, 25% came to the conclusion about *opposite gender*. *Hobby* as a topic for communication was supported by 15,3% of respondents, 11% selected *studying*, 5,6% supported news and 2,8% selected memes (Diagram 7).

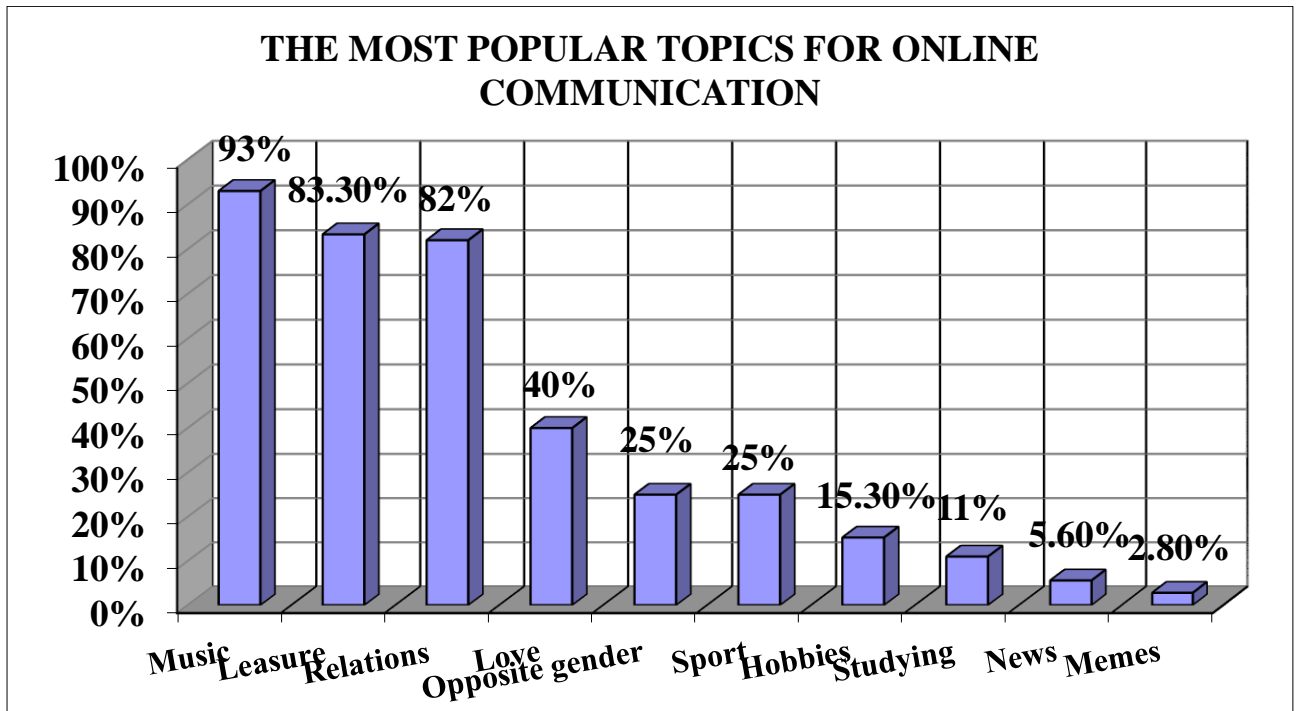


Diagram 7: The most popular topics for online communication.

Source: own processing.

Analyzing the forms of social networks communication, the respondents were precise and clear. 50% preferred dialogue and 50% were more inclined to apply mixed forms, including monologue and dialogue. It proves the idea that young people are quite tolerant in communication and depending on the situation can vary this or that form. They seem to be tactful and delicate (Diagram 8).

