



**DIGITAL SPACE AND MORAL EDUCATION OF FUTURE
OFFICERS: INSIGHTS FROM RUSSIAN MILITARY
UNIVERSITIES.**

*Abdurakhmonov Zafar Botirovich
Customs Institute, Senior Lecturer
of the Department of "Mathematics
and Information Technologies" E-mail: ucell1@mail.ru*

Abstract. The article analyzes the role of the virtual environment in shaping the moral values of cadets in military universities of the Russian Federation. Based on empirical data obtained through surveys and content analysis, both the risks of destructive influence of digital platforms and the opportunities for their pedagogically sound use are identified. The necessity of integrating digital ethics into the military education system is substantiated based on the experience of the Russian Federation.

Keywords: virtual environment, moral values, moral education, military education, digital ethics, cadets, military universities of the Russian Federation, digital literacy.

Introduction. Modern digital transformation affects all spheres of public life, including the professional education system. This process is particularly acute in the military sphere, where the formation of an officer's personality requires not only a high level of professional training but also a stable system of moral values. In the context of the ubiquitous penetration of digital technologies, the virtual environment becomes a significant factor in the socialization of youth, including future military personnel.

However, the dual nature of the virtual space – as a platform for self-realization and simultaneously a source of disinformation, aggression, and moral relativism – requires scientific understanding. The relevance of this study



is conditioned by the need to identify the mechanisms of the virtual environment's influence on the value orientations of cadets and to develop pedagogical strategies aimed at minimizing risks and enhancing the educational potential of digital technologies.

The purpose of the article is a theoretical and empirical analysis of the role of the virtual environment in shaping the moral values of future officers based on the experience of military universities of the Russian Federation, and the development of recommendations for its constructive use in the educational process.

Main Body.

1. Theoretical foundations of the interaction between the individual and the virtual environment

The virtual environment is defined as a socio-technical system in which communication, learning, self-expression, and decision-making take place under conditions of interaction mediated by digital technologies [1]. For Generation Z, to which the majority of modern cadets belong, the virtual space becomes a natural habitat, comparable in significance to real life [2].

According to the concept of the "extended mind" (A. Clark, D. Chalmers), digital devices and online platforms are integrated into the cognitive and ethical processes of the individual, forming new models of behavior and decision-making [3]. In this context, the virtual environment ceases to be a neutral instrument and becomes an active participant in moral development.

In Russian pedagogy, it is emphasized that the moral values of an officer are traditionally formed through the assimilation of concepts such as honor, duty, patriotism, and loyalty to the oath [4]. However, in the digital environment, these categories are subject to relativization: anonymity, the absence of immediate consequences, and multiple identities weaken the connection between an action and moral responsibility [5].



2. Empirical data: the experience of military universities of the Russian Federation

In 2024–2025, a study was conducted among cadets of two leading military universities of the Russian Federation: the Combined Arms Academy of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Military Educational and Scientific Center of the Ground Forces ($N = 180$). Respondents underwent anonymous surveying, participated in focus groups, and also provided consent for the analysis of their public posts on social networks (sample: 300 posts from 2024–2025).

The results showed that 92% of those surveyed use social networks daily, and 68% play online games, including military simulators. At the same time, 74% encountered negative content (propaganda of violence, fakes, xenophobia), but only 31% expressed readiness to critically evaluate it.

Of particular concern is the phenomenon of "ethical splitting": cadets who demonstrate high moral qualities in real life allow aggressive, manipulative, or immoral statements in the virtual environment, explaining this as a "game role" or "anonymity" [6].

At the same time, 40% of publications contained elements of patriotic discourse, discussion of historical events, and ethical dilemmas. This indicates the presence of a need among cadets for moral self-expression, which can be directed into a constructive channel.

For clarity, we present the key empirical data in the form of tables.

Table 1.

