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ETHICS AND VALUES IN THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

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Abstract. This article explores the role and significance of ethics and values in a digital society. It analyzes how the rapid development of digital technologies affects human behavior, communication, and responsibility in the online environment. The study emphasizes the importance of preserving human values in the digital age, highlighting key ethical issues such as respect, honesty, and the responsible use of information.

Keywords. digital ethics; ethical consciousness; mass culture; morality; student education; digital culture; social consciousness.

Introduction. What is a digital society? Before answering this question, it should be noted that a digital society is a form of society in which its main structures and activities—such as the economy, culture, politics, and social relations—are organized and mediated by digital technologies and infrastructures, primarily the Internet, mobile networks, and data systems. This is not merely about using computers; rather, it is about living in a world where the digital and the physical are deeply interconnected. Personal identity, social interactions, work, entertainment, and even rights are increasingly becoming digital in nature.From this perspective, the digital society is causing profound changes in all aspects of human life, including systems of ethics and values. Due to the rapid development of technologies and the widespread use of the Internet, communication between people, social relations, and moral norms are being reshaped. Today, users of the Internet, social networks, and various digital platforms are establishing new ethical norms in human interactions. This, in turn, has brought issues such as privacy, information security, and the protection of personal data to the forefront of public discourse.At present, the growing number of ethical issues in the digital society requires the development of new moral principles and approaches. Problems such as cyberbullying, online deception and fraud, and the spread of fake information demand new ethical and legal responses. Topics including information security, personal data protection, moral education, and digital literacy have become highly relevant for all segments of society.In a digital society, ethics and values should not only define norms of communication and interaction between individuals but must also be established as fundamental principles across all areas of digital life. Creating solid scientific foundations to ensure the development of ethical values in the digital environment, to achieve their stability, and to strengthen peace and social cohesion within society is of great importance.

Literature Review. According to the theory of utilitarianism developed by John Stuart Mill (a British philosopher), human actions can be evaluated as moral or immoral solely based on their consequences. Mill argues that “any action that brings the greatest happiness to the greatest number and minimizes suffering is the right action.” In this context, happiness refers to a state of well-being in both individual and social life.John Rawls (a scholar), in his work A

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Theory of Justice, considers justice to be a fundamental value of society and introduces the concept of "justice as fairness." According to Rawls, clear principles of justice must be established within society, and all citizens should enjoy equal rights. He emphasizes that "each person should have an equal right to the most extensive set of basic liberties compatible with similar liberties for others."The ethical views of Immanuel Kant (a German philosopher) are based on the concept of the "Categorical Imperative." Kant argues that individuals should act according to the principle: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." This means that every human action must conform to universal moral principles.Today, students widely use digital technologies, especially in the field of information technology. They are capable of developing numerous software programs that can meet the needs of many people. When seeking an answer to the question of how students use digital technologies today, examples include accessing information through Google, academic databases, YouTube tutorials, graphic design tools such as Canva, and programming environments for computer science (for example, VS Code). In addition, students can learn foreign languages through social networks and applications such as Duolingo.In the digital age, the Internet has become an integral part of everyday life, shaping how people communicate, learn, and express themselves. Along with this expanded freedom comes a significant level of human responsibility. Whether posting content, sharing information, or interacting with others, every action taken online can have real consequences. Today, the Internet plays a central role in human life: work, education, communication with friends, and even leisure activities largely take place online. Therefore, every individual is responsible for their behavior, words, and posts on the Internet.

