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THE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF THE PEOPLE IN UZBEKISTAN: MEDIA PRESENCE AND THE ABSENCE OF MEDIA LITERACY

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Abstract: This study is devoted to the analysis of the current process of political socialization of the population of Uzbekistan. A historical retrospective of the formation of the concepts of political socialization and politics is presented, and the chronological stages of individual socialization are analyzed. An unsatisfactory level of media literacy of the population and a lack of fact-checking and verification skills were revealed. The research hypothesis was confirmed, which is seen in the decisive role of the mass media in the process of communication between the authorities and society in general and in the process of political socialization of the population in particular.

Keywords: socialization, politics, communication, media literacy, mass media.

1. Introduction and Hypothesis

The concept of political socialization emerged in the United States in the late 1950s. The emergence of this concept is associated with the crisis of traditional institutions of the political system of Western society. These traditional institutions were unable to voluntarily accept the new democratic principles of the newly formed generation. The crisis was caused by the fact that the scale of power could not satisfy the growing demands of social groups formed in the new society. This crisis was aggravated by individual opposition to the political system, distrust of government institutions, exclusion from political relations, and, finally, public protests against official power.

The concept of "socialization" was defined by the American sociologist Franklin Giddings, who used it in a meaning close to modern in the book "The Theory of Socialization" (Lukov; Lukova, 2014) in 1897: "It is the development of the social nature or character of the individual, the preparation of human material for social life." As a result, the concept of socialization began to be viewed as the process of acquiring knowledge, faith, organization, and rules by the new generation of a particular society - these views should serve to ensure the preservation and development of society.

The understanding of socialization began to be refined as different scientific schools and directions focused their attention on various features and essence of socialization mechanisms: the influence of family, school, culture, and mass media on the socialization process was studied. It is known that as a result of the interaction of the listed influencing factors, people form their personal "I". In the process of interaction, people begin to express

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their attitude to the nature of the stimuli affecting them. If you pay attention to the fact that communicative relationships are important for a person - the expression of other people's thoughts, gestures, emotions, then you can notice that supporters of these views focus on group influence on the individual. As a result, the essence of the social system began to be determined taking into account the socialization of the individual. As a result, maturity began to be considered a person's voluntary submission to the goals and rules of the political system, being in agreement with the existing social system.

Western scientists also include features of role activity in the interpretation of primary socialization. Talcott Parsons' theory of structural functionalism can be called the theoretical basis for this understanding of socialization. This researcher, among other things, states that "despite the truly great abilities of the human body to learn, as well as to create new elements of culture, not a single individual is able to create a cultural system by himself. The basic characteristics of cultural systems embodied in typical patterns change only over the course of the lives of many generations, they are always followed by relatively large groups, and they can never apply to only one or a few individuals. The individual learns them mainly passively, although he may introduce minor constructive (or destructive) changes to them" (Parsons, 1966).

In turn, Jurgen Habermas considers political socialization as acculturation (that is, a person's mastery of new values), highlighting the intrapersonal, psychological features of the formation of political behavior (Habermas, 2003).

Other researchers such as E. Durkgame, Ch. Kuli, J. Mid, W. Tomas, and F. Znanesckii, E. Erikson (Kambarova, 2016) also formulated their own visions of the concept of "socialization".

At the same time, in order to focus on the concept of "political socialization", it is necessary to know what the concept of "politics" is. The origins of this concept go back to the work of Aristotle, which is called in the same way "Politics"; the meaning of the concept was developed in the works of Niccolo Machiavelli and further by other researchers over the centuries. In the 20th century, the definition of the concept of "politics" was given in the works of Max Weber, who, as a first approximation, defined politics as "the desire to participate in power or influence its distribution between groups within the state," and in a broader sense, "the ability to achieve obedience from other people, regardless of to what this obedience is based on" (Ogurtsov; Bernstein; Simonov, 2023).