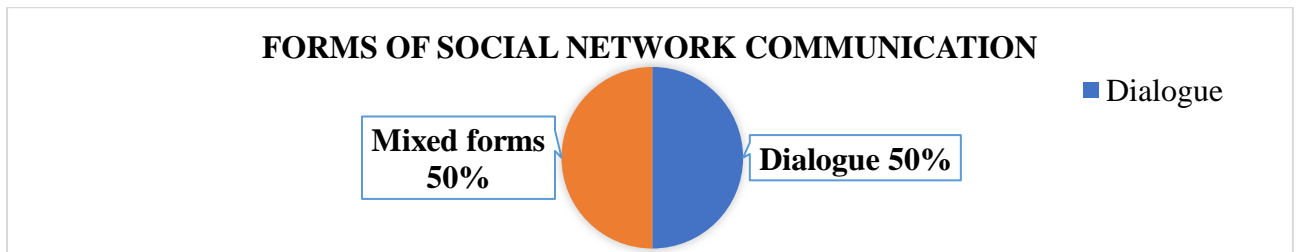


Diagram 8: Forms of social network communication.

Source: own processing.

Filling in the questionnaire, respondents have distinguished communicative characteristics of social networks. 58 % of respondents identified emotional expression as a leading communicative characteristic of the online social networks. 56 % considered simple communication as the leading communicative characteristic of social network. 53 % stressed the emotional coloring as a typical feature of social network. 53% of surveyed students mentioned content and form as communicative characteristics. Logics was supported by 47% of the respondents. Arguments and counterarguments were identified by 31% of respondents (Diagram 9). Some other characteristics make up 1%. Among them respondents identified interlocutor's interest and other communicative actions.

