

The Agents of Socialization Keep in Touch with Socio-Virtualization

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Abstract

In contemporary society, as opportunities for individuals to acquire knowledge and socialize with family, friends, school, and media expand, they are increasingly exposed to human-machine interaction on an individual level. The age of science, which has brought many benefits with technological advancements, continues to present a plethora of opportunities for people. However, it is important to acknowledge that technology also has its drawbacks and consequences. Technology has opened new doors for both society and individuals through its contributions to socialization and personal growth. Its structure, which activates and impacts the socialization tools of society, makes it impossible to avoid being affected or influenced by the virtual space both individually and socially. As a result, the concept of socialization is evolving into "socio-virtualization." This phenomenon has begun to be studied by educators, sociologists, and other related fields. With the ongoing evolution of technology, it remains to be seen whether it will be incorporated as a new tool for socialization or if its role in this process will shift in the future. This research aims to examine the socialization process and the effects of technology, specifically the virtual aspect, on society and socialization.

Key words: Individual, Society, Socialization, Socio-Virtualization



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1. Introduction

Socialization can be defined as the individual's engagement with and integration into society (Ramarajan&Reid, 2020; Fisher et al. 2020). It encompasses the process of learning human behavior and the roles, values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge deemed appropriate by society. Through socialization, culture is transmitted to new generations and society imparts its norms, values, and beliefs to its members (Garcia, et al. 2019). Interaction with others in the community is integral in the process of becoming fully human. As the individual experiences personal development, they simultaneously recognize themselves and internalize society's values (Coser, 1987; Miller&Collette, 2019). As a social being, the individual completes their biological growth and integrates social norms and personality through the process of socialization (Proshansky&Fabian, 1987). Socialization is the development of the abilities and adaptability necessary for fulfilling future societal roles (Peng, 2019). The social and cultural development of an individual is shaped by the environment in which they were raised from childhood, with particular emphasis placed on the development of oral and written language and perception of the surroundings (Kurt & Ağayev, 2009). The process of socialization, which begins at birth through involvement with socialization tools such as family, school, peer groups, and mass media (Coser, 1987), enables the individual to easily participate in society and learn from their family and environment in terms of behavior. As a result, the individual becomes an "individual" as the process continues throughout their lifetime. In other words, individuals are raised and socialized by being taught and shown how to live and behave from past to present.

Participation in society is facilitated through the process of socialization, which continues through formal education and the cultural function of education, including subjects such as history, geography, literature, and society's values. It is important to re-examine and re-consider all factors that are effective in the socialization process of an individual, particularly in light of current technological developments (Moorhouse&Harfitt, 2021).

Socialization, defined as the individual's participation in society and the acquisition of societal norms, values, and beliefs, has undergone a shift towards increased speed and reliance on formal education and mass media. This historical process has resulted in individuals having access to a greater amount of information and experiences in a shorter amount of time. However, in the 21st century, the relationship between individuals and socialization tools has become more complex, with people limiting their time spent in social environments and increased interaction with technology. Each means of socialization, such as family, school, friend groups, and mass media, contributes to the individual's social and cultural development in unique ways. For instance, interaction with peers offers opportunities for individuals to prepare for their roles in society and to behave more comfortably, while the influence of mass media can be observed in their attitudes and behaviors with their peers.

It can be argued that the proliferation of technology and the internet has led to a shift in attitudes and behaviors among individuals. The virtual environment plays a significant role in this process, noting that social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter represent a new form of social structuring (Heidari et al. 2020; Geelan, 2021). These platforms have become key distribution channels for international organizations and universities, such as CERN, NASA, the United Nations, and the American Heart Foundation. Additionally, major media outlets, such as the BBC and CBS, utilize YouTube to distribute their content in multiple languages and to make archived programs available to viewers.