According to M. Weber, the main components of politics are: 1) the presence of ruling subjects, that is, those who exercise power; 2) the presence of subordinate subjects, that is, those

over whom power is exercised; 3) norms of government, that is, basic laws, procedures, rules; 4) sanctions for violation of norms and rewards for their implementation. There are corresponding institutions and accepted patterns of behavior behind each of the four elements; they change in the course of historical development. The diversity of these institutions and forms of behavior are captured in the concept of a political system (Ogurtsov; Bernstein; Simonov, 2023).

The political sphere of public life feels the need to use means of coercion and means of using social power to preserve the integrity of society, balance and coordinate relevant conflicts in it. Politics also appears in processes related to the application of the interests of such groups to the social situation and the state of social and national units, requiring the intervention of the state and other public institutions of power.

Thus, politics essentially represents purposeful relations between groups, using open institutions of power to meet socially significant requirements and needs. Politics has a specific structure which consists of the following components:

- political relations. The component reflects the stable nature of communicative relationships between social groups and government institutions. In its content, it characterizes various communicative actions of elites and electorates, elites and counter-elites, leaders and support groups, social and national units, various interest groups, and political institutions;

- political consciousness. This is the relationship expressed by the political life of people's relationships in relation to power and their interests in it;

- political organization. This is the characteristic role of public authorities as centers of coordination and management of social processes.

The organizational core of politics is legislative, executive, judicial, party and socio-political institutions, pressure groups, and other links representing the political interests of various classes and the whole society. Political organizations embody the will of the population to power, socialize the population, express this will in management decisions, thereby giving certain directions to all political processes. In this sense, scientists usually refer to Carl Schmitt (1992) and also cite the definition of politics by the Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin: "Politics is the art of uniting people," points out I. Ilyin believing that this unification should be loyal, legal, free, national, fair, and constructive in content (Sytin, 2014).

However, so that a person can understand politics and independently participate in it, it is necessary to develop a number of political skills, abilities, culture, and, not least, skills

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in correctly mastering information that is broadcast (published) by various mass media, its verification. Such skills today can be combined with the term "media literacy" - since the perception of political processes and attempts to personally participate in politics, personally and/or using the capabilities of social groups and public institutions, including political parties, occur not least (and sometimes in mainly) through mass media messages. It is the mass media that help a person as a political subject not to fall under the influence of various political forces, and also to effectively fulfill his political role and responsibilities.

Based on the above-mentioned thoughts, the hypothesis of this study has been formulated. It states that the main instrument of political socialization is the mass media as a means of social communication, primarily between the authorities and society.

Taking into account the fact that each tool requires the ability to use it competently, the task of the research accompanying the disclosure of the hypothesis was to clarify the current level of media literacy of the population of Uzbekistan based on the conducted field research (which will be discussed further in the "Materials and Methods" section).

2. Materials and Methods

Analytical and empirical research methods were the main methods used in this work.

In the analysis of the stages of personality socialization, the author used the works of previous researchers such as "Personality trait change at work: Associations with organizational socialization and identification" (Alessandri; Perinelli; Robins; et al., 2020); "Gender socialization of preschool children: definition of basic concepts, principles, components" (Amet-Usta, 2021); "Concept, factors and mechanisms of socialization" (Gordeev et al., 2021); "Electoral socialization of Russian youth: posing the problem within the boundaries of the sociological dimension" (Dashkevich; Rachipa, 2020); "Personality socialization in different theoretical perspectives" (Ivanova; Prosvetova, 2016); "The influence of Internet technologies on the political socialization of youth" (Pachina; Gorodova, 2022), etc.

The author used the empirical research method, in particular, in the implementation of a focus group of current media industry operators - creative media employees and experts from the field of higher education.

The data from the non-governmental organization Freedom House (Freedom, 2013-2022) serves as the material for charting the dynamics of the situation with the adherence to civil rights and freedoms in Uzbekistan.