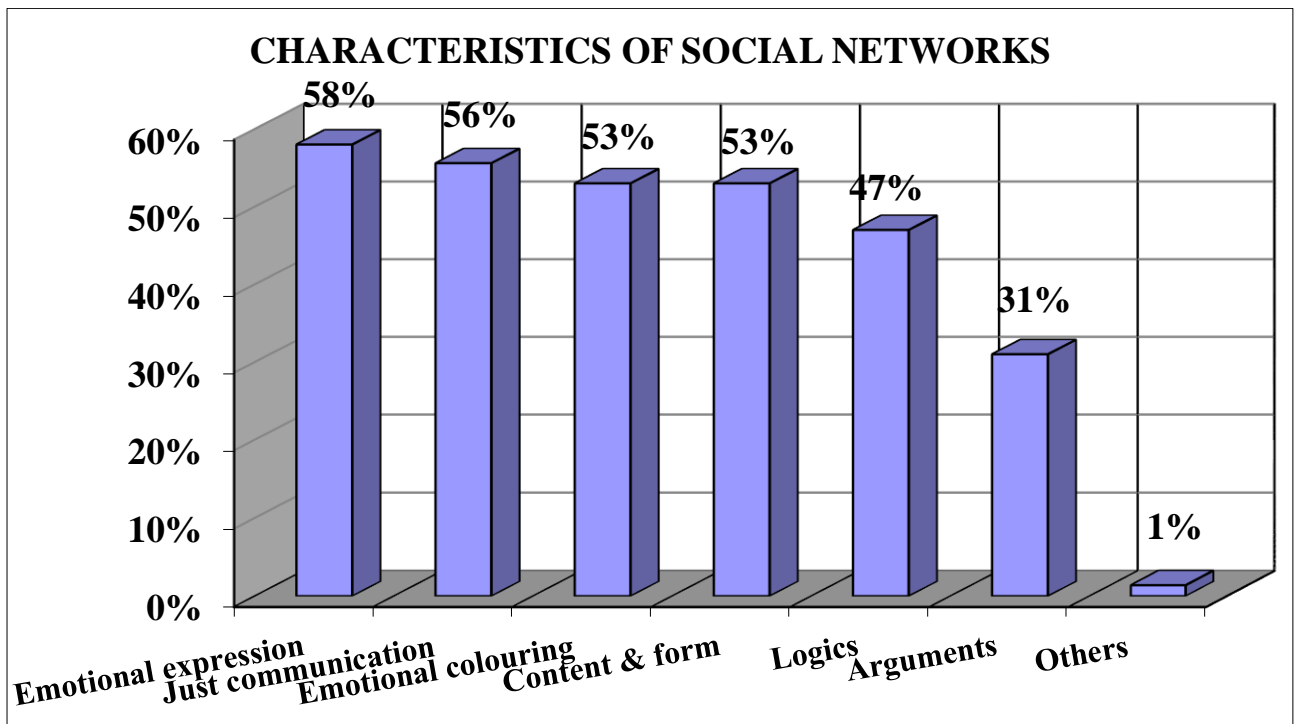


Diagram 9: The most appealing communicative characteristics of social networks.

Source: own processing.

Above-mentioned characteristics prove the idea of perception of social networks as important social means of communication that serve the needs and demands of young people in Ukraine.

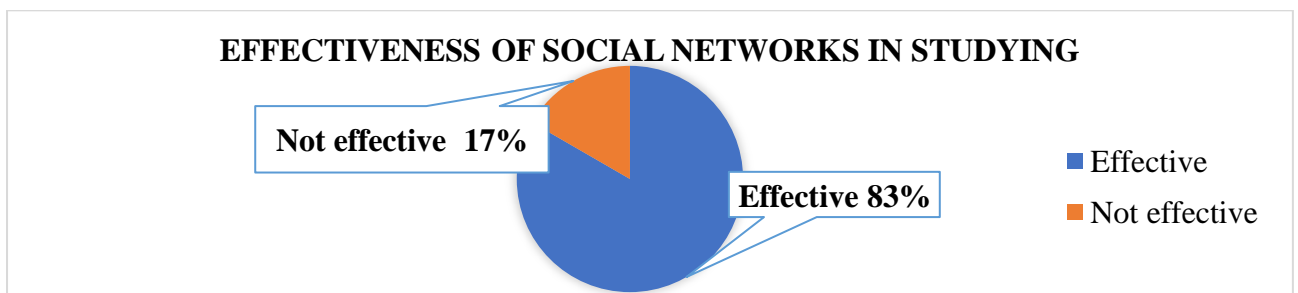


Diagram 10: Effectiveness of social networks in studying.

Source: own processing.

Studying was another aspect of social networks analysis. From the point of view of effectiveness 83% of respondents stressed that social networks were effective means in the process of studying while 17% considered them ineffective (Diagram 10).

According to the criterion of functions of social networks, 13 of them were identified by the respondents. The leading ones were informative (95%), communicative (90%), cognitive (86%), educational (67%), entertainment (58%), cultural development (58%), manipulative (44%), pragmatic (33%), reflexive (33%), economy of efforts (33%), interpretative (25%). Less frequent were the function of assessment (22%) and regulative (17%) (Diagram 11).

