

**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: FEATURES OF STUDENT YOUTH IDENTITY IN
THE MODERN INFORMATION SOCIETY**

***TRANSFORMAÇÃO DIGITAL: CARACTERÍSTICAS DA IDENTIDADE DO JOVEM
ESTUDANTE NA MODERNA SOCIEDADE DA INFORMAÇÃO***

***TRANSFORMACIÓN DIGITAL: CARACTERÍSTICAS DE LA IDENTIDAD JUVENIL
ESTUDIANTIL EN LA MODERNA SOCIEDAD DE LA INFORMACIÓN***



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How to reference this paper:

MAMEDOVA, Natalia; IVLEVA, Marina; VITYAEV, Sergey; BUZSKAYA, Olga; AKIMOVA, Alena; RUBTSOV, Aleksandr. Digital transformation: Features of youth identity in the modern information society. **Nuances: Estudos sobre Educação**, Presidente Prudente, v. 36, n. 00, e025015, 2025. e-ISSN: 2236-0441. DOI: 10.32930/nuances.v36i00.11287



| **Submitted:** 15/05/2025

| **Revisions required:** 02/06/2025

| **Approved:** 14/10/2025

| **Published:** 16/12/2025

Editor: Prof. Dr. Rosiane de Fátima Ponce

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ABSTRACT: The information society is characterized by the creation of a global information space where people interact and gain access to global resources, meeting their needs for information products and services. This concept increases the role of information and knowledge in human life, fostering the growth of information communications, resources, and services as part of a country's GDP. The active use of digital technologies in the processes of the information society affects individuals, altering their psyche, self-control, self-expression, communication, and activities. The article presents the results of a study on the features of youth identity within the context of digital transformation in modern processes. Age groups are identified, and for each group, key processes that utilize software tools are defined. The study results can be used to develop educational strategies and government programs aimed at supporting youth social policy, taking into account trends in active digitalization.

KEYWORDS: Social network. Mobile application. Digital identity. Digital technologies. Digitization.

RESUMO: A sociedade da informação caracteriza-se pela criação de um espaço global de informação onde as pessoas interagem e têm acesso a recursos globais, satisfazendo as suas necessidades de produtos e serviços de informação. Este conceito aumenta o papel da informação e do conhecimento na vida humana, fomentando o crescimento das comunicações, recursos e serviços de informação como parte do PIB de um país. A utilização ativa de tecnologias digitais nos processos da sociedade da informação afeta os indivíduos, alterando a sua psique, autocontrolo, autoexpressão, comunicação e atividades. O artigo apresenta os resultados de um estudo sobre as características da identidade juvenil no contexto da transformação digital nos processos modernos. São identificados grupos etários e, para cada grupo, são definidos os principais processos que utilizam ferramentas de software. Os resultados do estudo podem ser utilizados para desenvolver estratégias educativas e programas governamentais destinados a apoiar políticas sociais para a juventude, tendo em conta as tendências de digitalização ativa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Rede social. Aplicação móvel. Identidade digital. Tecnologias digitais. Digitalização.

RESUMEN: La sociedad de la información se caracteriza por la creación de un espacio informativo global donde las personas interactúan y acceden a recursos globales, satisfaciendo así sus necesidades de productos y servicios de información. Este concepto refuerza el papel de la información y el conocimiento en la vida humana, impulsando el crecimiento de las comunicaciones, los recursos y los servicios de información como parte del PIB de un país. El uso activo de las tecnologías digitales en los procesos de la sociedad de la información afecta a las personas, alterando su psique, autocontrol, autoexpresión, comunicación y actividades. El artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio sobre las características de la identidad juvenil en el contexto de la transformación digital en los procesos modernos. Se identifican los grupos de edad y, para cada grupo, se definen los procesos clave que utilizan herramientas de software. Los resultados del estudio pueden utilizarse para desarrollar estrategias educativas y programas gubernamentales destinados a apoyar las políticas sociales para la juventud, teniendo en cuenta las tendencias de la digitalización activa.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Red social. Aplicación móvil. Identidad digital. Tecnologías digitales. Digitalización.