An important material for the research is also the results

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of the work "Media research management methodologies as a tool for resolving problems of information and media literacy of the population: a view on Uzbekistan", in which its authors, among other things, carried out a survey of the population about preferences in using alternative information sources in foreign languages (Allayarov et al., 2023).

The theoretical foundation of the work was based on the works of the past scientists, such as "The Concept of Society: The Components and Their Interrelations" (Parsons, 1966); Understanding Media: External Extensions of Man by Herbert Marshall McLuhan (2003); "Philosophical Discourse on Modernity" (Habermas, 2003); "The Concept of the Political" (Schmitt, 1992); "On political success (forgotten axioms). Our tasks. Historical fate and future of Russia. Articles 1948–1954" by the famous philosopher I.A. Ilyin (1992); "Letters to Students" (Kareev, 1895), etc.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Political socialization as a process
The process of political socialization is historical in nature. This process helps to create an "elector" who has his own political, ideological, aesthetic, and spiritual vision. The content and nature of political socialization depend on various factors. These are macroenvironment (the nature of the era, international relations, state, nation, social groups, the character of the political culture of society); microenvironment (institutional and informal community, school, family, individual); as well as factors in which internal genetic aspects arise: self-discipline.

The process of political socialization occurs through mutual communication through various means, including:
- institutions (family, school, institute, enterprise);
- groups with mutual communicative relationships (relatives, acquaintances, interest groups);
- family mass media (press, radio, television, computer information systems).

Factors of socialization are divided into political and non-political. Political factors include the nature of government, parties, and various movements. Non-political factors include family, peer groups, school, workplace, culture, art, national traditions, and mass media. In real life, these two factors are closely interrelated with each other and impact people in many ways.

When studying the process of political socialization of a person, it is necessary to analyze the origin of each of his personal characteristics, the social environment surrounding him, the policies pursued by state institutions, the activities of political

parties and non-governmental organizations in the country, and also pay attention to the level of the political culture of the individual. The reason for this is that the formation of processes of political socialization depends not only on the active aspirations of the individual but also on the socio-political environment surrounding him.

The formation of personality in the direction of civic maturity and adaptation to politics occurs in stages. These stages help a person acquire first ideas about politics from childhood through family, relatives, and mass media. During the early stages of socialization, the ideas about right and wrong behavior are developed in children. From a psychological point of view, a child, in the process of growing up, goes through three stages of hidden development. At the first stage, signs of egoism and individualism appear. At the second stage, the child becomes aware of the communicative relationships between the individual and society. At the third stage, moral and evaluative qualities are formed that can penetrate into children's society and criticize certain aspects of it.

A person feels the influence of the socialization process in early childhood. The stronger the influence of the processes, the wider the child's level of activity is. The child feels the role of the teacher's authority at school, and in the family - the role of the parents' authority. The child begins to understand problems based on his life experience and communication relationships, depending on these problems he learns to obey and "revolt" (protest). The child adapts to the norms of activity of the various groups around him, which can be influenced by means of communicative relations. Such a unique "pre-political" experience of the child is enriched with information about the history of the country, political figures, and active periods of political life. To this same initial stage of socialization, researchers attribute, in particular, the process of gender socialization: "In preschool pedagogy, gender socialization is defined as the process of forming ideas about masculinity and femininity in boys and girls of preschool age, aimed at improving their individuality and focused on the formation and development of their gender identity" (Amet-Usta, 2021).

Observations indicate that political socialization can occur in different ways: under the influence of the sociocultural environment; influenced by a sense of belonging to the previous or next generation; influenced by a sense of belonging to a social class or group. Political support, norms, and values can be "imprinted" in the child's mind for life under the impact of the views of the family and environment, and he can differ with his/her commitment to the goals.

