The Relationship between ICT Engagement, Values, and Prosocial Behavior in Online and Offline Contexts

Relevance and novelty of the research

With the proliferation of ICT, the proportion of people actively involved in various kinds of interactions on the Internet is getting higher (Yemelin et al., 2012). In this regard, the impact of digitalization on the personality and behavior of modern people both in the online context and real life becomes a relevant and topical issue. The phenomenon of transferring daily activities into the online context became especially noticeable during the pandemic, and the consequences of that have to be assessed in the future. One of the most important resources of society for overcoming crisis situations is prosocial behavior (Jonas, 2012), which is one of the key components of social capital. Prosocial behavior contributes to well-being of individuals and to the prosperity of society as a whole (Brief, 1986).

However, research findings on prosocial behavior in relation to ICT use are mixed and require clarification. Firstly, ICT in general and the Internet in particular are a specific field where a special type of pro-social behavior relevant to peculiarities of the online context arises. According to the theory of co-construction, pro-social behavior on the Internet and in real life feeds and inspires each other (Wright, Li, 2011). On the other hand, in accordance with the so-called "slacktivism effect", one can expect that after the implementation of prosocial motives in online behavior, people will be less inclined to prosocial behavior in real life (Lane D. S., Dal Cin, 2018). With a broader focus, the determination of prosocial behavior by various factors, among which individual values are of particular importance, is contextually dependent. The use of ICT can serve as a trigger activating individual values. Values, in turn, can facilitate or hinder prosocial behavior in online and offline contexts (Efremova, Bultseva, 2020). Secondly, the relationship between ICT engagement, individual values and prosocial behavior in online and offline contexts have not been previously studied.

Research methodology

The research presented in this report examined the relationship between ICT engagement, individual values, and prosocial behavior in online and offline contexts. The study was conducted using a socio-psychological survey with cross-sectional design on a sample of 300. Special instrument was developed to measure prosocial behavior in online and offline contexts (Efremova, Bultseva, 2020). Values were considered according to the theory of S. Schwartz and were measured using a short version of the individual values scale included in the European Social Survey (ESS) project. Engagement in the use of ICT was measured using a questionnaire developed by the Centre for

Sociocultural Research team of the Higher School of Economics (Tatarko et al., 2020). Path analysis in AMOS was done on order to answer the research questions.

Results and discussion

ICT engagement has been found to promote pro-social behavior in an online context. Prosocial behavior in an online context is positively related to prosocial behavior in an offline context; and it fully mediates the link between ICT engagement and prosocial behavior in an offline context. So, it is rather that the co-construction of identity and behavior in different contexts occur than some compensatory mechanisms.

Engagement in ICT use contributes to the greater importance (and, presumably, activation) of the Openness to change values and Self-Enhancement values. The relationship between ICT use and Openness to change is culturally universal. However, the positive relationship between ICT use and Self-Enhancement values is inherent only among Russians and reflects the broad possibilities of ICT for realization of power motives and favorable image construction (Tatarko et al., 2019).

At the same time, Self-Transcendence values and Self-Enhancement values together contribute to prosocial behavior in an online context. Prosocial behavior in an offline context turned out to be directly determined only by Self-Transcendence values. However, prosocial behavior in an online context is a mediator of the influence of Self-Enhancement values. This result indicates the universality of the prosocial motives behind prosocial behavior in any context, and the relative ease of realizing the selfish motives of prosocial behavior in the online context and subsequent social learning.

Conclusion

We found a complex mechanism of relations between engagement in ICT and prosocial behavior in real life, mediated by the actualization of values relevant to the context and the implementation of pro-social behavior in the online context. The results expand the understanding of the impact of digitalization on personality and prosocial behavior, not only in the online context, but also in real life.

List of used literature

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