
**MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY: A NEW BRANCH OF THEORY IN MASS COMMUNICATION -
THE PROBLEM OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROTECTION FROM ADVERSE MEDIA IMPACTS**

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Abstract

Media psychology is a new, rapidly developing branch of theory and practice of journalism, the subject area of which is the description of a person's behavior, conditioned by their exposure to mass media; the study of individual and group media effects and core components of media culture, identifying psychological patterns of human attitude and behavior in multicultural media environment; a research into psychological phenomena and mechanisms of perception of media texts. Psychological manipulations in the media have actually no limits, but the irrational actions can be limited to an ethical, moral or legal framework. The impact of journalism becomes stronger and stronger, when we talk about the search and optimization of knowledge on the psychological abilities of a person. This knowledge is provided by media psychology, which was influenced and developed by the disciplines of political science, sociology, psychology as applied to communicative processes.

Keywords: Media Psychology, Mass Media, Media Effects

**MEDYA PSİKOLOJİSİ: KİTLE İLETİŞİM KURAMLARINDA YENİ BİR DAL - OLUMSUZ
MEDYA ETKİSİNDEN PSİKOLOJİK KORUNMA PROBLEMİ**

Öz

Medya psikolojisi, gazetecilik kuram ve uygulama alanında yeni ve hızlı gelişen; kişinin, medyanın etkisiyle koşullanmış davranışlarının tanımını, kişisel veya bütün olarak medyanın etkisinin, medya kültürünün ana bileşenlerinin konu edildiği, çokkültürlü medya ile çevrili olan kişinin psikolojik tutum ve davranışlarının tespitini, psikolojik fenomenler ve medya metinlerini algılama mekanizmasına dair araştırmaları içeren bir daldır. Psikolojik manipülasyonlar, gerçekte medyada hiçbir sınır tanımamaktadır fakat akıldışı işlevleri etik, ahlaki ve yasal çerçeveler doğrultusunda sınırlandırılabilir. İnsanın zihinsel yeteneklerinden bilginin araştırılması ve bilginin en iyi seviyeye getirilmesi söz konusu olduğunda gazeteciliğin etkisi daha fazla güç kazanmaktadır. Bu bilgi; politik doktrinlerin, sosyoloji ve psikolojinin iletişim süreçlerine uygulanması ile bu alanların etkisini taşıyan ve geliştirilen medya psikolojisi tarafından sağlanır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Medya Psikolojisi, Kitle İletişimi, Medya Etkisi

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INTRODUCTION

This article deals with the merger of the two fields of knowledge - psychology and journalism. The aim of the study is to develop a scientific approach to the formation of the dialogic model of interaction between the media and the audience. The research is based on a study of scientific discussions about a new direction in the theory of mass communication, as well as on the analysis of the practice of the media in Russia and other countries of the world. The authors refer to such paradigms as behaviorism, cognition, psychoanalysis, gestalt psychology, humanistic psychology etc. This article uses the axiological approach to the study of activities in the field of media. The authors try conceptualize the results of researches in the field of mass communication. They identify media psychology as a new, promising area of communication theory. The subject of media psychology is the study of human behavior under the influence of the media, as well as individual and group effects of the media.

Media psychology (according to E. Pronin) offers opportunities of parallel research into higher mental functions of a human and the psychological processes of modern mass communication, objectified in the latest information technologies, text structures, images and patterns of journalism.

Theories of journalism rest on many postulates of social psychology and personality psychology: they concern understanding of a personality, formation of targets and norms, values, leadership problems, conformism, identification and other less general problems such as psychology of feelings and mass moods. "Behavioral sciences" are designed as the search of mechanisms regulating behavior of people taking part in communication, have considerably broadened the base for the study of the mass media.

The success of social and political psychology has opened up great opportunities for journalism and allowed looking at it as a joint venture for the processing and dissemination of information. Journalism, along with its main purposes is to inform, orient, educate and entertain, has other, purely psychological, goals: to change or maintain values of the audience, turn them into beliefs, form internal willingness to perceive or interpret an object or an episode in a certain way; extract a certain, previously predetermined by the communicator, sense from the information. In this regard, it is becoming more and more important to study psychological peculiarities of the relationship (journalists and recipients), during which the communication determines the direction of the interaction between minds and mentalities, which inevitably affects the content of messages.