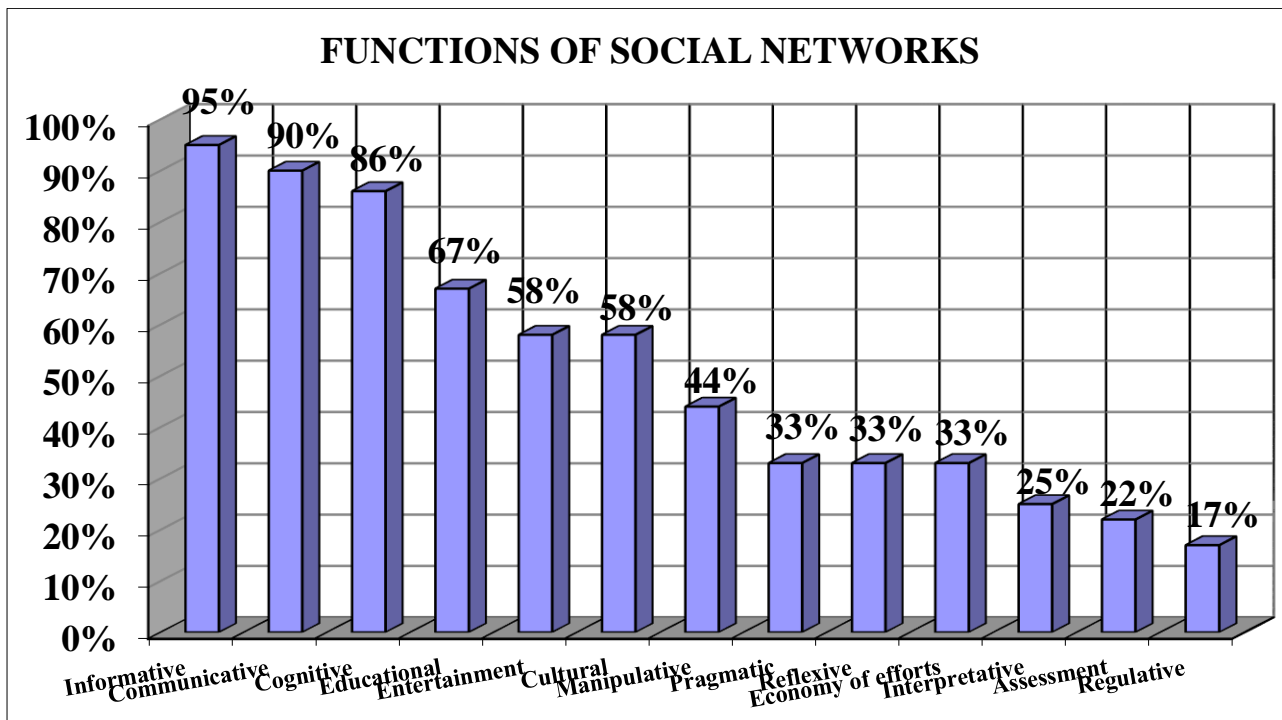


Diagram 11: Functions of social networks.

Source: own processing.

Process of studying is connected with information flow and the sources of information. Different things serve as dominant sources of information in the process of studying. Predominantly, 68% of respondents realize that professors are the primary sources of information along with lectures, seminars etc. Libraries (16%) turned out to be the second source of information, networks made up 14% of sources and books were selected as sources of information only by 2% of students (Diagram 12).

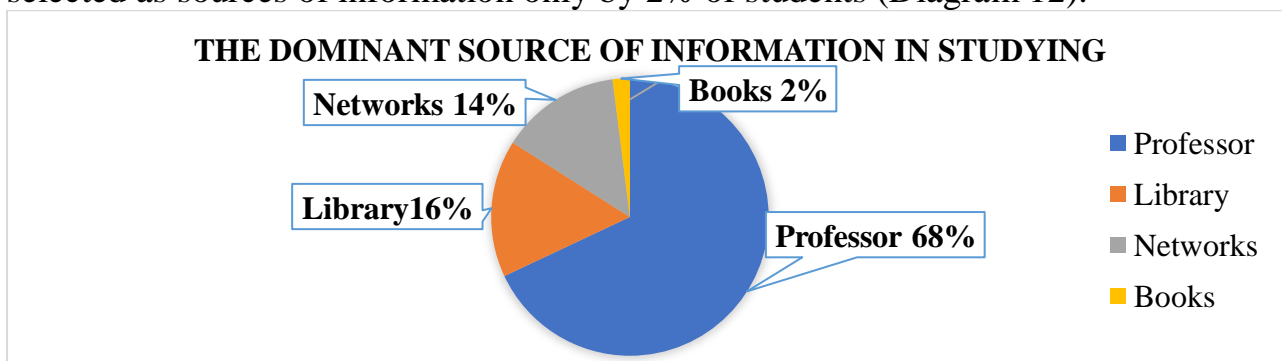


Diagram 12: The dominant source of information in studying.

Source: own processing.

