

## THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL IN THE MEANINGFUL ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS' LEISURE TIME

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### Abstract

The article highlights the role of social networks in the meaningful organization of students' leisure time and the possibilities of using them as an educational tool. The positive and negative aspects of digital platforms, which have become an integral part of the life of today's youth, are analyzed. Also, recommendations are given on the formation of ideological immunity in students and effective methods of intellectual and moral education through social networks.

**Keywords:** Students, leisure time, social networks, educational tool, digital environment, ideological immunity.

In today's era of rapid globalization and information technology advancement, the meaningful organization of students' leisure time has become one of the most pressing issues in the higher education system. For the modern student, social networks (Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, YouTube) have evolved beyond mere communication tools into primary sources of information and spaces for recreation. According to statistics, students spend approximately 60–70% of their free time in the virtual world.

However, the influence of social networks on youth education and upbringing is dualistic in nature. On one hand, these platforms create infinite opportunities for learning, broadening horizons, and enhancing creativity. On the other hand, they can lead to the negative influence of “mass culture”, information attacks, and the inefficient use of time. Therefore, it is of significant importance to research the use of social networks not just as entertainment tools, but as modern pedagogical instruments that educate students in the spirit of patriotism, morality, and intellectual potential.

The objective of this article is to analyze the pathways for correctly directing students' activities in the virtual space, forming a culture of information consumption, and increasing the effectiveness of educational work through social media.

The correlation between social media and student time management has become a global concern. Students are among the most active users of the virtual world, not only in Uzbekistan but across the globe.

Below is the statistical data regarding student social media usage and the primary metrics related to time wastage:

1. General Time Consumption Statistics. According to international research (e.g., Global Web Index and Statista) and local observations:

**Average Daily Usage:** Students spend an average of 4 to 6 hours per day on social networking platforms [6].

**Annual Accumulation:** This equates to approximately 1,500 – 2,000 hours per year. In this timeframe, an individual could read over 50 literary books or achieve proficiency in a new foreign language.

**Nocturnal Usage:** Nearly 40-50% of students spend at least one hour on social media before sleep, which directly correlates with a decline in academic performance.

2. Platforms Associated with High Time Wastage. The phenomenon of “wasted time” is predominantly linked to algorithmic content (infinite scrolling):

**TikTok and Instagram Reels:** Short-form video consumption creates a “loop effect.” A student intending to spend 5 minutes typically remains on the platform for 45-60 minutes.

**YouTube:** Consuming entertainment content (shows, pranks) occupies an average of 1.5–2 hours.

**Telegram:** In the context of Uzbekistan, a significant portion of students' time is spent reading non-essential group chats and “sensationalist” news.

3. Negative Consequences of Excessive Usage (By Percentage)

Research has identified the following impacts of social media over-dependence:

**Academic Decline:** Students who spend more than 3 hours per day on social media have a Grade Point Average (GPA) that is, on average, 15-20% lower than their peers.

**Diminished Attention Span:** Due to short-form content (Reels, TikTok), the average attention span of students has dropped from 12 seconds to 8 seconds. This results in an inability to maintain focus during long lectures.

**Procrastination:** Approximately 75-80% of students prefer browsing social media over completing academic assignments (academic procrastination).

Mechanisms for using social networks as educational tools each social platform possesses unique opportunities for the meaningful organization of students' leisure time. Below are the primary networks and methods for utilizing them for educational purposes:

1. Telegram: a spiritual and intellectual mobile space. Telegram is the most popular messenger among students in Uzbekistan, allowing for the remote management of the educational and developmental process.

✚ Intellectual competitions: Healthy competition can be fostered among students by organizing bots for intellectual games such as “Zakovat” (the local version of “What? Where? When?”) or specialized subject Olympiads.

✚ Moral advocacy: Highlighting national values, the teachings of great ancestors, and modern achievements through the official channels of higher education institutions strengthens students' ideological immunity [2, 45].

2. YouTube: high-impact visual learning. It is observed that visual information is processed 60 times faster than text. In this regard:

- Motivational content: Awakening feelings of diligence and goal-orientation in students through video interviews with successful individuals.
- Media literacy: providing “fact-checking” lessons in video format to teach students how to protect themselves from information attacks [5, 12].

3. Instagram and TikTok: creative and aesthetic potential. As these platforms are based on visual aesthetics, they can be utilized to realize the creative potential of students.

- Social challenges: encouraging social activism through creative video contests such as “Reading Week” or “My Motherland”
- E-volunteering: Developing humanitarian qualities by encouraging students to cover and promote charitable events and social initiatives [1, 88].

Below, we can observe the networks and their specific educational functions in the analytical table.

Social Network	Educational Orientation	Method of Use
Telegram	Intellectual education	Scientific channels, webinars, and discussion groups
YouTube	Moral and educational upbringing	Documentary films, master classes, lectures
Instagram	Aesthetic and social education	Photo exhibitions, videos, promotional content
Facebook	Socio-political education	Public discussion, opinion analysis, debates

According to pedagogical scholars, rather than completely restricting students' access to social networks, it is essential to cultivate an “information filter”—the skill of distinguishing beneficial content from the unnecessary [4, 115].

Conducted analyses and studies indicate that for today’s student, social networks are not merely communication tools but powerful factors that shape their social identity. Utilizing these platforms as educational instruments in the meaningful organization of students’ leisure time is a modern necessity. In conclusion, the following points should be highlighted:

1. Balance of Opportunity and Risk: While social networks serve to enhance a student’s intellectual potential, if left unmonitored, they can lead to wasted time and exposure to alien ideologies [2, 54].

2. Shift of the Educational Environment: Modern pedagogy must no longer be confined to the classroom; it must penetrate the virtual space and operate within the students' "sphere of interests".

3. Media Immunity: The most critical outcome of educational efforts should be the formation of a robust ideological immunity in students against external information attacks [4, 122].

Practical Recommendations:

Within the framework of this article, the following practical recommendations were developed for the systematic organization of students' leisure time:

Transformation of HEI official pages: Transitioning university and faculty channels from mere sources of official news into interactive educational platforms (e.g., weekly online crosswords, "Reader of the Week" competitions).

- Supporting the "Student-Blogger" movement: implementing a system of material and moral incentives for students who create positive and useful content on social networks.
- Digital hygiene classes: Organizing short-term online courses or webinars on the culture of social media use, time management, and information security during leisure time.
- Virtual community projects: Strengthening students' civic positions by engaging them in charitable, ecological, and volunteer projects through social networks during their free time.

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