



*Asesorías y Tutorías para la Investigación Científica en la Educación Puig-Salabarría S.C.
José María Pino Suárez 400-2 esq a Lerdo de Tejada, Toluca, Estado de México. 7223898475*

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TÍTULO: Formas y métodos de manipulación de los medios: una encuesta entre los estudiantes de Volgogrado.

AUTORES:

1. Dra. Yulia Semikina.
2. Dra. Olga Demushina.

RESUMEN: En este artículo se trata el problema de la formación de las habilidades de los estudiantes de las universidades modernas para oponer las estrategias de manipulación utilizadas en los medios. Los autores realizaron un estudio sociológico e identificaron el grado de la influencia de los medios en la conciencia de los jóvenes, argumentaron la necesidad del uso de los métodos más efectivos de la resistencia a las estrategias de manipulación de la opinión pública, y elaboraron la estrategia de la formación de las habilidades de los estudiantes de tal oposición.

PALABRAS CLAVES: medios, estrategias de manipulación, contramanipulación, opinión pública, sociedad informativa.

TITLE: Ways and methods of media manipulation: a survey among Volgograd students.

AUTHORS:

1. Dra. Yulia Semikina.
2. Dra. Olga Demushina.

ABSTRACT: The article focuses on the problem of ways and methods of media manipulation. The authors conducted a sociological survey which helped to reveal the degree of media influence on the consciousness of the young generation and substantiated the need to use the most effective ways which help to resist the strategies of public opinion manipulation. As a result, a strategy was developed to form students' skills to combat manipulative techniques.

KEY WORDS: mass-media, manipulative techniques, combating media manipulation, public opinion, information society.

INTRODUCTION.

Nowadays, both Russian and Western media use manipulative strategies to form public opinion. The younger generation that often does not have any skills neither distinguish manipulative strategies nor counteract them, is helpless and vulnerable when it faces different ways and methods of media manipulation. As a result, it is important to distinguish the ways, which help to combat the effects of the manipulation of public opinion. The skillful use of axiological means in the media affects the perception of the reality and forms the context of interpretation of events.

According to the conducted survey, young people realize that media influence people's minds, but they do not understand the mechanisms used by manipulators to influence human's subconscious, in particular, and the collective subconscious in general (Jung, H. M. 2009: 188). This article intends to make an initial contribution to the understanding how to combat the effects of the manipulation.

Objective.

The main aim of the study was to investigate the Volgograd students' awareness and attitude towards practices of media manipulation in order to develop methods to combat the effects of the manipulation.

DEVELOPMENT.

Methods.

The research tool was a survey with 10 questions grouped into two main sections. The first one collected data evaluating students' trust in mass media. The second section was designed to obtain information about types, practices and examples of manipulation used by media towards the young people.

The study was conducted in the fall of 2018 among the randomly selected students of the following Volgograd universities: the Volgograd Institute of Management, the Volgograd Pedagogical University, and the Volgograd Technical University which are considered to be the biggest and the most important universities in Volgograd.

The study sample comprised the full-time students of all the areas of study enrolled in undergraduate and graduate study programs. Each student was given an anonymous self-administered coded questionnaire and was asked to mark the correct option. Several questions were supplemented by the possibility to add own comments. The students were assured that the collected information would remain confidential. The questionnaire did not contain any information that could be used to identify the participants. They were not required to provide their names. The answer sheets were collected immediately after the students had marked their options.

The data was analyzed using SPSS statistics software package in order to produce the descriptive statistics and verify the reliability of the scale.

Results and discussion.

In total 312 students were surveyed. Table 1 displays the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1. The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents (%).

Gender	
Male	46
Female	54
Age	
17-18	32
19-20	26
21-22	23
23-24	19
University	
Volgograd Institute of Management	38
Volgograd Pedagogical University	33
Volgograd Technical University	29

According to the analysis of the questionnaires, a significant part of the students show interest in publications with political content. 15% of the respondents regularly read, watch or listen to the information related to the political issues, 28% and 43% do it often or rarely correspondingly. Just 11% of the surveyed students do not have any interest in political news reported by media. It should be noted that interest in political issues depends on age and gender. According to the study, the male respondents over age 20 are more likely to have interest in political issues than women.

The majority of the respondents have critical attitude towards information presented by media. Three thirds of the surveyed students assert that citizens receive incomplete information from media. Half of the respondents argue that a great deal of information remains hidden. 23% think mass media intentionally distort information.

The analysis of the findings allows to make a conclusion about the low level of the students' trust in information provided by media. Only a very small percentage (4%) fully believes in mass media reports. The majority of the respondents (55%) partially trust in mass media. Almost a third of the surveyed students painstakingly filter the information. This response option was chosen predominantly by male respondents who usually tend to evaluate the situation more decisively

and uncompromisingly. Thus, the results of the survey show skeptical attitude of the respondents towards the media content.

A certain unanimity among the students can be observed towards mass media using manipulation practices most often. 95% mark TV as a main source of manipulation. 42% choose Internet, 25% and 11% consider printed media and radio correspondingly to be the main sources of manipulation. Total percentages do not equal 100 per cent because the respondents could choose several options.

In one of the questions the students were asked to provide an example of media manipulation. Thus, we were planned to check how the respondents understand this term on the one hand, and to find out their awareness towards this problem, on the other hand. All the received responses can be divided into two groups. The respondents of the first group marked type of manipulation, the second part of the surveyed students gave specific examples. The results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Types and examples of manipulation provided by the respondents.