The basis of many theories of journalism is laid by numerous theses of psychology which concerns the interpretation of a personality, formation of values and norms, problems of leadership, conformity, identification and less general problems of psychology of senses and mass moods.

Experts in the field of sociology, psychology, political science are discussing the problems of perception, attention, understanding, memorizing in the sphere of mass communication (E. Pronina, P. Vinterhoff-Shpurk, G. Malyuchenko, A. Fedorov). In 2011 the collective monograph "The man as subject and object of media psychology" was published. It was

one of the first integrated multidisciplinary, fundamental works, “in which specialists from different fields of fundamental science and practice - psychologists, psychotherapists, journalists, philologists, linguists and philosophers to try and express their different approaches to the facts, phenomena and phantoms of mass communication.

Thus, media psychology is a new interdisciplinary area of knowledge, combining studies in the field of psychology, sociology, linguistics, theory of information and journalism. The term “media psychology” has been introduced into scientific use by the German researcher P. Vinterhoff-Spurk. He defines media psychology as a field of science, which on a micro analytical level, describes and explains behavior of a person, conditioned by the individual and group communication (Vinterhoff-Shpurk, 2007).

One of the modern definitions of media psychology is provided by the dictionary compiled by A. V. Fyodorov. According to this definition, media psychology is a social branch of psychology, which studies psychological laws of processes of functioning of the media in an environment and psychological aspects of the content of media texts of various genres (Fedorov, 2010).

Russian researcher M. V. Zhizhina determines media psychology as a new field of psychology, the subject area of which is phenomenology, laws and mechanisms of regulation and development of a personality in the media world as a rapidly developing field of the world culture (Zhizhina, 2010).

The object of media psychology, according to M. V. Zhizhina, is social behavior and a personality which acts as the subject and object of media interaction in a multicultural media environment (Zhizhina, 2010), while its subject is the description of core components of the media culture, determination of behavioral patterns of a person in a multicultural media environment, the study of mechanisms of perception of media culture, the investigation of media competence and media security of a person (in the systems of media education, media production, media perception and media consumption) (Zhizhina, 2010).

Appearance of media psychology is conditioned by the fact that today the mass media, on the global and local levels, perform the functions of influence, support of the social community, informing, enlightening and entertaining, but the most important thing is that they connect people. During its existence the media have mastered the rich range of means of argumentation (ability to influence people’s mind, to involve as many participants as possible into the procedure of information exchange, to accomplish social public communication).

In this connection we observe actualization of task of revealing the factors, affecting this process. The media is a developing system, evolving into a social body. In the dynamics of the media we cannot hope for positive results only, forgetting negative consequences, there is no direct correlation between an act of communication and a desired result. There often appear unforeseen, undesirable effects. There exists an interrelation of polynomial factors and social connections, mediated by the factor of influence on the audience.

The Main Directions of Media Psychology: The Relationship of Science and Social Practice

Thus, media psychology is considered as a new field of psychology and a new branch of the theory of journalism and mass communication, developing as a science and studying social practices and information technologies in several directions. Let us outline the main ones.

1. Psychological laws of processes of functioning of the mass media in multicultural media environments: Here we study the environment, character, forms, and results of psychological influence of a media environment and media texts on a society, formation of views, reactions of the audience, behavioral strategies, psycho-social adaptation and psychological health of an individual.

More and more often media psychology focuses on the study of the results of change of psychic conditions and features of an audience, transformation of adjustments under the influence of the media. Scientists study problems of dependence of psychic processing of messages on the peculiarities of mass communication on the whole, and means in particular, on organization of information traffic, on specifics of interests of these or those groups of the audience, on psychic barriers of perception, on attention, understanding and memorizing (Oleshko, 2006). Specialists also study mass effects under the influence of mass media on the audience, mechanisms of escalation of social aggression, national conflicts, extremism, terror and fanaticism.

2. Interaction of subjects and objects in the process of media communication. Modern psychological technologies of organization of a dialog with a media audience, relevant to the new media reality.

Media psychologists focus their activities on the study of peculiarities of people participating in communication, mechanisms and methods of influence on formation of preferences and expectations of the audience. Findings of media psychology are used in organization of technologies of operational communications with the audience, technologies of game realization in journalism, building of social and psychological 'media – audience' models, manifesting themselves within a dialogue. Research often concentrates on the study of a situation of interpretation of information, perception of journalistic materials depending on the channel of mass communication, singling out psychological barriers of perception and description of mechanisms of identification during communication.