Introduction

Youth represents the key link connecting the past and the future (Albarello; Crocetti; Rubini, 2021; Barkova *et al.*, 2017). Strengthening this connection requires young people to realize their role and place in social life, adapting and defining themselves within rapidly transforming processes driven by advancements in science and technology. The modern state of the global order directly influences the system of relationships between the individual and society, setting new vectors for societal, civilizational, and cultural development (Bakulov *et al.*, 2020; Vyalyova, 2016).

The primary vector of societal development is the implementation of its digital identity (Engeness, 2021; Golubeva, 2020). Identity is an essential component of values, representing a dynamic system of an individual's self-perception formed through self-determination and the definition of their place in society (Gagné *et al.*, 2022). Identity encompasses self-awareness and value-meaningful and regulatory spheres, forming the psychological core of personality. This core develops through real-life interactions, self-comparisons with others, and deliberate self-improvement to achieve a desired form (physical, mental, spiritual) (Bakulov *et al.*, 2020; Golubeva, 2020). These processes are strongly influenced by the digital transformation of daily life, work processes, and human activities.

Modern individuals actively use mobile devices in their daily lives, leveraging internet access to obtain diverse information sources, organize various forms of communication (between individuals and between individuals and governmental bodies), and access digital systems that offer functional tools for solving various tasks (both professional and personal).

Thus, a person's digital space emerges, reducing their interest in participating in real-world processes. The result is the formation of a distorted self-concept due to the transfer of real-world identity elements into the virtual realm (Setsko; Tantsura, 2021). In the virtual world, individuals seek virtual compensations for their inability to achieve self-realization or express their individuality in everyday life.

Researchers differentiate between virtual and digital identities formed in the information space (Golubeva, 2020; Mamedova, 2021; Setsko; Tantsura, 2021). When a person in the informational environment recognizes their belonging to a particular community (part of the sociocultural identity), it is perceived as virtual identity. Digital identity, on the other hand, allows for the creation of an online counterpart (a digital projection) that includes all individual data.

The Internet serves as a space where traditional human values are devalued, widely accepted behavioral models are transformed or destroyed, and traditional identity is undermined. This necessitates the transformation of the real personality to maintain stability in the digital reality, as behavioral models in this space change rapidly (Setsko; Tantsura, 2021).

Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that identity is not static but formed through continual negotiation between personal, social, and technological contexts. Within digital ecosystems, identity becomes increasingly performative and shaped by algorithmic mediation—where youth navigate self-perception in a landscape structured by curated content, recommendation systems, and feedback metrics (Tan *et al.*, 2025). In this environment, digital identity is not merely a reflection of self but a construct influenced by patterns of visibility, peer validation, and platform logic (Reyes-Millán *et al.*, 2023). While these affordances may expand opportunities for experimentation and expression, they can simultaneously introduce psychological fragility, comparison-based stress, and instability in identity development.

Virtual identity, as distinct from digital identity, provides space for young people to simulate alternative roles, appearances, or affiliations. However, this simulated flexibility may come at the cost of coherence, creating dissonance between online projections and offline experiences. For students especially, the interplay between educational roles and social self-representation becomes increasingly complex (Saraiva; Nogueiro, 2025). As learning environments shift into digital spaces, academic identity and social identity often intersect—or even conflict—within platforms that were not designed to support reflective or secure self-construction. This raises essential questions for education systems: how can schools, universities, and non-formal institutions support stable identity development amid a digital culture of fragmentation and surveillance?

In this context, the objective of this study is to analyze how digital environments influence the development and restructuring of youth identity, with particular attention to the pace and triggers of identity shifts. The “speed of transformation” refers to the intensity and frequency of changes in self-perception and social positioning as youth interact with digital platforms. This includes examining emotional, cognitive, and behavioral markers across different digital ecosystems, such as educational platforms, social media, and mobile apps.

Methods

The object of the study included software products whose functionality involves collecting user data and providing access to resources based on this data (e.g., personal information, activities, hobbies, etc.). These products included social networks, messengers, service aggregators, online cinema platforms, government service portals, and educational services available in Russia.

Particular attention was given to educational platforms and government-linked learning systems, as these environments play a direct role in shaping youth identity through digital interaction, evaluation, and participation.

The subject of the study focuses on the conditions under which processes emerge and change during the interaction of various age groups with such software products. These conditions include not only technical accessibility and platform functionality but also socio-cultural and pedagogical dimensions, such as the degree of agency youth exercise within digital learning environments and how feedback mechanisms influence self-perception.