Type of manipulation.	Example of manipulation.
Omission of information.	Information about medical exceptions for athletes during the Olympic Games.
Intimidation of audience.	Russian football fans will be aggressive during the 2018 FIFA World Cup.
Political propaganda.	A call of some countries to boycott the 2018 FIFA World Cup.
Provision of the contradictory information.	Protests in Bolotnaya square.
Incitement against another country.	Crash of Boeing in Ukraine.
Distortion of reality.	Confrontation with Turkey.
Advertisement.	Meeting to protect the Kholer river.

The survey helped to understand which types and examples of media manipulation are unknown to the respondents. These manipulative techniques were developed by Sylvain Timsit in 2002 (Timsit, S., 2002). The results can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Types and examples of media manipulation unknown to the respondents.

Type of manipulation.	The objectives of manipulation.
Distraction.	-To deflect attention from important issues and make people forget about urgent problems.
Problem – reaction – solution.	-To check how people will perceive a social problem. -To improve the rating of a politician or government.
Gradualism.	-To make people accept socially unpopular decisions.
Differing.	-To present unpopular decisions as unavoidable and to make people believe that their sacrifices are for better life in future.
Appealing to destructive emotions.	-To control people or to make them feel anger or fear.
Keeping the public ignorant and mediocre.	-To provide information selectively. -To spread consumerism. -To make people unconcerned about the social problems.
Self-blame.	-To make people feel underconfident and to believe that only they are responsible for their misfortunes.

It must be stressed that the most surveyed students have a great interest in the discussed problem. The majority offered their own methods of protection against media manipulation and developed their own recommendations. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Methods and techniques of protecting against media manipulation offered by the respondents.

Methods and techniques of protecting against media manipulation	The reasons and recommendations given by survey respondents
To filter information provided by media.	Try not to watch too much political TV programs or read a lot of newspaper articles about a certain event if you do not need any special data. It helps not to be involved in media manipulation.
To check accuracy of information.	It is always necessary to catch only the main idea excluding from the message emotionally colored words and expressions. Do not pay much attention on photographic images.
To give up mass media (not to watch, not to listen, not to read).	Reduce the social media noise in your life. Mass media use noise to control the public attention. They expect people to consume a large number of minor information. People become addictive on news. They read headlines and articles which are mostly factual and do not provide any significant amount of critical analysis of the events.
To compare information received from different sources.	Most of the stereotypes used by manipulative media are emotionally colored. The messages received from the media should be perceived dispassionately.
To use different mass media.	Create alternatives. Do not accept any information received from mass media on faith. Use alternative trusted sources of information.
To develop own point of view about events discussed by media.	Be ideologically aware and socially critical. Try to learn more about peculiarities of mass media language. The important principle of protection against manipulation is the rejection of the language used in manipulative media. It is impossible to accept its language, terminology and images and stay dispassionate.
To criticize any received information.	Use dialogic thinking.
To look for an original source. To use only trusted sites.	Try to be dispassionate and use common sense.
To find historical parallels.	Stop thinking in stereotypes.
To read more fiction.	Do not watch TV news at all.
To develop independent worldview.	Be unpredictable. It is much easier to manipulate people whose thinking is standard, uncritical, depersonalized. The unpredictability means that we need to consciously delay or even block thrusted stereotypes.
To try to avoid capture.	Remember that media capture shapes public perceptions of certain events. Capture is an important stage of the media industry to increase «victims of manipulation»: more people are interested in urgent or sensational news.

As the results of the survey show, a small part of the respondents did not understand this question or did not take it seriously. Among the responses we can see: “Do not worry, take it easy”, “move to an uninhabited island”, “watch only cartoons”, “Forget it”.

Thus, the results of the survey show that there is a real need for ways and methods, which help to combat manipulative strategies used in media.

CONCLUSIONS.

The study applied the analysis of the ways and methods of manipulation used by media.

The results of the survey among Volgograd students show that manipulative media techniques influence the minds of students in Russian universities. The young generation is aware of the potential negative media impact on the consciousness of the perceiving audience, but they do not know much how to combat media manipulation.

The results of the survey confirm the need to teach students how to distinguish different techniques of human minds affection and how to resist manipulative strategies used in media information space.

The advantages of the actions, which help combat media manipulation, are obvious. Students acquire a number of important skills: to use various sources to obtain information, to analyze and interpret the information according to the tasks, to make decisions, to filter information provided by media not to become addictive on news, to develop own point of view about events discussed by media to avoid capture and so on.

The results of the presented study can be used to help students to form more objective worldview and reduce their vulnerability to the influence of manipulators. Further study can conduct a survey to find out students' opinions and attitudes towards destructive influence of stakeholders aimed at the theory of controlled chaos implementation (the destruction of the state, the use of young people to promote someone's economic and political interests, etc.) (Vilmer, J.-B. Jeangène Escorcía, A. Guillaume, M. Herrera, J. 2018: 55-57).

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DATA OF THE AUTHORS.

1. **Yulia Semikina.** Associate Professor in the Faculty of Public and Municipal Administration at the Volgograd Institute of Management, branch of RANEPА, Russia. She got her Candidate (PhD) Degree in Philology in Volgograd State Socio-Pedagogical University. E-mail: semikinajulia@yandex.ru
2. **Olga Demushina.** Associate Professor in the Faculty of Public and Municipal Administration at the Volgograd Institute of Management, branch of RANEPА, Russia. She got her Candidate (PhD) Degree in Sociology of Management in Volgograd Academy of Civil Service. E-mail: olga-demushina@yandex.ru

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