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Professional Socialization of Students Using Social Media Tools

Vera Ryabchikova ^{a, *}, Irina Sinitsyna ^a, Svetlana Zhabchik ^b, Irina Telezhko ^c

^a Russian State Agrarian University – Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, Moscow, Russian Federation

^b Kuban State Agrarian University named after I.T.Trubilin, Krasnodar, Russian Federation

^c Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russian Federation

Abstract

The issue of socialization is one of the most important in sociology, psychology, pedagogy, and philosophy. The socialization of university students is an extremely significant process, both for contemporary Russian society as a whole and for the personal development of each future specialist in particular. That is why the study of students' professional socialization through the use of social media tools is intended to help create favorable conditions for the development of well-rounded, physically and psychologically healthy, and spiritually enriched members of society.

The aim of this article was to determine the impact of social media on the professional socialization of students. Using survey methods and mathematical statistics, significant differences were identified between student groups depending on their involvement in professional online communities.

The study revealed that students who are registered in professional and educational groups – i.e., those who use social media tools in the process of professional socialization – are more likely to express a desire to become highly qualified specialists in their chosen field; they consider such qualities as education, professionalism, diligence, perseverance, creativity, and the ability to generate new ideas to be important. These students tend to use effective learning practices and are more oriented toward working in their field of study and engaging in scientific research.

Keywords: socialization, professional socialization, social media, students, motivation, learning practices.

1. Introduction

Today, against the backdrop of changing social functions of professional education institutions, the demands for the quality and content of specialist training, as well as for their

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: smirnovaverochka@mail.ru (V. Ryabchikova)

future social roles and professional fulfillment, are increasing. At the same time, modern production and the labor market require a new type of worker – one who possesses a high level of social competence, professional and psychological adaptability, and mobility (Babina et al., 2022; Gumerova, Shaimieva, 2024). Therefore, the issue of professional development, and especially professional socialization, has become one of the key concerns for both the development of society as a whole and for specific social systems.

This issue is closely linked to the search for new models of organizing the educational process through the use of information and communication technologies, as well as to the creation of an effective environment for quality interaction between teachers and students (Kuznetsov, 2024).

The use of social networks as a platform for learning and communication allows for the organization of students' independent work during non-class hours (Shichkin et al., 2024). Methodologically sound and purposeful integration of online services into the educational process has the potential to foster self-regulated, autonomous learning, since learning via electronic social networks is active, dynamic, student-driven, and student-managed (Klimenko, 2012). In addition, the use of network technology services as modern educational tools helps improve the quality of the educational process, enabling a rapid response to the emerging demands of the information society (Pavlichenko, 2012; Shaimieva et al., 2024; Grudtsina et al., 2025).

The concept of professional socialization emerged under the influence of the general concept of socialization (Severin, 2023). It represents a process through which an individual's mental structures are shaped through interaction with those parts of the social environment that are connected to professional activity (Makarova, 2007; Smolin, Palchikova, 2024). Professional socialization begins during higher education and is largely determined by the conditions of professional training (Seliverstova, 2010; Bulgakova, 2024).

According to Migacheva (2007), socialization into a profession involves acquiring the necessary skills as well as social support (depending on the specifics of the professional activity), through which a sense of belonging to the profession develops. The author also emphasizes that during the socialization process, a professional acquires a new language for understanding and perceiving reality.

Murzagalina (2010) defines professional socialization as the accumulation of professional experience by the subject in the course of their activity. She notes that the foundations of professional socialization are laid during university training.

Researchers view professional socialization as the process of entering a professional environment, internalizing professional experience, and mastering the standards and values of the professional community (Abdullayev et al., 2024a). It is also seen as an active realization of accumulated professional experience, where various types of adaptive behavior are expressed not as a response to external demands but as an autonomous choice of the optimal behavioral strategy, leading to professional self-development (Irba (Kiseleva), 2008).