Together with this, a considerable part of investigations is connected with problems of manipulation – a system of methods and procedures of communicative influence, causing certain motivational conditions of the object, for the purpose of imposing some ideas, opinions or circumvention, as well as urging to act in a way desired by the subject of influence. As per the definition by E. L. Dotsenko, manipulation is a kind of psychological influence, skillful performance of which results in a hidden impulse of another person to show intentions not coinciding with his real desires (Dotsenko, 1997:59). Manipulation only affects those who do not notice it, and does not influence those who realize and fulfill their own interests.

As we can see, manipulation, unlike natural influence on an audience on the part of the media, which is mediated by the news content and individual perception, is a dedicated influence, desirable for the subject. The threat of manipulation increases due to development of the Internet environment, where each participant of communication is potentially vulnerable, and in case some criminal or terrorist elements are involved there appear serious risks for the whole of society too.

3. Media analytics, media therapy and media education: E. E. Pronina includes into the subject field of media psychology hyperpsyche which is understood as non-local processes of interrelation of individual and collective mind in the field of mass communication (Pronina, 2010). Global processes, one of the phenomena of the modern world, cause changes to the psychological sphere too. There appears a hypersubject – a global society, which has a hyperpsyche. As viewed by E. E. Pronina, the goals of media analytics are to analyse the media content from the point of view of informational and psychological security and to reveal psychotechnologies of information campaigns and their consequences. Media education is meant to inform the audience of the methods of influence on the part of the media, to increase the informational and psychological security of a person (Pronina, 2010).

Informational and psychological security has become important for both military and non-military areas (Oleshko, 2008). The informational ‘quasi weapon’ and ‘mass media weapon’ aim not only at groups with different degrees of organization, but also at ‘key personalities.’ Both technical components of systems and the consciousness of specialists, who service them, appear to be vulnerable. The threat of latent wars grows, when the object of an attack is a person’s intellect. But in the non-military sphere too, in time of peace the political struggle cannot do without a due technological provision and extensive use of methods and procedures of information-psychological war. It is quite complicated to look for ways and measures aimed at protection of a person or a group of people from the psychological influence of negative information.

In the context of informational security of a person it is equally dangerous to ‘unleash the subconscious’ and to form limited ‘committed thinking.’ It is very destructive to influence a person’s intellect, lowering the ability to think critically and take independent creative decisions under extra-ordinary circumstances. It might also lead to dangerous results when there is a shift in values, taking place under conditions of application of methods of ‘soft power’ and ‘noopolitics.’ In the globalizing world it is urgent to form a universal mode of international information security, which could prevent mass psychological influence on people, resulting in destabilization of the society and a nation (Krutskikh, Biryukov, 2010).

The character of interaction of bio-, nano-, and information technologies makes us think of the prospects of a new technological revolution, leading to a further penetration into the mysteries of genetic information. Some researchers believe that, in a situation when modern technologies are improving the life of a person and broadening his abilities, a human will be substituted by a posthuman. One expects that ‘posthumans’ will obtain outstanding physical, psychological and intellectual abilities

(Bostrom, 2005). Others predict a threat to the existence of Homo sapiens as such.

4. Psychological peculiarities of the profession of a journalist and journalism as creative work: The professional culture of a journalist depends on their individuality, creative talent, and ability to go beyond the borders of something customary and traditional. While studying creativity, psychology views the most important revelation of mechanisms, connected with creative activities of a person. A special area of media psychology is dedicated to the study of creativity as a process of creation of something new and original in different spheres and activities of a media worker, and formation and development of his creative potential. Scientists accentuate understanding of the role and the place of scientific methods in productive thinking, as well as motivational and personal factors in the creation of an information product (Misonjnikov, 2011).

Media psychology studies personal constructs, perception, logical and conceptual, emotional and sensual, evaluating and motivational components of a creator's consciousness (values, value systems, peculiarities of reflection) as well as results of their activities, expressed in a text. Of paramount importance are ideas of self-actualization and self-realization of a journalist's personality, which represent a permanent process of disclosure of abilities of a person in creating comprehension and transformation of the world.