Apart from studying students spend time online enjoying entertainment. Time periods vary according to the entertainment interests of the students. 30,6% of respondents entertain themselves on social networks from 30 minutes up to one hour. 27,8% of first year students spend 1-2 hours on entertainment online. Those, who spend 2-3 hours on entertainment, make up 13,9% of all the respondents. 5,6% of respondents spend online only 20 minutes on different forms on entertainment. 2,8% of young people spend 3-4 hours daily surfing social networks in search of entertainment. There are even those young people (2,8%) who do it daily, but spending up to eight hours. 13,9% of respondents don't waste time on entertainment at all (Diagram 13).

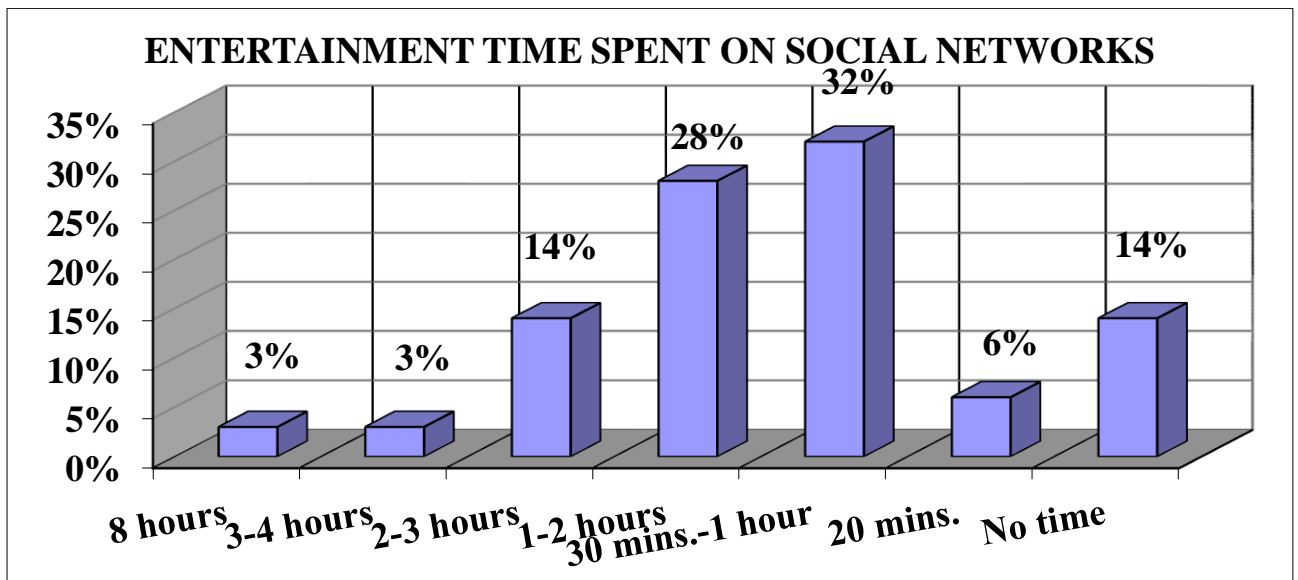


Diagram 13: Entertainment time on social networks.

Source: own processing.

A separate question was set about games. As it turned out, 89% of students do not play games via social networks. 3% do it online, spending one hour daily and 8% of the respondents stated that they play games on social networks between twenty and thirty minutes daily (Diagram 14).

