



Research Article

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Informational and Psychological Influence on Student Youth in the Conditions of the Information-Psychological War

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Abstract

Peculiarities of informational and psychological influence on social consciousness as a destructive tool in the conditions of conducting the information-psychological war are considered in the article. The danger of informational and psychological influence on the citizens' consciousness is that such influence changes the normal behavior of people, their reactions to the surrounding world. It makes the person's psyche vulnerable and encourages the individual to destructive actions against society. This is a danger not only for the psychological state of an individual member of society, but also for the whole country. The purpose of the study is to reveal the peculiarities of informational and psychological influence on social consciousness in the conditions of the information-psychological war. The research was conducted using the following methods: methods of mathematical statistics, experiment, prosopographical method. It was proved that the verification of information received from the media is not verifiable by representatives of student youth on the basis of the survey. Informational and psychological influence is an important tool for conducting the information-psychological wars and operations. It is seriously detrimental to social consciousness. Young people need special protection because the future of the country depends on them. It is noted that there is a need to develop mechanisms for protecting young people from negative informational and psychological influence. The media must submit proven information in a dosed form using a simple vocabulary. Government agencies should develop rules of work in the Internet space of the state, which will help to protect society as a whole, and student youth in particular, from the negative informational and psychological influence.

Keywords: *information and psychological influence, information-psychological warfare, public consciousness, information, misinformation*

1. Introduction

At the present stage of human development, informational and psychological influence is the basis for effective activity in the field of management, pedagogy, trade, advertising, etc. However, informational and psychological influence is the main weapon of information-psychological wars and operations. It causes serious damage to the object to which it is directed. Informational and psychological influence is a purposeful psychological attack on specific spheres of an individual, group psyche, or social consciousness as a whole. The danger of informational and psychological influence on the citizens' consciousness is that such influence changes the normal behavior of people, their reactions to the surrounding world. It makes the person's psyche vulnerable and encourages the individual to destructive actions against society. This is a danger not only for the psychological state of an individual member of society, but also for the whole country. That is why today it is necessary to investigate the peculiarities of informational and psychological influence on social consciousness in the conditions of the information-psychological war.

The purpose of the study is to reveal the peculiarities of informational and psychological influence on student youth in the conditions of the information-psychological war.

Objectives of the study:

- 1) to determine the essence of informational and psychological influence on social consciousness and characterize the forms of such influence;
- 2) to determine the attitude to checking the information received in the media by the representatives of student youth.

2. Research Methods

The experimental study was conducted at Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University (Mykolaiv, Ukraine). A total sample was 96 persons (full-time students of different specialties of the political sciences faculty aged 18-24). The study was conducted in May 2019.

The distant individual questionnaire was used. The questionnaire contained eight questions: age of the respondent; which channels of receiving the information he/she uses; which channel he/she prefers; whether he/she checks the information received through the preferred channel; whether he/she compares information messages read in various print media; whether he/she compares information messages presented on various Internet portals; whether he/she compares information messages presented by different television channels; whether the respondent considers himself/herself protected from the destructive influence of information.

The criterion for evaluation was the respondents' ranking by the level of frequency of use and verification by them one or another channel of obtaining information. The unit of analysis is the place of the information channel in the system of obtaining information. The research was conducted in order to identify the most popular channel for obtaining information among students and to determine the degree of readiness to check the information by the representatives of student youth.

The analysis of the results obtained was carried out on the basis of a systematic approach. It allowed considering the attitude to the verification of information received in the media by the representatives of student youth. The mathematical and statistical processing performed with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics 21.00 computer program for Windows was quite important in carrying out this research. Namely, the use of this program allowed realizing thorough statistical processing of data and identifying the relevant groups of respondents.

For the completeness of the study (as an experiment), the authors also used the prosopographical method. It gave the opportunity to follow the respondents' preferences regarding the channels for obtaining information and namely the quality of this information, depending on the origin of these respondents, their place of residence and the surroundings. As a result of the application of this complex method, the authors managed to obtain predicted results. At present, the place of residence and surrounding people who, using latent methods of influence, can make

respondents perceive or not perceive the relevant information flows, have a really great influence on the consciousness of young people regarding the search, perception and awareness of the information. There was a very interesting fact that students who were able to visit at least one of the European countries (for educational purposes) during the period from 2015 to 2019, due to the information prism, perceived the realities of life in Ukraine differently.

3. Research Results

Today, humanity lives in the information society. This is a new type of society in which the possession of information (and not material goods) is the driving force for its transformations and development, and where human intellectual creativity thrives.

The psychological influence on the opponent, based on communicative processes using modern information technologies, involves changing the public opinion in a given direction.