Each online action can affect other people's emotions, reputation, and future. Irresponsible behavior not only harms others but may also lead to social and legal consequences for the individual. The first rule of understanding responsibility in the digital space is to consider the potential impact of the material being shared. Every post, image, video, or comment can influence someone's emotional state, mental well-being, or social standing. Thus, respecting others' privacy and avoiding harm are essential principles in online environments.Negative opinions or harmful ideas encountered online can sometimes be dangerous. If it is safe to do so, constructively criticizing such content while protecting oneself and others can be beneficial. If it is not safe, reporting such content rather than ignoring it is necessary. Ignoring harmful ideas negative behavior contributes to their spread and makes the digital space more dangerous.Protecting personal data is also a crucial part of online responsibility. Nothing online can be considered truly private. Names, addresses, phone numbers, and personal photos can be copied and distributed indefinitely. Therefore, caution is essential before sharing content, and privacy settings should be actively used to protect personal information on social networks. It is important to remember that one's online reputation can affect future employment opportunities, educational prospects, and social standing.Managing emotions is another key aspect of online responsibility. Angry or offensive posts, sarcasm, and aggressive language can quickly escalate situations and lead to regret. Often, people act impulsively online and later feel compelled to apologize. For this reason, thinking calmly before posting—or even waiting a day before responding—is often the most rational approach, especially regarding rapidly spreading news and controversial topics on social media.When encountering cyberbullying or illegal content, responsibility extends beyond self-protection to helping others. Blocking and reporting harassment contributes to making the online environment safer. Reporting not only reduces risks but also helps protect victims and may lead to legal action against offenders. Additionally, regularly monitoring one's online presence, checking what information is available, removing

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inappropriate content, and sharing positive material can help manage one's digital image.Responsible online behavior also requires adherence to legal and ethical norms. Negative actions such as stealing money or personal data, spreading false information, engaging in cybercrime, or downloading illegal files can result in serious legal consequences. Therefore, every user must carefully consider each step they take online. Awareness of legal responsibility is an essential part of being safe and responsible on the Internet.Understanding responsibility in the digital space also opens opportunities to make a positive impact. By creating positive content, maintaining blogs, promoting personal skills, or teaching others, individuals can contribute to constructive change online. Every user can help others, promote kindness, and serve as a positive example through their online behavior.In conclusion, human responsibility in the digital space means recognizing the significance of every post, comment, and action. Acting responsibly online helps make the Internet safer, more useful, and more positive. At the same time, it contributes to the development of individual moral values, benefits society, and supports healthy relationships with others. The digital space is shaped by our actions; therefore, each of us must be accountable for our behavior online.

Analysis and Results. Today, a large part of students' lives takes place on the Internet. Activities such as learning, searching for information, communicating with friends, sharing opinions on social networks, and developing personal interests are mostly carried out in the online environment. Therefore, students' behavior on the Internet, their moral decisions, and sense of responsibility are of great importance for the social and moral state of society.When students express their opinions online—posting comments, images, or videos—they need to understand that their actions can affect the feelings of others. Every post or comment in the online space has not only social but also psychological impacts on others and on themselves. Therefore, students need to learn to manage their online behavior and act responsibly.Moral processes guide students' actions on the Internet. For example, when encountering false or harmful information, a student must know how to respond appropriately. If safe, they can exercise moral responsibility through critical thinking and constructive discussion. If the situation is unsafe or complicated, reporting the content can increase accountability and protect others. Ignoring harmful behavior or false ideas contributes to their spread, making the online environment more dangerous.Students also need to understand responsibility in protecting personal data. Nothing online is truly private, as all content can be copied and shared. Therefore, students can create a safer online environment by protecting personal information, posting carefully, and using social media privacy settings.A key aspect of online moral processes is managing emotions. Angry, hurtful posts, sarcasm, or aggressive language can escalate situations quickly and negatively impact social relationships. Students can control their online behavior by thinking calmly before posting, even waiting a day before responding. This is particularly important when commenting on rapidly spreading news or controversial issues on social media.When facing cyberbullying or illegal content, students are responsible not only for protecting themselves but also for helping others. By blocking and reporting harassment of other students or young users, they contribute to creating a safer online environment. Additionally, continuously monitoring their online actions, managing their reputation, deleting inappropriate content, and posting positive material strengthens their sense of responsibility.