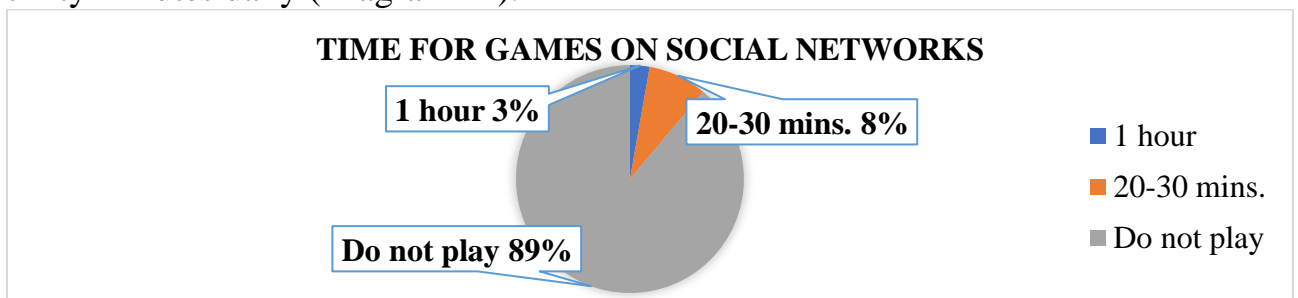


Diagram 14: Time for games on social networks.

Source: own processing.

Another question included into the questionnaire was about students' unhealthy habits for social networks. The respondents were quite critical about their level of addiction to social networks. 17% were convinced that they were addictive to social networks, 25% were sure that they were not addictive to social networks at all, 55% of respondents perceived themselves to be partially addicted and only 3% thought that it depended (Diagram 15).

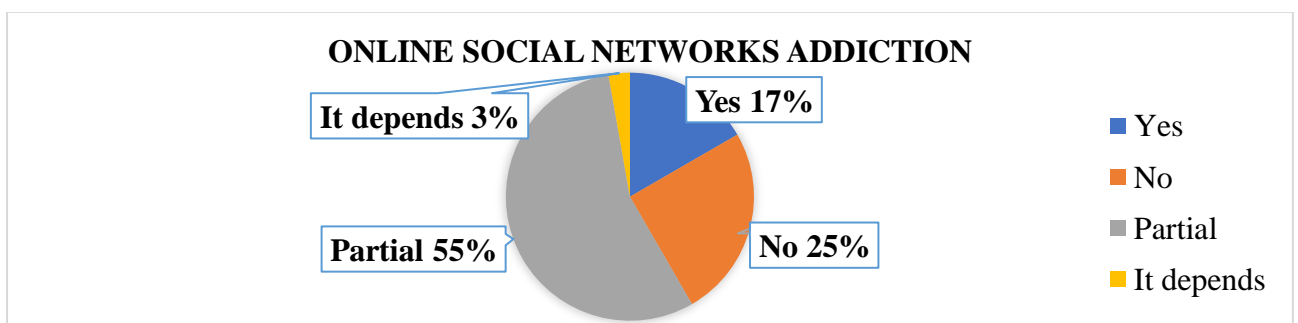


Diagram 15: Online social networks addiction.

Source: own processing.

The most interesting finding of the research concerned the issue of social networks as obstacles for studying. Ukrainian students were asked about it. Answering the question, students (45%) were not considering that social networks were barriers for studying, 17% completely agreed to the statement about social networks as obstacles in studying while 38% of all the students were hesitant, so they could not say definitely whether they perceived social networks as obstacles that distracted them from studying or not (Diagram 16).