Krasnoperova (2008) pays particular attention to the concept of "professional and labor socialization." She argues that professional socialization is closely tied to professional functions, without which it cannot be fully realized. During professional socialization, individuals are prepared for professional labor. Therefore, for this preparation to be effective, socialization must be aligned with pedagogically organized labor – this is the essence of professional and labor socialization (Abdullaev, 2023; Zhuzev et al., 2024). This type of socialization refers to professional development based on the cultivation of professional qualities, beginning with early vocational education and continuing throughout life through interaction with the surrounding environment. It includes the assimilation of social norms and cultural values, professional self-development, and self-realization in the society to which the individual belongs. It encompasses labor education, vocational training, and the spontaneous acquisition of appropriate qualities (Goncharenko et al., 2025).

A.V. Zenkina (2020) notes that personal activity is essential in the process of professional socialization, as it involves interaction and influence within systems of social connections and relationships, and it demands a whole set of characteristics from the individual. S.G. Razuvaev (2013) suggests that a person with a well-formed "self-concept" and developed motivational-cognitive characteristics will be more successful in undergoing professional socialization. This process involves the individual entering into social relationships with others who belong to a specific professional environment (Shahr et al., 2019; Markheim, Lukyanova, 2023).

Studies also highlight that professional socialization is a multifactorial and multi-level process of acquiring professional culture, integrating into the professional system through the transmission of professional values, traditions, and behavioral norms (Rubanova, 2015; Babina, Utusikov, 2024; Semenova, Lazutova, 2024). The implementation of this process at different stages of life (childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood, and old age) has its own unique features (Radaev, 2018).

V.A. Klimenko understands professional socialization as a process of human development and self-realization through the assimilation and reproduction of professional culture. Alongside acquiring knowledge, skills, and creative experience in the professional sphere, it also includes behavioral norms, interpersonal relations, and a value system aligned with the purpose and content of the profession (Klimenko, 2012).

Thus, professional socialization can be understood as both the process and outcome of acquiring professional competence – that is, the combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for effective activity in a given professional field, as obtained through higher education. The key role in this process belongs to the realization of an individual's educational potential, which is an integrative characteristic encompassing one's knowledge, skills, learning needs, interests, values, and motivations shaped by both formal education and self-education (Salisu et al., 2019; Shebzukhova et al., 2023 Mityurnikova et al., 2023).

As for students specifically, professional socialization takes place through real-life interaction under the influence of social circumstances and various educational influences. This shapes their worldview, activity skills, behavioral principles, and psychological qualities, thereby preparing them to participate in public life (Arendachuk, 2013). Amid growing competition in the education sector, the significance of students' professional choices and their drive for self-expression and self-fulfillment has increased (Romm, Romm, 2010).

Researchers note that the student years are a sensitive period for the development of key sociogenic potentials of the individual, including: the formation of professional, ideological, and social qualities of the future specialist (Nizhnikov, Lagunov, 2024); the development of professional abilities as a prerequisite for independent professional creative activity; the formation of intellect and stabilization of character traits; the transformation of motivation and value systems; and the formation of social values in connection with professionalization (Vaisburg, 2014; Abdullayev et al., 2024b). In other words, higher education plays a crucial role in the comprehensive socialization of the student as an individual.

Professional socialization is considered the second stage in the broader process of human socialization. At this stage, individuals acquire a profession and gain specific role-based knowledge, with the role being connected to the division of labor (Morozova, Frolova, 2005). The professional socialization of university students is an especially important process, both for Russian society as a whole and for the development of each future specialist as an individual (Yugfeld, Pankina, 2014; Gazizova et al., 2025).

Therefore, the aim of this article is to determine the influence of social media on the professional socialization of students.

2. Research methodology

To achieve the stated objective, the authors employed a number of methods, most notably: analysis of psychological, pedagogical, and scientific-methodological literature; a questionnaire-based survey (empirical research); and methods of mathematical data processing.

At the first stage of the study, the method of scientific-methodological literature analysis was used to identify key patterns, trends, and characteristics of students' professional socialization. This method enabled a detailed examination of the essence of the professional socialization process and the influence of social media on it.

The survey was conducted during the second semester of the 2023–2024 academic year at the Russian State Agrarian University – Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy. The sample consisted of 50 third-year and 50 fourth-year students. The selection of respondents was carried out using a convenience sampling procedure, since participation in the survey was voluntary and limited to students available at the time of data collection.