The main part of the process of political education of

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children is the time of schooling. During this period, students study and acquire political values and develop their worldviews. In addition, the social practice can be experienced through active participation in youth organizations. This stage of socialization includes the problems discussed in the work "Interactive effects of parent emotion socialization and child physiological reactivity in predicting adolescent borderline personality disorder features" (McQuade; Dixon-Gordon; Breaux & Babinski, 2022). Other researchers (Nyatina, 2011) pay attention to the works of the scientists of the past, including "Letters to Students," in which its author N.I. Kareev noted that "in adolescence, more or less the main interests, mental aspirations and thought patterns of a mature person, his/her philosophical views, basic moral views, and social beliefs are clearly formed " (Kareev, 1895).

The next stage of political socialization occurs between the ages of 16 and 30. During this period, a person changes their attitude towards politics. At the same time, during this period, a person acquires deep knowledge in the field of politics in institutions, and later in professional work.

It is impossible not to take into account the large-scale impact the Internet has on the formation of personality in modern conditions. Researchers note that "in the age of digitalization, social networks and messengers are becoming especially popular among young people" (Pachina, Gorodova, 2022). Other researchers draw attention to the importance of studying the process of electoral socialization of youth (Dashkevich; Rachipa, 2020); In the work "Personality trait change at work: Associations with organizational socialization and identification," its authors report that "in the present paper, we propose an integrative theoretical model linking personality trait change to two important role acquisition processes, namely organizational socialization and organizational identification" (Alessandri; Perinelli; Robins et al., 2020).

Processes of political socialization continue even among adults. Their political views and morals are more influenced by their own life experiences and postulates that have survived from previous political views. They are able to deeply analyze changes and contradictions in the life of society and can make new significant changes in their own political views and behavior. Social factors influence even people of retirement age. It has also been observed that some of them are more actively interested in politics than before. However, most retirees are satisfied with a modest level of participation in public life. At this age, they begin to share their political life experiences with young people.

3.2. Political socialization and democracy
A person can be a real subject of political relations only in a

democratic society. In such a society, a person will have a wide range of political rights and freedoms, as well as a wide range of opportunities for expressing and realizing individual political interests. Democracy is considered an important political and legal basis for individual subjectivity and it creates favorable conditions for each citizen to realize their political potential. At the same time, a person's political knowledge, his political experience, views, and organizational skills are important.

In this sense, it is necessary to specifically note much of what is directly being done in Uzbekistan in terms of the formation and strengthening of democratic institutions since President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev took office as president at the end of 2016. As follows from the graph in Fig. 1, compiled according to Freedom House data for 2013-2022, precisely with the assumption of office by Sh.M. Mirziyoyev the country is moving cautiously along the path of expanding the scope of civil liberties - from 4 NF in 2013 to 11 NF in 2022 (Freedom House, 2013-2022).
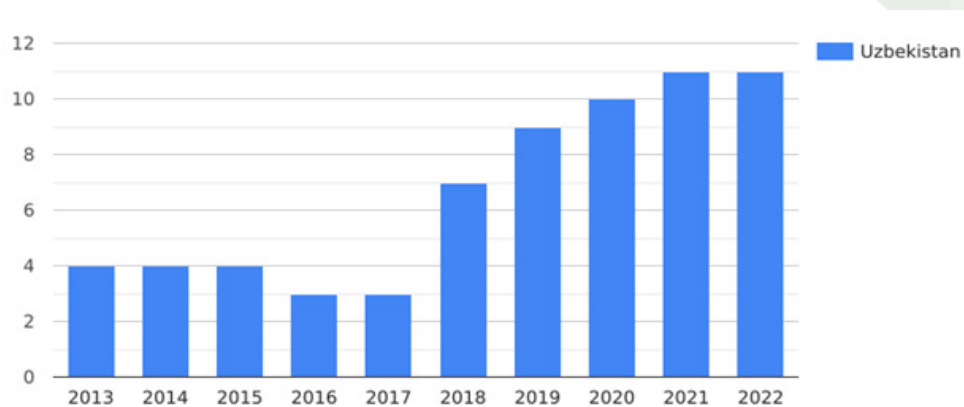
Fig. 1. Dynamics of the civil liberties indicator`

3.3. Political socialization and mass media
In approximately the same way as shown in Fig. 1, the rights of journalists and mass media developed in Uzbekistan during 2013-2022 - towards expanding the scope of freedom. However, in 2023, the international organization RSF lowered the rating of Uzbekistan in this aspect - from 133rd place in 2022 to 137th place in 2023. This means not only a narrowing of the scope of media freedom but also a deterioration of the situation with the political socialization of the population - since this process is closely related to the quality of information broadcast (published) by national media.