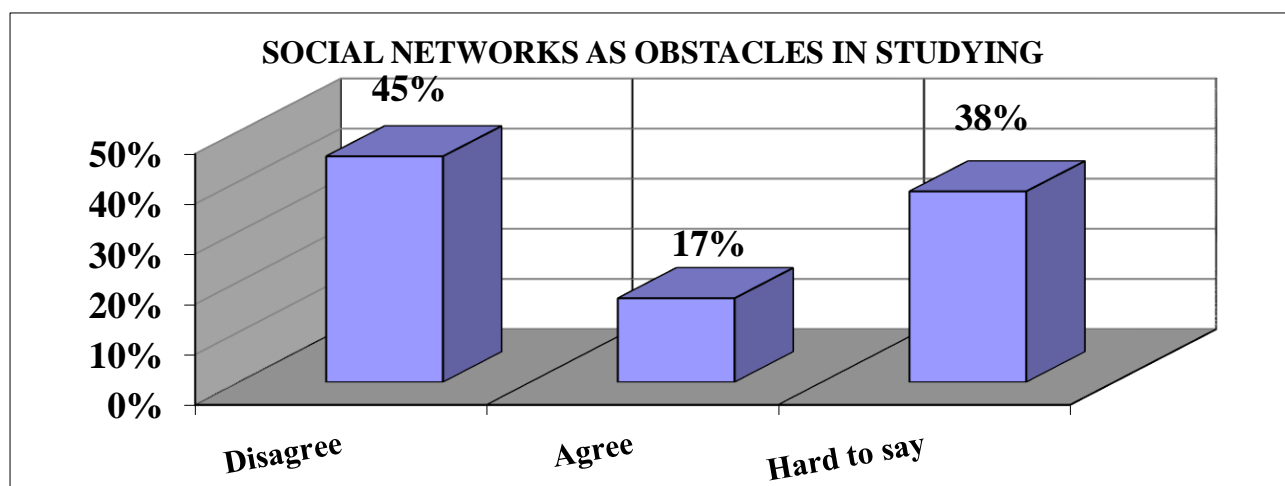


Diagram 16: Social networks as obstacles in studying.

Source: own processing.

Taking into account the above-made analysis, the results of the research push us to make conclusion that social networks affect personal development of students. The attitude of students to online social networks is quite ambiguous. According to our research discoveries, most Ukrainian students consider online social networks as a vital thing needed for communicating, sharing and seeking information, finding new friends, entertainment and studying. However, rather negative results are based on the fact that online social networks, if used excessively, may lead to addiction of young people.

5. Discussion and conclusion.

Our survey shows that Facebook is not so popular among Ukrainian students as it expected to be. On the contrary, young people prefer Telegram, Instagram and YouTube. The survey demonstrated an interesting set of results, some of which deserve much more detailed investigation.

The results about time spending online support the increase hypothesis that suggests that Internet use increases social interaction, the size of social networks, and closeness with others, as a means of maintaining social ties and creating new ones. This positive argument is partially based on the potential of the Internet as an interactive medium that can connect people to people while overcoming the barriers of time and place [13, p. 511].

In sum, the displacement hypothesis has been supported by findings that online communication is less useful or valuable than face-to-face communication. However, our research supports the idea that young people perceive online social network communication as a positive time spending, at least 62% of young people expressed positive attitude towards social networking.

Results of the survey regarding communication gives us an idea about young people assessment of their communicative skills. 79% of respondents are convinced that their communicative skills have improved, 3% concluded that their skills have partially improved and 18% of respondents consider that their communicative skills haven't changed at all. The results support the increase hypothesis that suggests that social networks use increases social interaction, the size of social networks, and closeness with others, as a means of maintaining social ties and creating new ones. This argument is partially based on the potential of the Internet as an interactive medium that can connect people while overcoming the barriers of time and place [13, p. 512]. Social networks serve as interactive means for communication and variety of topics ranging from music to memes makes this interaction dynamic, interesting and informative. Despite the fact, that students were the respondents the topics related to interests of young people predominantly at the core of the discussions with their peers (music, 93%; leisure, 83,3%; relationships, 82%; love, 40%; sport, 25%; opposite gender, 25%; hobbies, 15,3%; studying, 11%; news, 5,6%; memes, 2,8%.

Regarding the forms of communication, 50% are more inclined to dialogue while another 50% of respondents practice mixed forms in communication on social networks. While making conversation young people may have troubles, so they learn how to communicate using different forms. It can explain why they combine monologue and dialogue. Another half of the respondents feel more comfortable, that's why they prefer dialogue. Trying to use one form or another form of conversation not only help them to make a conversation, but also has a big impact on self-esteem. It paves the way to making friends.