Another dimension of moral processes for students is understanding legal accountability. Negative actions such as spreading false information, committing cybercrimes, stealing money or personal data, or downloading illegal files can have serious legal consequences. Therefore, students must carefully consider every online action and comply with laws and ethical

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standards.Developing moral processes online also fosters positive behavior. Students can create useful content, promote their knowledge and skills, and provide helpful advice to others, thus cultivating a constructive online environment. At the same time, students develop ethical maturity through maintaining healthy relationships, demonstrating respect, and acting responsibly.As a result, when students act responsibly and ethically on the Internet, the online space becomes not only safe and positive but also contributes to their personal development and the social and moral stability of society. Every action by a student online can improve the Internet, assist others, and serve as a positive example. In this way, the digital environment is shaped by our moral values and sense of responsibility, and each student must be accountable for their actions.Social networks allow students to communicate beyond geographical boundaries, share information, and access educational resources. By improving digital literacy and media culture, students contribute to their academic and personal growth. Misuse of digital technologies can lead to various ethical problems, including cyberbullying, posting unethical content, violating privacy, racism, or hiding behind anonymity. Some studies indicate that verbal abuse and hate speech are among the most common forms of digital harassment.Internet dependency or overuse may negatively affect students' learning process, motivation, and moral-psychological state. There are certain behavioral norms governing online interactions (e.g., proper language use, copyright respect) that students need to adopt. Since students are not only consumers but also creators of content, they must feel responsible for their online actions. Implementing policies and regulations in higher education institutions to guide students' online ethical behavior (SNS policies) is therefore essential.Today, digital technologies are an inseparable part of life. Through the Internet, social networks, mobile applications, and digital communication tools, people exchange thousands of pieces of information daily. At the same time, human moral values and social norms must adapt to this new environment. Maintaining ethics and values in a digital society is essential not only at the individual level but also at the societal level.The basis of ethics and responsibility in the digital environment is that every user is accountable for their actions and words. Every post, comment, image, or video can affect others. Therefore, in a digital society, individuals must preserve their moral values and respect the feelings of others. Core values include honesty, justice, respect, kindness, and non-harm.The need to uphold ethics and values is especially urgent for younger generations, students, and socially active users. While learning, communicating, and expressing opinions online, they must adhere to moral standards and avoid spreading harmful or false content. Negative actions, such as sharing false information, cyberbullying, or harming others' reputations, disrupt social balance and reduce trust in a digital society.Another key aspect of maintaining ethics and values in a digital society is protecting personal information and privacy. Since everything spreads rapidly online, safeguarding personal data, carefully posting content, and protecting individual characteristics ensure adherence to moral norms.Upholding ethics in a digital society also supports emotional and social stability. Rapidly spreading negative opinions, aggressive comments, hurtful posts, or trolling can harm people's psychological well-being. Users must learn to express themselves calmly, politely, and respectfully.Furthermore, maintaining ethics in a digital society is important not only individually but also socially. Social balance, trust, and cooperation depend on individuals fulfilling their moral obligations. Improper or negative online behavior increases injustice, misinformation, and distrust. Therefore, every user is obliged to preserve their moral values, act responsibly, and serve as a positive example to others.Another important aspect of preserving ethics and values in a digital society is following laws and regulations. Improper online actions, such as spreading false information, committing cybercrimes, stealing personal data, or downloading illegal files, carry

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not only moral but also legal consequences. Therefore, every user must understand the outcomes of their actions online and comply with laws and ethical standards.In conclusion, the necessity of maintaining ethics and values in a digital society reflects both personal and social responsibility. Every user's posts, comments, and actions affect others. Thus, preserving ethical values and acting responsibly in a digital society is the duty of every individual. Only in this way can the Internet remain safe, positive, and beneficial, while each user contributes to social and moral stability by developing their own ethical values.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the development of digital technologies today requires a parallel advancement in education and skills, as well as progress in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and related fields. I conclude that the development of digital technologies is essential, as they can meet the needs of a large number of people. To this day, I have been using the highly developed digital technologies effectively.However, introducing these technologies without philosophical reflection can negatively affect human thinking and moral values. Artificial intelligence in education produces positive outcomes only when it is used not to replace humans, but as a tool that expands their learning capabilities. Therefore, the integration of education and technology must be guided by philosophical thinking to ensure it fosters both intellectual growth and moral development.

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