The questionnaire offered to the students consisted of two blocks of questions. The first block focused on the use of social media in their professional socialization (2 questions): "Which groups are you registered in or subscribed to?" and "In which groups do you spend more time compared to others?".

The second block addressed the development of professional socialization and included questions about students' motivation for entering university, professionally significant personal qualities, study strategies and practices, motives for academic activity, and the types of work they plan to pursue after graduation (5 questions):

1. What is your motivation for obtaining higher education?
2. Which personal qualities do you consider professionally significant?
3. How do you organize your study activities?
4. What are your motives for academic engagement?
5. What do you plan to do after graduating from university?

For the second block, multiple answers could be selected.

The survey was conducted through an online platform.

Based on the responses to the first block of questions, the student sample was divided into an experimental group (EG) and a control group (CG). The experimental group (EG) consisted of students who were registered (or subscribed) to both professional and educational online groups. The remaining students comprised the control group (CG).

It was hypothesized that being registered in professional and educational groups may indicate the initial stages of professional socialization.

At the third stage, the results from the second block of questions were processed using methods of mathematical statistics. The goal was to identify differences in the distribution of a particular indicator (the formation of professional socialization) by comparing two empirical distributions. For this purpose, Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2) was used.

The measurement scale included two categories ("forming" and "not forming"), hence the degrees of freedom $v = 1$. According to the chi-square distribution table, for a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ and $v = 1$, the critical value is $\chi^2_{crit} = 3.841$.

The statistical hypotheses of the study were as follows:

– H_0 (null hypothesis): There is no difference between the empirical distributions of EG and CG students regarding the formation of professional socialization.

– H_1 (alternative hypothesis): There is a difference between the empirical distributions of EG and CG students regarding the formation of professional socialization.

3. Research results

3.1. Survey results (first block of questions)

Table 1 shows the types of groups respondents are registered in and in which of those groups they spend the most time.

Table 1. Distribution of responses to the questions: "Which groups are you registered or subscribed to?" and "In which groups do you spend more time than in others?"

Groups	Registered / Subscribed	Spend over an hour
Entertainment	84 %	81 %
Music	84 %	38 %
Informational	70 %	54 %
Educational	58 %	43 %
Political	51 %	3 %
Shopping	51 %	16 %
Professional	51 %	39 %
Commercial	41 %	16 %
Sports	38 %	3 %
Gaming	35 %	24 %
Culinary	32 %	0 %
None	24 %	0 %

Source: compiled based on the survey

It was found that only a quarter of respondents do not belong to any group. The other responses were distributed as follows:

84 % of respondents are in entertainment groups, the same number in music groups, 70 % are in informational groups, and 58 % are in educational groups. Political, professional, and

shopping groups each have 51 % of respondents. Other types of groups account for about one-third of the surveyed students.

Although students can be registered in several groups simultaneously, they spend the most time in entertainment groups. In these, the number of students registered and the number who spend time there is almost equal – about 80 %.

70 % of respondents are registered in informational groups, and 54 % report spending significant time there.

Approximately 40 % of respondents spend a substantial amount of time in professional and educational groups, though nearly two-thirds are registered in them.

While 84 % of respondents are registered in music groups, only 38 % spend much time there. In political groups, where half of the students are registered, only 3 % spend a significant amount of time. In shopping groups, where the same number of students are registered, five times as many (16 %) spend most of their time.

Based on the survey results, the student sample was divided into two groups. The **experimental group (EG)** consisted of students who were simultaneously registered (or subscribed) to both professional and educational groups (46 %). The remaining students formed the **control group (CG)**.

3.2. Survey results (second block of questions)

As part of the study, the motivation for entering university was analyzed among the separate student groups.

Table 2. Motivation for higher education (as % of respondents)

	EG	CG	χ^2
Wanted to become a highly qualified specialist in their chosen field	54.7	42.3	12.67*
Wanted to improve their social status, gain a more prestigious position	37.9	36.2	2.54
Wanted to secure financial stability in the future	52.6	51.8	1.19
Believed that any university diploma would be useful in life	34.9	37.3	5.68*
Parents insisted on it	8.2	8.2	0
Thought university would provide interesting social connections	12.2	12.5	0.67
Believed higher education would help them become cultured, well-educated	25.7	27	3.42
Hard to say	1.4	1.5	0.23
Other	0.6	0.7	0.22

Source: based on the survey results (multiple answers allowed).