To define the composition of age groups, the method of social stratification was used. This method is based on grouping young people according to shared characteristics. In this study, the characteristics considered were age, primary type of activity, and psychological development features according to age. The primary types of activities selected included:

- Education: This included opportunities for taking advanced training and retraining courses. It also encompassed the use of formal digital educational tools such as school/university portals, mobile learning apps, and state certification platforms;
- Household activities: These involved meeting needs related to organizing and performing household tasks, visiting retail establishments, service enterprises, government institutions, etc;
- Social processes: These referred to interactions with other people or groups united by a specific attribute (e.g., interests, hobbies, professional activities).

The method of surveying was employed to identify processes characteristic of different age groups and their use of digital technologies. The survey was conducted using software tools that allowed remote collection of respondents' answers. Respondents were invited to answer questions without time constraints to gather information on:

- Which software tools they use;
- In what life situations they use these tools;
- What personal information they share in the digital environment and why.

Additionally, survey questions addressed the perceived impact of educational technologies on personal development, motivation, and self-presentation in digital contexts. These questions allowed for the identification of identity-related shifts occurring within institutional digital ecosystems.

The collected data were processed to further study the specifications of these software products and scientific literature related to the behavioral transformation of young people using various digital tools. In analyzing the responses, the study sought to link individual digital behaviors to broader ethical, cultural, and educational implications, especially in how digital platforms influence youth identity formation and autonomy. This analysis employed the axiomatic method, the method of apperception, and aspect analysis.

Results

The process of identifying factors influencing the rate of transformation in youth identity processes consists of several stages, the content of which was determined by the nature of the tasks performed.

At the first stage, age boundaries were defined to identify individuals classified as youth. There is no universal global approach to defining these boundaries. For example, the UN classifies youth as individuals aged 15–24, noting that other age ranges may be used in member states (Drapushko; Drapushko, 2022). These boundaries may vary not only by country but also by the organization conducting the classification of social groups and the goals of the research. For instance, the WHO defines youth as individuals aged 25–44 (Kochkina *et al.*, 2018).

An analysis of publications from organizations dealing with national statistics revealed that lower age boundaries are typically set at 14–16 years, while upper boundaries range from 24–35 years. In Russia, the age of youth is legally defined in the Federal Law “On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation,” specifying youth as a socio-demographic group of individuals aged 14 to 35, inclusive.

At the second stage, the main characteristics of youth activities were identified. To achieve the research goal, the legislatively defined age range was divided into groups based on

the primary activities typical for representatives of each age category. The following age ranges were defined:

1. First group (14–17 years): Characterized by processes related to education and affiliative needs.
2. Second group (18–21 years)
3. Third group (22–30 years)
4. Fourth group (31–35 years)

For young people in the first age range, education and affiliative needs are the predominant activities. In Russia, children typically begin schooling at various ages (most commonly 6.5–8 years), so the starting point for identifying age-related processes is 7 years. At 14–15 years, adolescents complete basic general education, which is mandatory. At 16–17 years, they usually complete secondary general education either at school or in vocational colleges.

An analysis of educational content revealed that digital technologies are actively used to develop knowledge, skills, professional, and general cultural competencies (characteristic of college educational programs) (Vaganova *et al.*, 2020). Unified digital educational platforms are created in regions, providing spaces with learning materials, simulators, and tools for activity monitoring. For instance, Moscow’s “Moscow Electronic School” platform integrates teachers, parents, and students into a single digital space. The system generates a digital student profile that includes personal data to identify the individual, as well as information on academic performance, materials viewed, etc. Reference materials can be used during lessons on interactive boards or personal mobile devices, as well as during remote learning.

The lower age boundary of the first group is characterized by the development of cognitive mental processes, ensuring consistent and differentiated personality formation. A significant aspect for adolescents at this age is the sense of belonging to a peer group (e.g., based on common interests or hobbies) (Magomaeva, 2020). Social networks and messengers are the primary means enabling these processes. These tools not only serve a communicative function but also allow adolescents to express their viewpoints and emotions and improve self-esteem.

For this age group, an orientation towards “adult” life is characteristic, and the use of social networks enables experimentation with their own “self” (adopting social roles different

from real life, creating an ideal self-image, and shaping personal lives based on images created by other social network participants) (Veselova, 2014).