Hence, media psychology includes the study of a journalist's personality. To understand a personality as a special feature of a person that is formed in the social cultural environment means to detect how its components biologically, psychologically and socially conditioned, interact with one another. Among biologically programmed features an important role is played by chronologically conditioned and gender characteristics of a personality, which are becoming more and more interesting for researchers. Whether your entry into a profession is successful or not depends on factors of genetic basis (psychological stability, extraversion, altruism etc.). Temperament is exceptionally important for media specialists. The classification of characters of journalists is multicolored. Success in any job, including journalism, depends on abilities – individual psychological peculiarities of a person, which determine the qualitative level of a product. They condition easiness and swiftness of acquiring new skills and methods of activities and do not only come to knowledge, skills and practices.

5. Media production, media consumption and psychological modeling of media texts: Such phenomena as emotional and cognitive reactions to media information, quest for personality prototypes, social identity, and spontaneity of forming world-views are becoming most important to us nowadays. Mass communication can be presented as extended, non-local psyche, collective thinking, which is not necessarily of a rational character. Mass media consumption is marked by domination of spontaneous components. Irrationality manifests itself through a chaotic consumption of information, lack of criticism, emotionality of perception (Gavra, 2011).

G. N. Malyuchenko singled out phenomena that accompany modern processes in media psychology: weakening of legal and economic instruments of state influence

on the media; mass perception and assimilation of cultivated media images as the reference points and benchmarks of success against the excessive flow of information; growth of irrational components in everyday communication and structure of perception of the world among mass consumers and producers of media products, which occurs because of the broadcast media images that create “spontaneous trance states” and hypnotic effects in all subjects of a media environment (Oleshko, 2003).

In Malyuchenko’s opinion, there have appeared the following trends of development of the modern media environment: the media function as the most effective tool of a legitimate impact on the mass consciousness; the effectiveness of the media is determined by the independent nature of the establishment of key themes and format of cooperation, as well as the continuing confidence of the state and society; the media seek multidimensional influence of a media consumer, encompassing the conscious and unconscious, motivations and needs, emotions and values (Malyuchenko, 2010; Vinogradova, Melnik, 2011).

With the advent of new media, especially Internet media – a form of systematic and regular dissemination of information through network multimedia technologies - the communicative behavior of the audience has changed (Vodolagin, 2002, 1:52). The importance of the Internet media is determined by the absence of limits in time of placement and amount of information, technical capabilities and the ease of finding information. A network text serves as a way of public intervention in the discussion of a topic and decision making. Implications of appearance of a network text are not always predictable, even for journalists (Pronina, 2001, 6: 16-21). We can speak not only of traditional presence effect of the media, but about the participation effect as well. There appears an individual activity. A person operates information and compares data from different sources, leaving comments to media messages (Pronin, 2002).

6. New mobilization technologies of influence: The mass media is an important tool of political management and provision of mass loyalty to the current government, which is determined by embeddedness of the media into the establishment, their status, and the position taken in political relations - between the government and the people. In the political process, the media carry both a destructive and a positive charge. The continued marginalization of the Russian society increases the importance of the mass media used in the political interaction, of government and society emotional and symbolic factors, irrational ways of influence, especially in the election period. The media help to polish up the technology of “information wars”, “velvet” revolutions, ethnic mobilization, effective methods of psychological influence on the audience that changes the behavioral strategy, which inevitably raises the issue of data security, access to information resources (Lobza, 2003, 1: 126-136).

In conflict situations, one of the most popular modern methods of organization and management of the political processes is mobilization technologies. Their role is greatly increased in complexity of social relations in connection with the growing dynamism of the political process, when the increased requirements for the improvement of social control are there (Political Technologies, 2010). Specialists work on perfecting

the technologies of supporting election campaigns, methods that make the process of political communication as controllable as possible under conditions of a competitive struggle for the political preferences of potential voters and groups of active citizens.

Typically, mobilization or 'protest' technologies are used by the warring parties for the purpose of dissemination of favorable information and shaping public opinion. There are special political elites, experts, politically active part of society and journalists who participate in the information support of a political process. A number of leading political journalists (channel 'faces') play the role of political functionaries, political lobbyists and messiahs.

The media, incorporated into the power, almost blur the line between political and information activities. Effective technologies, aimed at interaction between representatives of the authorities, political elite, financial groups with journalists and media entities, make it possible to test and refine models of this interaction in the practice of mass media (the models of "conflict," "crisis," catastrophe," "chaos," "system," "market," "game," "competition," "cooperation," "partnership," "trade," "public and social choice," "interception of power") (Puiu, Bodrunova, 2012).