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$

The leading motivations for entering university were the desire to become a highly qualified specialist in their chosen field, to ensure future financial stability, to improve social status, to obtain a university diploma, and to become a cultured and educated person.

For most answer choices, there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG). However, for the statement “Wanted to become a highly qualified specialist in their chosen field,” the χ^2 value exceeded the critical level ($12.67 > 3.841$).

In analyzing students’ professional socialization, we also studied their focus on developing qualities such as creativity, conscientiousness, education, professionalism, self-discipline, diligence, perseverance, initiative, critical thinking, and the drive for self-realization.

The study revealed that students generally value qualities such as education, professionalism, diligence, perseverance, creativity, and the ability to innovate.

Statistically significant differences between EG and CG were found for qualities such as creativity, conscientiousness, discipline, education, professionalism, self-discipline, and the desire for self-realization.

Table 3. Students' orientation toward developing professionally significant personal qualities (as % of respondents)

Professionally significant qualities	EG	CG	χ^2
Creative approach, ability to generate new ideas	59.6	39.3	18.91*
Conscientiousness, discipline	37.4	17.2	13.34*
Education, professionalism	48.6	45.5	5.12*
Self-discipline, self-organization	36.6	30.6	8.42*
Diligence	36.4	35.8	1.41
Perseverance	37.2	34.1	2.83
Initiative	33.8	35.7	1.42
Critical thinking	24.7	27.7	3.15
Striving for self-realization and personal achievements	47.5	28.8	11.63*

Source: based on the survey results (multiple answers allowed).

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$

We also examined students' learning practices (see [Table 4](#)).

Table 4. Students' learning practices (as % of respondents)

Learning Practices	EG	CG	χ^2
Study to the best of their abilities	65.3	38.7	22.63*
Absorb material with little effort	34.2	36.3	1.42
Study systematically throughout the semester	54.7	40.4	14.31*
Regularly attend and actively participate in classes	43.5	26.9	10.72*
Complete all academic tasks in full	54.3	42.1	10.31*
Go beyond the required program	63.2	23.8	29.81*

Source: based on the survey results (multiple answers allowed).

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$

Significant differences in learning practices were observed between EG and CG. More students in EG reported studying to their full potential, studying systematically throughout the semester, attending all classes regularly, completing all tasks in full, and going beyond the basic program (see [Table 4](#)).

To explore students' academic motivation, we analyzed the motives for their academic engagement (see [Table 5](#)).

Table 5. Students' academic motivation (as % of respondents)

Academic Motivation	EG	CG	χ^2
Desire to better prepare for a future professional career	75.8	58.7	17.22*
Desire to build a successful career	64.2	66.3	1.23
Considering grades in future employment	44.7	40.4	2.17
Interest in the subjects studied	53.5	26.9	18.42*
Sense of self-worth	34.3	32.1	0.51
Parental control	35.3	37.6	1.64
Grades matter for receiving a scholarship	34.2	36.3	1.42
Demanding teachers	44.7	40.4	1.31

Source: based on the survey results (multiple answers allowed).

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$

The most common academic motivations were the desire to prepare for future professional work, build a career, consider academic performance in future employment, and interest in the subjects studied.

Statistically significant differences between EG and CG ($\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\text{crit}}$) were found for the motivations “Desire to better prepare for a future professional career” and “Interest in the subjects studied.”

An important indicator of professional socialization is students’ life plans after graduation (see Table 6).

Table 6. Types of activities students plan to pursue after graduation (as % of respondents)

Post-Graduation Plans	EG	CG	χ^2
Teaching (college, technical school, university)	8.3	7.6	1.91
Scientific research	44.7	16.4	28.72*
Practical work in their field	66.6	34.2	22.11*
Administrative/managerial work	18.2	19.7	1.17
Political or social activity	4.9	5.1	0.81
Starting their own business	24.1	28.3	3.13
No clear plans yet	10.4	24.1	12.52*

Source: based on the survey results (multiple answers allowed).

