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MEDIA EDUCATION AS A PROTECTION TOOL AGAINST THE MEDIA HARMFUL EFFECT ON SOCIETY

The human is a social being who constantly lives in the process of interacting with their peers. The basis of such interaction is communication. It is considered an important part of our lives. For a modern man, one of the main sources of information is mass media [1] as they are constantly supplying people with a large flow of news. Besides, everyone has many tools to search information and channels to spread it which opens up new opportunities that an individual may use to improve their life.

However, mass media have an arsenal of mechanisms to influence people and even have a destructive effect. Due to it, mass media obtain the behaviour they need from the audience, they lay down certain views and program actions [2]. In this way, they intervene with consciousness and affect both a person's emotional and physical state. The way out of this situation may obtain the basics of media education. It appears as a tool for learning about the information space through critical analysis of media content.

Therefore, the study of media influence is an important contribution as in today's world people absorb a lot of information without thinking that it can affect them negatively. The **purpose** of the article is to explore how mass media affect people, their consciousness and behaviour. We

performed the analysis of the positive and, especially, negative media effects in order to determine how media education can reduce the destructive media influence.

The media cover a wide audience of people from different categories of life. That is why they cover current issues in order to keep public attention. It allows them to understand what is happening in the world. Also, the media are able to act as a source of knowledge and means of individual comprehensive development [1]. At the same time, consumers of information can learn about quite contradictory facts [3, p.1]. When trying to analyse the information they obtained, a person has doubts about the truthfulness of the facts. Accordingly, the level of trust to the source may decrease.

Being an important issue, a sociological company InMind conducted a survey in 2019. Its main goal was to determine the level of trust to the media. According to the data, Ukrainians had lost confidence in them. The main reasons for mistrust are unreliability of information, as well as scepticism about official reports, lack of references to reliable sources, increased duplication of information and many more [4].

Although the media are an integral part of civil society, there is a contradictory influence of the media in modern conditions. In addition to their positive effect, they can also affect people. For example, we can consider degradation of classical culture and standardization of individual consciousness. In other words, the state of modern society is getting worse, because most people begin to think primitively, alienating themselves from creative activity [5, p.1]. Moreover, the culture imposed by the media can be directed against human spiritual values. Unfortunately, we cannot ignore the fact that mass media have a negative impact on the younger generation, which is most susceptible to value changes [6, p.2]. Mass media can become an obstacle in education and upbringing, as well as they can stimulate aggression in adolescents. This is confirmed by the hypothesis of imitation: violence on the screen contributes to its manifestation in life [7, p.146]. It is difficult to accept the fact that the negative impact of the media can threaten the well-being of an individual. According to the research, it has been found that mass media can cause more stress than relieve it. Many people may experience anxiety, which in turn leads to problems with the quality of sleeping and concentration [8].

Decrease in the general level of media production causes the need for educational technologies in the field of mass media [9, p.5]. In these conditions, media education is the only way to equip a person with self-protection from unscrupulous information. Considering the term of media education, we see that it is defined as knowledge and skills that are useful in analysing, evaluating, interpreting ideas and values in media messages [10, p.128].

Based on the critical thinking theory, the purpose of media education is to orient the individual in the media environment and mitigate manipulative influence. It is believed that society

has a surplus of information. Therefore, it needs a guideline and understanding how the mechanisms of media influence are constructed [9, p.9].

Thus, according to the scientific study, teaching this discipline should provide people with mastering skills of media decoding, in other words, properly understanding the content of media messages and their structure [10, p.276-277].

In conclusion, this study confirms that raising the level of media education in modern realities is a vital issue because this knowledge can help society to fully analyse media messages and identify their possible manipulative effects. We suggest mastering media education skills to help our society become more aware and prudent.

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