There are several interpretations of information-psychological war in science. The most striking one is the definition of the researcher T. Belska. She considers it as the influence that is being carried out with the goal of purposeful dissemination of special information that affects the psyche and behavior of the political elite and the civil society of a particular country or region. Therefore, the highest form of the war of the future can be called "conscientious" war (from the Latin conscientia - consciousness). It is a system of information-propagandistic and psychological measures carried out with the use of media, culture, art and other (psychotropic, psychotronic) means for a long time period according to carefully designed scenarios (Belska, 2014).

The purpose of the information war is the implanting false representation of the surrounding world into the subconscious, through which the manipulation of public opinion takes place. The system of traditional values, ideals and myths on which the national culture, a sense of dignity, the possibility of cultural and national self-identification is based, are the main "heights" the possession of which ensures the future success of the aggressor country (Korokhod, 2013). In the information-psychological war, the information fight is carried out by the hostile parties in the form of executing secret information-psychological operations using informational weapons (Moroz, 2016).

The basis of information-psychological war is a manipulative influence on the mass consciousness in order to:

- introduce hostile, harmful ideas and views into the public and individual consciousness;
- disorientate and disinform the masses;
- release certain beliefs, foundations;
- intimidate the people using the image of their enemy;
- intimidate the enemy with their power;
- finally, ensure the dumping ground for its economy (in this case IPW becomes an integral part of the competitive struggle).

The destructive influence of the information-psychological war can be carried out in different ways of psychological and informational influence. The main ones are disinformation; propaganda; diversification of public opinion; psychological pressure; rumors (Maruta, 2015).

The essence of disinformation is the intentional provision by the subject of knowingly false information to the object in order to disorient it. In order to disinform the person false data is consciously used. Misleading information should be of plausible character. The following things are inherent for disinformation: the absence of a template in the forms and content; skilful carrying out activities to mislead the person for a single plan, their thorough coordination and maximal use of plausible information; skilful concealment of actual intentions, goals and tasks that exist.

Historical experience shows that there are different methods of carrying out disinformation activities which have positive and negative features. The specific choice of a method directly depends on the operational situation on a specific area of the special service activities and their tasks. The most frequently used forms of disinformation are:

- tendentious statement of facts - a form of disinformation, consisting in biased coverage of

facts or other information about events with the help of specially selected true data. Typically, specially formed information is given to the target object in a dosed way, to constantly increasing tension. Such a tense position of the object is maintained by continuously "throwing" new portions of strictly limited and dosed data into a medium of information deficit;

- disinformation "from the reverse". It means to provide true information in a distorted form or in such situation when it is perceived as false one. As a result, an object knows the true information about the intentions or concrete actions of the opposite party, but perceives it inadequately. An individual is not prepared to withstand the negative influence;
- terminological "mining" consists in the distortion of the primary correct meaning of fundamentally important, basic terms and interpretations of the general mindset and operational-applied nature;
- "gray" disinformation involves the use of the synthesis of true information with disinformation;
- "black" disinformation involves the use of predominantly false information.

One of the examples of apparent disinformation was the broadcast on July 12, 2014 on the First Russian TV channel of a news item about a boy who was allegedly crucified by the Ukrainian Army. Obviously, the absolute lie was instantly circulated by other Russian media and spread in social networks. The Russian audience received another portion of fear mongering and hatred for the Ukrainian Army (Gorban, 2015).

One of the main methods of leading the information-psychological war is propaganda. It consists in the dissemination of various political, philosophical, scientific, imaginative, and other artistic ideas with a purpose to introduce them into public opinion and activate and, thus, use these ideas in the mass practical activity of the population. At the same time, propaganda includes messages that are spread to make a beneficial influence on public opinion, provoke programmed emotions and changes of the attitude to a particular situation or the behavior of a certain group of people directly or indirectly beneficial to the organizers (Gorban, 2015).

Diversification of public opinion is the dispersion of attention of the ruling elite to various artificially focused problems and distractions thereby from solving urgent priority tasks of social-political and economic development for the normal functioning of the society and the state.

The spread of rumors is the activity of spreading various information (mostly false information) among the general population mostly by unofficial channels in order to disorganize the society and the state or its separate institutions or organizations (Maruta, 2015).

The spread of rumors is one of the most effective ways of disseminating information with informational and psychological influence. It is based on increasing group suggestiveness during the influence (Zharkov, 2007).

There are several prerequisites for rumors. Faced with an obscure phenomenon and not finding a sufficient explanation of some event, people ask for advice or help from acquaintances, but they interpret the event as they perceive and understand. Rumors often play an important role in formation of public opinion, the image of an individual (especially public one). Rumors can increase panic (for example, a "perestroika" deficit when people bought sugar, matches, and other products in bulk, even if there was not enough space at home to keep it all up), disorganize the work of the firm or company, or compromise a person, authorities or law enforcement agencies, trademarks and brands.