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$

The results show that after graduation, students are primarily oriented toward working in their field, starting a business, or engaging in administrative work (see Table 6).

Statistically significant differences between EG and CG ($\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\text{crit}}$) were observed for the following post-graduation plans: “Practical work in their field,” “Scientific research,” and “No clear plans yet.”

Overall, the survey results related to the formation of professional socialization indicate that χ^2 values for most variables exceeded the critical threshold ($\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\text{crit}}$). This provides a basis to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1), confirming that the empirical distributions of EG and CG students in terms of professional socialization **differ significantly**.

Therefore, the hypothesis that the professional socialization of students in the experimental and control groups differs has been confirmed.

4. Discussion

Based on the conducted empirical study, it can be concluded that the main factors determining the professional socialization of university students through the use of social media tools are as follows:

- Educational Process Factor: Successful professional socialization is more effective when students integrate social media tools into their learning process.

- Characterological Factor: Personal traits play a crucial role in successful professional socialization. These include creativity, conscientiousness, education, professionalism, self-discipline, diligence, perseverance, initiative, critical thinking, and the drive for self-realization (Akhmetshin et al., 2025).

- Motivational and Value-Based Factor: The student’s motivational and value sphere significantly influences professional socialization. This includes the desire to prepare better for a future profession, the ambition to build a professional career, considering academic performance in future employment, and interest in the subjects studied.

- Professional Identity Factor: One of the key components of professional socialization is professional identity, which is formed, among other things, under the influence of social media.

An important factor influencing the effectiveness of future specialists’ professional socialization is their commitment to working in their chosen field – something in which social media and participation in profession-oriented groups can play a significant role.

According to Social Learning Theory, students learn better when they can interact with peers within the framework of an academic course or assignment. Research has shown that academic performance is higher among those who were part of a specific social media group that brought like-minded individuals together (Radaev, 2018).

Social networks can also be used in students’ research activities, as virtual communities contribute both to the expansion of professional contacts and to a broader inclusion of potential

participants in academic discourse (Arendachuk, 2013; Vassilchenko, 2024). Social media connects people from various professional backgrounds, increasing network diversity and enhancing the circulation and usage of network resources. Furthermore, students can engage in communication and form communities based on various interests – economic, ethical, cultural, intellectual – which often overlap with their professional interests (Serebrennikova, 2024).

Most students and teachers already use social platforms and online social networks in daily life. Free social media tools can meet the needs of educational participants in storing, sharing, and collaborating on various documents. However, the primary factor limiting the active use of these tools is the readiness of the education system to adopt modern teaching technologies (Razuvaev, 2013).

Given the rapid development of computer-based technologies and their integration into the educational process, alongside these advantages, some negative aspects of using social media in education should also be acknowledged. These include limited functionality in finding new friends, rapid habituation to excessive online presence, health deterioration (e.g., vision problems, disrupted sleep patterns due to lack of rest, nervous system disorders), and the fact that communication in virtual networks cannot replace real human interaction and genuine emotional experience.

This study has one limitation: the sample was obtained through convenience sampling from a single university (Russian State Agrarian University – Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy). Therefore, the results may not fully represent the entire student population, and caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings.

5. Conclusion

Social networks, when integrated into the learning process, can become an integral part of a university's information and educational environment. They possess significant educational potential and create fundamentally new channels for information and communication exchange. The use of such an information-educational environment implies that activities within social networks produce tangible outcomes, making voluntary and motivated participation a key element.

Social networks should be viewed not only as entertainment and communication platforms but also as a powerful educational resource – an interactive space that serves as the foundation for innovative learning processes involving modern information technologies. The use of the positive aspects of social media – such as convenience, informativeness, accessibility, informality, and psychological comfort – can help create an effective environment for successful student professional socialization. These platforms can eliminate barriers to education, make the learning process more engaging and non-traditional, and foster a psychologically supportive climate for acquiring knowledge.

Undoubtedly, this form of professional socialization represents the future for students. As one of the most popular services among students, social networks can bring greater mobility, interactivity, accessibility, and creativity to higher education. In turn, this enhances motivation to learn and positively affects the quality of students' cognitive outcomes.

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