In addition, adolescents are actively involved in household processes where digital products are widely utilized. Accessing content outside social networks often requires an account that contains information about the adolescent and their interests. For instance, this could be an account on streaming platforms or online cinemas. Such functionalities may involve parental controls to restrict content or the use of falsified data to gain unrestricted access. These digital tools typically collect user activity data in the background to create a corresponding digital profile. This profile enables recommendation algorithms, content personalization, marketing strategies, and other actions designed to enhance efficiency and, consequently, the profitability of companies providing user access to these environments. Companies also develop specialized offerings to integrate adolescents into their systems, such as family plans for mobile networks, internet services, or bank accounts. Legislation defines the legal mechanisms for such actions, such as requiring the consent of legal guardians to open a bank account.

The processes involving digital systems and technologies in the second age group are also linked to the physical and psychological development of young people and changes in their societal roles. For most individuals, this age marks the beginning of an independent phase of life, including the possibility of starting a family. Consequently, all household processes are geared towards ensuring a person's normal functioning and creating comfortable and healthy living conditions.

To interact with government agencies and access relevant services, young people require a digital account containing all necessary personal information (e.g., passport details, residence, employment). This account enables users to access information, request documents or certificates from tax authorities, healthcare institutions, and other public services, and pay utility bills, all without in-person visits.

At the age of 18–21, individuals may pursue higher education or vocational training. The content of their education depends on the chosen program, but its implementation invariably involves digital technologies. These technologies facilitate communication between teachers and students, visually present materials, and simulate processes to develop specific professional competencies.

There is also the possibility of engaging in work instead of or alongside education. In such cases, digital technologies are used for performing work tasks and organizing them. For

example, courier services require specialized software to establish communication channels between couriers, clients, and vendors.

For this age group, social networks and messengers remain widely used, although their functions evolve slightly compared to adolescence, depending on the individual's social status, interests, and current activities. A new work-related function also emerges: these applications are increasingly used for professional communication with colleagues on work-related and non-work-related matters. They may also be employed in the educational process for organizational purposes or personal interactions between participants.

For other age groups, the use of digital products remains consistent, as these processes are maintained. It should be noted that such processes can be permanent or temporary and may evolve over time. For instance, educational processes may transform into professional development or retraining programs, though the conceptual use of digital tools remains unchanged. Additionally, individuals may continue their education, using digital tools for postgraduate programs or advanced professional training.

Notably, after completing any educational programs or working in specific organizations, young people gain the opportunity to create digital profiles on professional platforms. These profiles enable remote communication with colleagues in their field, sharing experiences, job hunting, or offering specialized services.

Discussion

The analysis of the results shows that the life of a modern young person is closely intertwined with the constant use of digital technologies for organizing, supporting processes, or simplifying the execution of various functions related to education, work, household activities, and social engagement. In some cases, individuals cannot opt out of using digital services, as government services rely on digital data processing. For instance, a digital profile is automatically created in the public sector (e.g., a digital individual insurance number is assigned at birth, and wages or other payments are processed through bank accounts). While individuals can choose not to use messengers, social networks, online resources, e-commerce platforms, and other software tools, this can create difficulties at certain points in life (e.g., inability to physically visit a store due to illness). Regardless of age, each person independently sets the boundaries for their use of digital tools and determines the level of inconvenience they are willing to endure.

From an educational standpoint, the digital transformation of identity intersects directly with how youth experience schooling, learning, and academic self-worth. Online platforms used for education—such as virtual classrooms, assessment systems, or adaptive learning environments—become mirrors for digital self-perception. When learners receive feedback only through digital scoring systems or automated grading, their understanding of success and belonging becomes platform-dependent (Sudarnoto *et al.*, 2025). It is essential that digital education strategies include elements of emotional literacy, identity negotiation, and reflexive use of technology to foster not just academic success but psychological stability.

As researchers point out, the active use of digital tools has been enabled by advancements in technology, which allow for the instant transmission of information over long distances, the storage and processing of vast amounts of heterogeneous data, and the emergence of compact, multifunctional, and widely accessible smartphones (Adamides; Karacapilidis, 2020; Mamedova *et al.*, 2022). The widespread use of software products, particularly mobile applications, is attributed to their convenience, accessibility, and the variety of features offered to different user categories. According to research, this is closely linked to the development of operating systems that provide powerful tools for creating and deploying mobile applications. The broad accessibility of these applications has been made possible by high-speed internet and advancements in wireless technologies (the evolution of 3G, 4G, and 5G has ensured rapid internet access for mobile devices, enabling the use of cloud services and streaming video) (Olukunle *et al.*, 2023).