2. Society and Virtualization

The advent of communication and communication networks has led to the proliferation of various social networks in the virtual environment. These networks are now being utilized by individuals who have access to computers, mobile phones, and the internet. As the active utilization of these networks by individuals increases, it raises the question of whether these virtual environments are being incorporated as tools in the socialization process. Rather than being viewed as an additional tool to aid individuals in their socialization within society, it can be argued that the social environments brought about by the virtual world are now an integral part of the socialization process. Prior to the 2000s, it was commonly acknowledged that television had a negative impact on communication between individuals in society, particularly within the family. It was noted that individuals would often face the same direction while watching television, resulting in a decline in eye contact and face-to-face communication. Similarly, in home visits between relatives and neighbors, television would often take centre stage, leading to less communication than in an environment without television. Now, individuals who come together can retreat into their own virtual worlds by looking at their computer screens, rather than engaging in a common activity, leading to a decrease in communication. This phenomenon, referred to as "socio-virtualization," can be observed in all aspects of socialization (Kurt, 2012).

The proliferation of virtual environments has led to the emergence of a new phenomenon in the family institution, where individuals, particularly spouses and children, spend a significant amount of time. This has resulted in various difficulties for some family members. Additionally, the advent of the internet in schools has shifted the focus from education to the use and capabilities of the internet. Traditional friendship groups in the neighborhood or school have become less important for those who have access to virtual environments, and conversations often revolve around virtual interactions. Mass media also plays a role in this phenomenon, as individuals who are aware of global events may be strangers to their immediate surroundings. Furthermore, the decrease in communication with neighbors may be compensated by an increased awareness of events and people in distant locations. This phenomenon, referred to as "socio-virtualization", describes individuals who do not fully participate in either society or the virtual world and deviate from the traditional human condition. However, from another perspective, virtual environments provide opportunities for learning about new cultures, fostering dialogue, and promoting the social and political discourse of new social movements (Maloney&Freeman, 2020; Kim et al. 2022).

3. Socio-Virtualization

As individuals grow and socialize by conforming to societal norms, they are increasingly spending more time in "socio-virtualization" environments. It can be argued that individuals who begin to distance themselves from society tend to spend more time in environments that are personally meaningful to them. These engagements can encompass a wide range of activities, such as pursuing a profession, conducting research, seeking leisure activities, making new friends, and effectively communicating with others. The "socio-virtualization" individual finds a sense of belonging in the virtual world through network connections and the emotions and senses associated with them. However, due to their limited physical presence in the virtual environment, they may become alienated from the values and customs of society. The more an

individual aligns with the common values of society, or the more they can gain from the virtual environment, the more they will be able to apply practical knowledge and exhibit humane behavior in their everyday life. Individuals who become increasingly alienated from society's values, norms, customs, traditions, and customs, and cannot fully grasp these elements of social life, may find themselves further entrenched in a "socio-virtualization" situation. This is because it provides a comfortable environment where they are not questioned for their behavior. As a result, it is likely that the number of individuals experiencing similar sociological and psychological processes within society will increase.

4. Reflections of Socio-Virtualization on Social Life

It is imperative to examine and question the virtual world, which has become a source of comfort and convenience for many individuals, from various perspectives. It is worth noting that while the virtual world has brought numerous benefits to society, it has also begun to have a negative impact on society by diminishing social interactions and human connections.

One must consider the implications of this shift towards a virtual world on the social lives of future generations. Will there be a decline in the number of individuals who interact with others and model human behavior? Furthermore, the ways in which family, education, friendship, and mass media shape the new type of individual will become increasingly apparent in the future.

Individuals who have been exposed to television at a young age within the family and later engage with computers will likely differ from older generations in educational institutions. As such, teachers will need to be better equipped to effectively teach and socialize these future individuals. Schools may also become crucial spaces for fostering further socialization.

The weakening of social relationships, the rise of the virtual world, and increased individualism may lead to difficulties in fully communicating emotions and establishing healthy communication between individuals. Additionally, the inability to properly interpret gestures, facial expressions, and body language in virtual environments may impede the establishment of complete communication.