All of these abovementioned forms and methods, the conditions of their application for a certain period of time and territory, their tasks determine the use of the appropriate forces and means, specific measures of direct subversion or providing hidden beneficial influence.

The use of these forms of informational and psychological influence on consciousness is possible due to human nature. Today, most citizens are not inclined to check the information they receive through the media. It is worth noting that even young people do not have a critical attitude towards the information received through the media. Thus, it was found that most respondents do

not check the information received through the media. The results of the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Channels of receiving information and their checking (based on survey of respondents)

Channel of obtaining information that is preferred	Number of respondents (in %)	
	Do not scrutinize information messages	Constantly check the information received
Internet resources (53% of all respondents)	86%	14%
TV (41% of all respondents)	82%	18%
Printed media (6% of all respondents)	96%	4%

Influence can be made by means of information stimuli using the whole spectrum of methods and forms of technical, visual, sound, medicated, physical, noxious, virtual suppression of freedom.

American researchers at Stanford University, Herbert Lin and Jackie Kerr point out that Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 demonstrates the developing approach of the country to using the means of informational and psychological influence in conflict and pre-conflict situations. Integrated campaigns coverage in the media and social networks aimed at influencing public opinion in Russia, Ukraine and in the international community. Special information-psychological operations and a false flag or disordered actions (black and gray operations) with the participation of "polite people" were associated with the official refusal of Russia to recognize the presence of the Russian military in Crimea (Lin, 2017).

The Russian mass media emphasized the democratic nature of the transition of Crimea to the Russian Federation. Internal and regional coverage by the Russian mass media and viral social networks during the crisis played with the emotions and prejudices of certain groups of society, emphasizing the "Russianness" of the local population of Crimea and anticipating the threat of violence against Russian-speaking regions in Ukraine. At the same time, Russian soldiers looked like peacekeepers who defended ethnic Russians in Ukraine. Information from the Russian mass media varied from plausible to implausible messages (for example, the story about the crucifixion of a three-year Russian baby was entangled with real materials and materials).

The Russian mass media for citizens and governments of Western Europe and the United States tried to level the actions of Russia in Crimea and in the East of Ukraine to the actions of NATO forces in Kosovo and Libya, and also emphasized the non-legitimacy of the "coup" that took place in Kyiv in 2014 (Lin, 2017).

In the context of events taking place today in Ukraine, it is advisable to point out the possible ways of resisting to informational and psychological influence. In general, information resistance is a special complex of countermeasures aimed at caution, preventing, anticipating and protecting from enemy's destructive intentions for the mind of the person who makes managerial decisions.

The dominant aim of information counteraction operations is to assure the security of own information resources. The goal is achieved by means of physical protection of objects, hidden external observation, technical equipment, operative masking, disinformation in association with operational combinations, counter propaganda in a complex with radioelectronic struggle.

The research on the psychology of communications suggests that a person can be "vaccinated" against false news. Such procedure consists of simultaneous delivery of the original message, as well as the preventive detection of false claims that are likely to occur when the message is released. However, it is easier to say than to reproduce in practice. Still, there are methods for reducing dependence. In particular, it is necessary to provide information in the media more slowly and to reduce the complexity of the text content. This will create favorable conditions for a thorough

evaluation of information messages by the society. This method is useful when compiling news for young people aged 17-19, who has only found a critical attitude towards political events.

Nowadays, some large private sector entities have recognized the extent of their responsibility against certain types of informational and psychological operations. For example, Facebook introduced a new protocol for its users to identify questionable news sites. Social networks is a channel for students to get information. The protection of social networks from false information which causes a destructive influence on their consciousness is a very important part of the action of state institutions in modern Ukraine.

4. Conclusions and Perspectives of Further Research

Informational and psychological influence is an important tool for conducting information-psychological wars and operations and is seriously detrimental to social consciousness. Under the informational and psychological influence it is necessary to understand the purposeful psychological attack on specific spheres of the psyche of a person, group of persons or social consciousness as a whole, which changes people's behavior, their reactions to the surrounding world, makes the person's psyche vulnerable and encourages the individual to destructive actions against society.

The conducted research among the student youth made it possible to find out that the priority channel of receiving information among students is Internet resources. However, most respondents do not check information messages received from the sites that are their information channels. That is why, in the conditions of conducting an information war against Ukraine, the population of our country needs protection from informational and psychological influence. And young people need special protection because the future of the country depends on them. The need is to develop mechanisms to protect young people from negative informational and psychological influence: the media must provide proven information in a dosed form using simple vocabulary. Government agencies should develop rules of work in the Internet space of Ukraine which will help to protect society from the negative informational and psychological influence.

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