What is happening in general with the political socialization of the population in Uzbekistan, taking into account the position of national media as a tool of socialization? As an answer, among other things, researchers point to the impact of new, modernized forms of censorship operating on the territories of states in the

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post-Soviet space. Dr. Nozima Muratova mentions a number of such modernized forms of censorship - from the dissemination of recommendations to mass media editors by government structures to extra-legal pressure, various forms of statification of the media (also through the transfer of ownership to a loyal oligarchy), and tightening of legislation (2023).

To fulfill the objectives of this study, a focus group of current media industry operators was used - creative employees of various types of media and expert researchers from the field of higher education specializing in studying the processes of political broadcasting through different types of mass media and platforms on the global network.

Focus group participants were asked one closed question and they could give a positive or negative answer ("yes or no") with the opportunity to explain their positive or negative position. The following responses were received to the question "Do you think that the majority of the population of Uzbekistan is well-versed in politics?"

Akbar Nurmatov, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Print Media and Publishing at Journalism and Mass Communications University of Uzbekistan: "No. There is a lack of critical thinking. Modern youth lives in an information jungle, perceives information only visually but does not analyze it. Secondly: the media is engaged in propaganda and people become apathetic. In addition, Uzbekistan, unfortunately, is still under the influence of the Russian media space. Any information should be approached critically but the population lacks these skills to do this."

Rushana Aliakbarova, communications specialist at the UN office in Uzbekistan states: "No. Unfortunately, in Uzbekistan, the majority of the population does not have political knowledge and a good grasp of politics. First of all, this is connected with literacy - not with political, but with elementary literacy. The second reason: there is no direction for the development of critical thinking in educational institutions within the framework of which it would be explained how a person should perceive information, whether he should take everything "on faith" from what is said in the media, or not. In our country, unfortunately, people do not know how to analyze and compare information. It must be taken into account that the mass media themselves do not always compose headlines correctly so that to get more hype, and people, unfortunately, do not always go inside the <publication>. In general, people's interest in politics is low, they are not aware of their political rights, and those who do know believe that these rights do not matter to them."

Jakhongir Tokhirov, independent PR consultant: "No. Because there are very few good analytical platforms in the mass

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media of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has access to all world mass media, including CNN and BBC, but there is a language barrier. As a result, they learn news from each other."

Rikhsitilla Umarov, sports commentator: "No. Most do not understand politics. Our media do not devote enough time to the political education of the population."

Shokhrukh Kasymov, head of the Department of Public Relations at Journalism and Mass Communications University of Uzbekistan: "No. The majority of the population uses TV to watch TV series. In addition, many people do not have higher education and they are not interested in politics."

Otabek Khajabekov, correspondent of the newspaper "Yangi O'zbekiston": "No. Because no one reads newspapers."

Tursinali Akhmedov, translator, member of the Writers' Union of Uzbekistan: "No. The reason for this is that the majority are not interested in politics at all. People are busy with work and family."

Nozima Muratova, Doctor of Philology, Vice-Rector of Journalism and Mass Communications University of Uzbekistan: "No. There is a fragmented perception when it comes to political processes. The level of media literacy of the population needs to be increased. As for ordinary people, they mainly learn news in the Telegram messenger groups they are in, and they forward this news to each other without delving into the gist of the information at all. Political topics in Uzbekistan are discussed only when there is a loud reason, when there is hype. Young people especially should have their own positions, but they lack knowledge and competence."