It is necessary to examine and question the virtual world, which offers comfort and convenience to increasing numbers of individuals, from various perspectives. In reality, while the virtual world has brought notable advancements to society, it has also begun to have a negative impact on societal dynamics. As social interactions and human models decrease in the future, it is uncertain what kind of social life will be prevalent among future generations. The impact of family, education, friendship, and mass media on the shaping of the new type of individual is yet to be fully understood. As the trend towards virtualization in social environments continues, it is likely that the need for updating and re-evaluating social relations will arise. Furthermore, it is essential to consider the potential psychological and behavioral changes that may occur as a result of decreased social interactions and increased virtualization, and whether this shift is leading towards a loss of what it means to be human.

Modern society attempts to understand the human being and their social position by examining factors such as class mobility, lifestyle, consumption, and leisure time activities. In the future, will the social position of individuals whose socio-virtualization has become prominent be determined by their proximity to the humane, the number of individuals they communicate with, and their level of engagement on various social networks? Will their participation in

virtual social interactions and the frequency with which they leave their homes or interact with friends in person be subject to scrutiny?

As the impact of global warming has begun to alter the natural balance of the planet, it is worth considering if the balance of society is also shifting towards socio-virtualization. To evaluate the extent of this shift, one can observe the proliferation of examples of individuals who assert their existence through virtual means. A sign of the growing influence of socio-virtualization on society is the rise of "Internet addiction" as a recognized medical condition and the establishment of clinics for treatment in particular.

The internet, which emerged as a tool to increase opportunities for researchers by facilitating communication and information sharing, has resulted in pathological overuse and related problems due to its rapid spread and high popularity. Internet Addiction is a specific mental disorder characterized by decreased workplace and school performance, sleep disturbance, intense withdrawal from social life, and a very boring and empty life without internet, as well as muscle and skeletal system problems due to excessive use (Shaw&Black, 2008; Mondal&Kumar 2018). The prevalence of this disorder, which has been recognized in the literature in the USA and European countries since the 1990s, is also increasing in our country.

Furthermore, the situation of individuals who cannot leave chat rooms or social networks such as Facebook or Twitter for one day is a product of their focus on sociality in the present. This virtual disturbance (Internet Addiction) using various criteria. If an individual exhibits several of the following symptoms, they are considered to have Internet Addiction (Dalbudak et al. 2013): thoughts about the internet even when not connected; increasing use of the internet to achieve satisfaction; inability to control internet usage; feeling restless and angry when trying to cut down on internet use or reduce the time spent; perceiving internet usage as an escape from real life problems; lying to family and friends to spend more time online; risking education, job or career opportunities through internet use; continuing to use despite extraordinary charges for internet access; withdrawal or closing in from social life when not connected to the internet; and extending the current usage time compared to when they first started using the internet. A study performed by Horman et al. (2005) found that children who spend most of their time playing computer games experience a regression in their social development, have low self-confidence, and increased levels of social anxiety and aggressive behavior. Another study by Colwell&Payne (2000) found a negative correlation between the amount of time spent playing computer games and self-confidence.

The deterioration of familial relationships and the inclusion of the internet as a contributing factor to divorce are indications of the detrimental effects of socio-virtualization on society. Hortoğlu (2011) conducted research on the impact of social networking sites on divorce and identified four ways in which the internet affects marriages:

1. The increase in deception as a result of the ease of meeting individuals online.
2. The depression and unhappiness that results from excessive engagement in the virtual world and its impact on the family.
3. The allocation of time that would have been spent with a spouse to internet addiction.
4. The alienation and detachment from the spouse due to the formation of virtual relationships.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of adolescent girls leaving their families and forming romantic relationships with individuals they met online is a notable example of the effects of socio-virtualization. Communication in these cases occurs exclusively through digital means, allowing individuals to engage in behaviors that would be condemned in physical social environments.