Using social networks respondents pay special attention to communicative characteristics, such as emotional expression (58%), simple communication (56%), emotional coloring (53%), content and form (53%), logics (47%), arguments and counterarguments (31%). Only 1% identified interlocutor's interest and other communicative actions. Young people use social networks based on their needs and motives, and their media use is reinforced by the obtained gratifications. This perspective has identified social interaction is one of people's common reasons for media use [3]. Particularly for adolescents who begin to expand their interests outward, and have strong needs to be connected with their friends, social interaction will be one of the most primary motives for online communication.

Functions, distinguished by respondents support the idea about the role of social networks in communication and education. Among the leading ones were informative (95%), communicative (90%), cognitive (86%), educational (67%), entertainment (58%), pragmatic (33%), economy of efforts (33%). Young people get data online, they enthusiastically communicate and find out a lot of interesting things for them. Social networks also help them to get education and make studying easier. Online networks save their time and efforts.

Young people are attracted to social networking sites because of their features. S. Kuppuswamy and S. Narayan (2010) [16] argue that social networking websites distract students from their studies, but these websites can be useful for education based on sound pedagogical principles and proper supervision by the teachers. Moreover, the research concludes that social networking websites have both positive as well as negative impact on the education of youth, depending on their interest to use it in a positive manner for his or her education and vice versa.

Our research shows that online social networks have a positive effect on education of young people. Results show that social networks are closely connected with the process of studying of young people. 83% of students share the view that social networks are effective instruments in the process of studying while 17% find them ineffective. Results of another questionnaire demonstrate that students critically assess the role of social networks in studying. 68% of respondents realize that professors are the primary sources of information along with lectures, seminars etc. Libraries (16%) are also useful, but as a secondary source of information while networks could be sources of information from the point of view of studying only for 14% of respondents.

The young people were also asked whether social networks serve as barriers for studying. 45% of respondents do not consider social networks to be obstacles for studying while 17% completely agree that social networks are obstacles in studying. 38% of respondents could not say definitely whether they perceived social networks as obstacles that distracted them from studying or not.

Time spent online by young people is inseparable from entertainment. Time periods vary according to interests of students. 30,6% of respondents entertain themselves on social networks from 30 minutes up to one hour. 27,8% of respondents spend 1-2 hours entertaining themselves online. Those, who spend 2-3 hours on entertainment, make up 13,9% of all the respondents. 5,6% of respondents spend online only 20 minutes and 2,8% of young people spend 3-4 hours daily surfing social networks in search of entertainment. There are even those young people (2,8%) who do it daily up to eight hours. 13,9% of respondents don't waste time on entertainment at all. It is natural for young people to seek entertainment, but at the same time, they are quite deliberate distinguishing entertainment and education. Trying to dig deeper young people were asked about gaming and time spending. What was interesting regarding students is the fact that 89% of them do not play games on social networks, 3% do it online, spending one hour daily and 8% of the respondents stated that they play games on social networks between twenty and thirty minutes daily.

Another important question concerned addiction to social networks. The respondents critically assessed their habits: 17% were convinced that they were addictive to social networks, 25% mentioned that they were not addictive while 55% of respondents perceived themselves to be partially addicted and only 3% thought that it depended.

The results of the study showed that in Ukrainian context online social networks play a significant role in the life of Ukrainian youth. Due to the results of the study, we come to the conclusion that social networks use among philology students is a part of their daily routine. For the majority of young people their online experience seems to be generally positive as soon as they can develop a sense of inclusion and connection and improve their social well-being.

The current study has also revealed that students are aware of advantages and disadvantages of social networks and their negative influence on students' life in terms of vulnerability of their psyche. Professors should consider the idea of incorporating social networks in curriculum and optimally using social networks for bettering teaching activities. Students should also develop their critical thinking that requires a systematic approach.

This kind of detailed research shed light on the extent to which online social networks affect young people in educational institutions. The approaches taken by this

paper seem sufficiently fruitful for clarifying the impact of social networks on activity, communication and education of young people. The research results could help efficiently organise and implement various civic projects and educational activities for young people in Ukraine.

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