When studying the results of the focus group, it should be taken into account that the opinion of each of its participants is of particular value, since, on the one hand, they are current representatives of the media community, on the other, they are representatives of the community of media researchers, that is, each of them has a good idea of the state of affairs with political socialization of the population.

What stands out in the answers of these experts? What conclusions can be drawn? Firstly, everyone answered a clear "no" to the question of whether the population of Uzbekistan understands politics.

Then we should highlight the reasons for this situation which the focus group participants also agree on: firstly, the low level of media literacy of the population, lack of critical thinking skills; secondly, it is apathy, a lack of interest in political issues caused not least by distrust of the national mass media.

Today, many researchers of political processes, including the ones in Uzbekistan, speak about media literacy, its advantages

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and the consequences of its absence among the population: Sanjarbek Allayarov and a number of authors in the work "Media research management methodologies as a tool for resolving problems of information and media literacy of the population: a view on Uzbekistan" (2023), Kanat Abdikarimov in the work "The concepts of "fake" and "disinformation" in the media environment of Uzbekistan" (2023) and other authors. Particularly indicative in this aspect was the mentioned study "Media research management methodologies as a tool for resolving problems of information and media literacy of the population: a view on Uzbekistan", during which the authors implemented an original blitz survey using the questionnaire method among students, as well as among older citizens living mainly in Tashkent metropolitan region, with an emphasis on identifying preferences in the use of alternative language sources of information to Uzbek and alternative sources of information in general (Allayarov et al., 2023). It turned out that "the most relevant language for getting acquainted with news among users of foreign language sources is Russian (89%), the next most relevant is English (38.4%), and only 28.8% of respondents use Uzbek-language mass media sources. Only 6.8% of participants use other foreign languages to obtain information" (Allayarov et al., 2023). For clarity, the authors summarized the research data in a graph in Fig. 2.
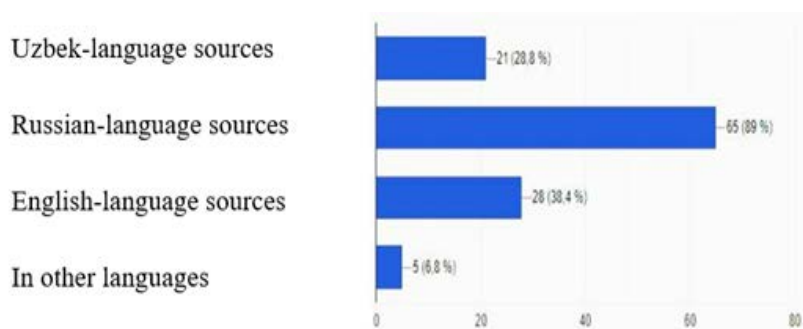

Fig. 2. What language sources do you prefer to use when consuming information?

Let us repeat that according to the data in Fig. 2 English-language sources of information are used by an impressive number of respondents - 38.4%, however, in this case, it should be taken into account that we are talking mainly about students and older citizens living in the capital, where the level of foreign language proficiency and education, in general, is obviously higher than in the regions: the majority of the population does not have knowledge of foreign languages and therefore is not able to turn to alternative sources of information, to foreign language media. Meanwhile, if we turn to the legacy of H.M. McLuhan, it turns out that "the media are a continuation of the human nervous system". Taking into account McLuhan's famous postulate that "the medium is

the message," by mass communication, he understood not only traditional media (television, radio, printed publications) but also clothes, a person's place of residence, his transport, everything that helps a person master the world around him and express it in himself.

The process of socialization occurs not only with the help of the mass media but also through social communication: this was also demonstrated by the results of a focus group of experts conducted by the author. According to scientific sources, there are two types of social communication:

- horizontal (between persons having the same status and level in the socio-political hierarchy);

- vertical (between people at different levels of the socio-political hierarchy).