Today, the media can contribute to a broad popular movement of a new type, which sees the meaning and purpose of its existence not in a "struggle for the [political] power", but in a "struggle with the [political] power."

The need for non-standard and creative solutions to the problems of social life, the search for answers to the challenges of time and risks create new virtual communities and anonymous information structures alternative to the official, which can solve these problems. A sign of the times is the political online participation, often protest, expressed in acts of civil disobedience. New sites and media use disruptive tactics; often call for action. The new media often direct the audience to a false socialization. The system of tactical media in Russia has access to social practices (for example, the 'The Yes Men' movement), aimed at an information explosion. Through such social media, anonymous virtual communities request autonomy, implying four models of articulation between discourses, practices, contents, and actors involved. The formats of social networks such as the Australian Chaser, the India Faking News (fakingnews.com), the British Daily Mash, NewsBiscuit and Private Eye (private-eye.co.uk), the Russian Hobosti Russia, Smixer.ru, FogNews.ru, allow best self-organization in a virtual space.

Information and psychological impact on the transnational level is acquiring a new dimension, becoming a weapon that is used in information-psychological wars - a new type of conflict. The inevitable consequence of the use of manipulative techniques in the media may be the destruction of the ability and the inalienable right of the people to think for themselves, creation of vulnerable individuals and society.

The hidden (non-direct) information-psychological influence of mass media leads to a situation where all over the world we observe an increase of mental illness, depression has become the malady of the age, where the number of suicides is growing. Under these

circumstances, the study of manipulation technology and protection from psychological impact is becoming an important scientific task. Efforts of theorists and practitioners of media should be directed at the search of a system helping to identify the techniques of manipulation and block their effects.

7. Protective (social, psychotherapeutic) mechanisms against targeted incorrect exposure: A modern journalistic text is based not only on ideology, but on mental structures, basic values and fears of a person. Under the influence of the new reality, the communicative behavior of the audience is radically changing. Here opens a play for manipulation with the media, which requires the use of psychological mechanisms of defense against information stimulation, leading to hysteria, psychosis, isolation; mechanisms to ensure freedom from control of mind, moral pressure and discrimination.

The negative impact of journalism – television violence, frustration, aggressiveness of the media, mind control, psychological pressure, discrimination - often cause hysteria, psychosis, isolation, rejection.

The study of the consequences of violent demonstrations has been the subject of interest of media psychologists in recent years (Vinogradova & Melnik, 2009). However, the problem of overcoming the negative consequences of TV violence on audiences is still open, despite the enormous amount of empirical data, as well as serious scientific generalizations.

The new field of research in media psychology is connected with the study of human activity mediated by the interconnected global computer networks. The 'virtual world' of the Internet as an information medium perfects such activities as cognitive, game and communicative activities, the consequences of which can be both positive and negative. At the present stage of development there appear Internet-subcultures that form the circle of interest and communication, stimulating the development of interpersonal relationships, which produces a positive influence in the sphere of individual field of psychic activities of the participants of a subculture.

Use of the Internet by people with pathological changes caused by "Internet addiction" is an important trend in the structure of this research.

A media text is generally considered from communicative positions, allowing you to see it in relation to the participants of communication, to the world of reality, the world of texts, to see its operational orientation to the interpretive activity of the listener (reader).

CONCLUSION

Mass communication has a psychological nature. This explains the rapid development of the science of human behavior under the influence of mass media.

Media psychology is developing under the influence of the doctrine of political science, sociology, psychology, which explains the communication processes.

Subject of media psychology includes:

- a description of the behavior of the individuals under the influence of the media
- study of individual and group media effects
- identify relationships and psychological patterns of human behavior in multicultural media space
- study of psychological phenomena and mechanisms of perception of media texts.

Media education, meant to prepare the new generation for life in modern information conditions, is a promising field of media psychology. The main task is to teach a person to adequately comprehend various information, to understand and to realize consequences of its effects on the psyche, to understand manipulative technologies and to confront 'screen violence.' Contemporary psychological culture is not just an obligatory element of the common culture, but also a necessary condition for security in social interaction and various interpersonal communication situations (Vinogradova & Melnik, 2012).

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