The concept of privacy and shame is not widely used in the virtual environment, and the norms established by society in traditional contexts are not given much importance. Female sexuality is often exploited on websites accessible to individuals of all ages. While children are not allowed to enter their parents' bedroom under normal circumstances, there are no such restrictions in the virtual environment.

Individuals seeking to find romantic partners often turn to the internet, and adolescents with family problems may seek to fulfil their emotional needs through virtual relationships with strangers. In the virtual environment, individuals can easily express themselves in ways they may be embarrassed or hesitant to in traditional social contexts, such as sharing photographs or videos with strangers.

The question arises: how will society cope with individuals who engage in these virtual behaviors and what impact will it have on their offline lives? Since it is not possible to keep society away from the virtual environment, it may be important to implement programs and activities within it. For example, providing primary and secondary school students with tablet computers can give them easy access to virtual environments and websites. Additionally, teachers should be trained on how to use these technological tools and how to address the social aspects of students' virtual lives. Situations and information that students may encounter in the virtual environment can manifest in their offline lives. An example is using virtual environments for environmental education, which allows students to learn without disrupting the natural flow of information and gain knowledge through visual, auditory, and audio-visual materials.

Given the ubiquity of the virtual environment in contemporary society, it is important to consider the implementation of programs and activities within this realm. For instance, the widespread provision of tablet computers to primary and secondary school students highlights the necessity of such initiatives. Through this means, students will have easy access to virtual environments and websites via the internet. It is also crucial for teachers to be trained on the utilization of these technological tools, as well as on the implications of the virtual environment for social life beyond the classroom. It is possible that situations and information encountered in the virtual environment may manifest themselves in students' lives, as demonstrated by studies on environmental education (Kurt,2013). The virtual environment can enhance learning experiences by providing access to visual, auditory, and audio-visual materials without disrupting the flow of information from the source (Papanastasiou et al. 2019; Xue-qin et al. 2016). Furthermore, the study on e-environment also classify learners in virtual environment as active and passive users.

This study on environmental education serves as an indication of the potential for utilizing socio-virtualization in other fields and actively incorporating it into social life.

5. Result and Discussion

In light of past trends, it is observed that individuals are increasingly limiting the amount of time they spend in social environments. The implications of this trend on future socialization patterns, as well as the potential impacts on an individual's ability to socialize and form connections, are uncertain. Socialization is a fundamental process through which societal norms, values, and beliefs are transmitted to individuals, and it also plays a crucial role in shaping one's personality and self-identity (Howard, 2007; Garcia, et al. 2019). Individuals who express that they feel more comfortable in virtual environments than in real-life social situations may negatively impact their real-life communications, as a result of their excessive use of virtual environments (Shapira et al., 2000; Yang et al., 2005). Spending more time in virtual environments and excessive use of these environments can lead to negative impacts on social relationships.

The increasing use of the internet and its impact on adolescents, as well as their social lives, also influences familial relationships. As parents' internet use increases, it leads to a decline in face-to-face communication and domestic communication. This same trend was also found among children who have increased their internet usage. The decrease in face-to-face communication due to the internet has also led to an increase in domestic conflicts.

As such, it is important to consider the following questions in further research:

1. How will individuals who have gained a sense of self and identity in society, but are increasingly less present in social life, navigate this process and where will they find fulfilment, and how will society accommodate and integrate these individuals?
2. How will individuals who spend less time in physical social environments acquire and maintain their sense of self and identity?
3. How will future generations view and describe the social interactions of people in the present, particularly in light of the shift towards virtual interactions?
4. How can traditional cultural values and practices be transmitted to future generations through virtual means?
5. How can we promote healthy socialization during unstructured time spent on digital devices? How can we create social norms that encourage responsible use of technology without impeding socialization?

Overall, it is crucial to engage in a thorough examination of how socio-virtualization can be leveraged to enhance socialization and social connections.

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