However, in the context of a civil and information society, it is not the distance that is important but the complexity and volume of transmitted information. The most effective functions in this process are performed by the mass media and electronic means of communication including the Internet (Sergeychik, 2013).

The process of communication as a means of human socialization was also studied by H.M. McLuhan. He emphasized that communication processes are a necessary basis for the formation, support, and transformation of the person, his cultural phenomenon. Communication theory by H.M. McLuhan reveals the influence of technology on changing a person's thinking, consciousness, perception, mentality, and lifestyle. According to the scholar, technical means of communication play a revolutionary role in the process of socialization by creating a universal environment for the formation of personality as new languages of communication are discovered.

Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that the level of political socialization of the majority of the population of Uzbekistan leaves much to be desired.

As the reasons for this situation, first of all, the low level of media literacy should be mentioned: in the presence of a wide range of information sources - from national news agencies and television channels to transnational multimedia brands of mass media, such as CNN, BBC, Euronews, and others - and in the absence of fact-checking and verification skills, Uzbek-speaking citizens prefer to use national sources of information, and Russian-speaking citizens prefer to use Russian sources of information. As a result, either a truncated, limited, or completely distorted picture of what is happening in the world and the Central Asian region is formed in the minds of citizens.

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The work shows that it is the mass media that play a decisive role in the process of communication between the authorities and society in general and in the process of political socialization of the population in particular, which actually confirms the research hypothesis formulated in its introductory part.

At the same time, the national mass media of Uzbekistan currently demonstrate the unsatisfactory quality of presentation of political issues in the national mass media as shown by the results of studies of the level of media literacy of the population, as well as the results of a focus group of current media experts of various profiles. It follows from this that the national mass media of Uzbekistan should restructure their work towards improving the quality of presentation of political issues - since this is precisely what will determine the qualitative improvement in the process of political socialization of the entire Uzbek society.

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ПОЛИТИЧЕСКАЯ СОЦИАЛИЗАЦИЯ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ УЗБЕКИСТАНА: ПРИСУТСТВИЕ МЕДИА ПРИ ОТСУТСТВИИ МЕДИАГРАМОТНОСТИ

Аннотация: Исследование посвящено анализу актуального процесса политической социализации населения Узбекистана. Представлена историческая ретроспектива формирования понятий политической социализации и политики, рассмотрены хронологические этапы социализации личности. Выявлен неудовлетворительный уровень медиаграмотности населения, отсутствие навыков фактчекинга и верификации. Подтверждена гипотеза исследования, заключающаяся в решающей роли масс-медиа в процессе коммуникации между властью и обществом в целом и в процессе политической социализации населения в особенности.

Ключевые слова: социализация, политика, коммуникация, медиаграмотность, масс-медиа.

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O'ZBEKISTONDA XALQNING SIYOSIY IJTIMOIYLASHUVI: MEDIASAVODXONLIK YO'QLIGIDA OMMAVIY AXBOROT VOSITALARINING MAVJUDLIGI

Annotatsiya: Tadqiqot O'zbekiston aholisining hozirgi siyosiy ijtimoiylashuv jarayonini tahlil qilishga bag'ishlangan. Siyosiy ijtimoiylashuv va siyosat tushunchalarining shakllanishining tarixiy retrospektivi taqdim etiladi va individual ijtimoiylashuvining xronologik bosqichlari ko'rib chiqiladi. Aholining media savodxonligining darajasi qoniqarsizligi, fakt-checking va verifikatsiya ko'nikmalarining yetishmasligi aniqlandi. Ommaviy axborot vositalarining hokimiyat va jamiyat o'rtasidagi aloqa jarayonida, xususan, aholining siyosiy ijtimoiylashuvi jarayonida hal qiluvchi roli bo'lgan tadqiqot gipotezasi tasdiqlandi.

Kalit so'zlar: ijtimoiylashuv, siyosat, aloqa, mediasavodxonlik, ommaviy axborot vositalari.

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