Frequency of use of digital platforms by cadets ($N = 180$)

Platform / activity of cadets	Daily (%)	Several times a week (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
Social networks (VK, Telegram, etc.)	92	6	2	0



Online games (incl. military simulators)	68	22	8	2
Educational platforms (Stepik, Coursera, etc.)	35	40	20	5
Forums and military communities	45	30	20	5

Table 2.

Cadets' attitude towards negative content in the virtual environment (N = 180)

Indicator	Share (%)
Encountered negative content (violence, disinformation, etc.)	74
Ready to critically analyze such content	31
Believe that virtual behavior does not reflect real values	58
Participated in online discussions of moral/ethical topic	40

3. Pedagogical strategies: the Russian context

In Russian practice of military education, educational methods based on the personal example of commanders, military rituals, and collective responsibility traditionally dominate. However, in the context of digitalization, there is a need to adapt these approaches to the new reality.



Pilot projects at the Combined Arms Academy of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation on the implementation of VR trainings (for example, the scenario "Ethical Choice in Battle") showed that after completing the simulations, the level of awareness of the ethical consequences of their actions among cadets increases by 37% [7]. This indicates the potential of digital technologies even in the conservative environment of military education.

The key areas of pedagogical work in Russian military universities are becoming:

- introduction of "Digital Ethics" modules into philosophy and pedagogy courses;
- creation of closed educational online communities (for example, based on corporate messengers);
- use of gamification to model moral dilemmas;
- formation of the "digital citizenship" competence – conscious and responsible behavior in the online space [8].

It is important to emphasize that the virtual environment should not replace traditional forms of education, but complement them, expanding the opportunities for reflection and self-development in conditions close to the professional activities of an officer.

Conclusions.

1. The virtual environment has a significant impact on the formation of moral values of future officers in Russian military universities, acting simultaneously as a risk factor and an educational resource.
2. The main risks are anonymity, disinformation, normalization of immoral behavior, and ethical splitting of the personality.
3. The constructive potential of the virtual environment is realized through VR simulations, educational platforms, and controlled online communities that contribute to the development of critical thinking and moral responsibility.



4. To effectively use this potential, it is necessary to integrate the principles of digital ethics into the military education system of the Russian Federation and develop a culture of responsible digital behavior among cadets.

The obtained results reflect the specifics of the Russian model of military education and can be taken into account in the development of federal methodological recommendations.

REFERENCES.

1. Bazhenov R.I. Digital environment as a factor of personality socialization // Issues of Education. - 2022. - No. 3. - P. 88–104.
2. Twenge J.M. iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious... - New York: Atria Books, 2023. - 320 p.
3. Clark A., Chalmers D. The Extended Mind // Analysis. - 1998. - Vol. 58, No. 1. - P. 7–19.
4. Smirnov A.V. Professional ethics of a military personnel: a textbook. - M.: Voenizdat, 2021. - 256 p.
5. Klimova E.A. Digital environment as a factor in the transformation of youth value orientations // Pedagogy. - 2023. - No. 4. - P. 45–53.
6. Petrov S.N. Ethics of cadet behavior in digital space: problems and solutions // Military Education. - 2024. - No. 2. - P. 33–41.
7. Report on the pilot project "VR-ethics" at the Combined Arms Academy of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. - M., 2025. - 28 p. (author's archive).
8. Lebedev A.A. Moral foundations of the professional activity of an officer. - St. Petersburg: Publishing House of Polytechnic University, 2020. - 192 p.
9. Floridi L. The Ethics of Information. - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. - 320 p.



10. Zinchenko Yu.P., Kryukov A.V. Psychology of the digital environment: a textbook. - M.: Yurait, 2023. - 278 p.
11. Johnson D. Military Ethics and Virtual Reality Training // Journal of Military Ethics. - 2024. - Vol. 23, No. 1. - P. 12–28.
12. West Point Center for Moral Leadership. Ethical Decision-Making in Virtual Environments: Annual Report 2024. - West Point, NY, 2024. - 44 p.
13. UNESCO. Digital Literacy Global Framework. - Paris, 2023. - URL: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385678>