To attract users, developers employ various strategies, including designing user-friendly and intuitive interfaces and implementing adaptive features, while marketers focus on creating and executing marketing campaigns or PR strategies.

The findings of this study align with assessments presented in the annual report on changes in the digital market. According to this report, 90.4% of the country's residents actively use internet functionalities (73.5% are social network users), spending an average of 8 hours and 21 minutes per day online, including 3 hours and 56 minutes on mobile device traffic (Kemp, 2024).

Final considerations

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital ecosystems shape youth identity, particularly by identifying stratified behaviors across age groups and platform types.

Key findings reveal that educational, social, and household activities now unfold in interlinked digital spheres, which influence not only functional habits but also emotional, cognitive, and social self-understanding. The study also highlights that digital profiles created in educational and state systems contribute to new forms of institutional identity formation.

The results obtained hold theoretical significance. Studying identity dynamics helps identify the mechanisms of identity formation and the factors influencing its changes under the impact of digital technologies (e.g., digital platforms, social networks, and online communities influencing youth self-identity and self-perception). These insights can contribute to the development of the theory of social identity in sociology, highlighting the peculiarities of socialization processes, group belonging, and social interactions within the virtual space. This allows for an analysis of the specifics of interpersonal relationships and other connections established through digital tools.

The results can also be used to develop educational strategies that account for the unique perceptions and behaviors of youth, behavioral models for analyzing the influence of globalization and digital technologies on culture and society, as well as state social policies.

The practical significance of the findings lies in their potential application in creating effective tools to support psycho-emotional health and ensure safety in the digital environment.

Any information technology raises serious ethical questions, with the key issues being “how user data is used” and “how it affects user behavior and health.” These concerns compel both providers and consumers to reflect on the boundaries of acceptability and to define what is appropriate. The current stage of digital technology development is characterized by the active use of artificial intelligence (AI) not only for performing industrial or professional tasks but also for analyzing user behavior and activity. This necessitates an understanding of the features of future civilization development and humanity’s place within it.

As a result, epistemological, anthropological, and ontological questions arise concerning the creation of humanistic approaches to developing software products with AI capabilities. These approaches should focus on human-centered and risk-oriented strategies aimed at enhancing individual potential, cognitive abilities, and the preservation of human civilization and culture.

The main obstacle to implementing such an approach is the creation of an information space where, through the use of software tools, the reality experienced by the user is conditional yet convincing. In such cases, the authenticity of an individual’s personality may be diminished, transforming it into a virtual identity and creating a conflict in the search for identity. This issue

is particularly acute for young people, as their personalities are actively forming at this stage of life and are subject to natural limitations.

The abundance of software products and opportunities available to users creates an environment where various forms of behavior, norms, and values are constantly intermingling. To navigate the digital environment effectively, users need to engage in critical analysis, self-assessment, tolerance, responsibility, self-accountability, and the ability to anticipate consequences.

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CRediT Author Statement

- ☐ **Acknowledgements:** The authors express their sincere gratitude to the editorial team and anonymous reviewers of *Nuances: Estudos sobre Educação* for their valuable comments and constructive suggestions that helped improve the quality and clarity of this article.
 - ☐ **Funding:** The study was conducted with financial support from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia (Research Project No. FSSW-2023-0053, Agreement No. 075-03-2023-040/13).
 - ☐ **Conflicts of interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.
 - ☐ **Ethical approval:** The study was conducted using publicly available digital platforms and anonymous survey data. All respondents participated voluntarily, and informed consent was obtained where applicable.
 - ☐ **Data and material availability:** All data supporting the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.
 - ☐ **Authors' contributions:** All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization, methodology, writing, and revision of the article. Natalia Mamedova led the theoretical framework; Marina Ivleva and Sergey Vityaev conducted the data analysis; Olga Buzskaya and Alena Akimova contributed to the survey design and interpretation of results; Aleksandr Rubtsov revised and finalized the manuscript for publication.
-

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation

