

## Digital technologies' impacts on student social adaptation during Coronavirus pandemic

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### Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic has caused a rather difficult period of adaptation of students to the university system and the new educational process. Digital technologies came to the rescue, which contributed to some solution of emerging adaptation issues for nonresident students. This article is aimed at identifying the features of social adaptation of nonresident students to the educational process at the university. As a research method, the questionnaire method was used, which allowed to identify and analyze the peculiarities of adaptation of first-year students from other cities to the university environment and university requirements. The article reveals the influence of digital technologies on the adaptation of students to the university environment and new living conditions. It was determined that, in general, the participants have a high level of adaptation to the university environment, even in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic.

**Keywords:** digital technologies; educational environment; social adaptation; student youth

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## 1. Introduction

The criteria that reflect the quality of modern professional training at the university, considering competencies, knowledge, skills, experience, should also be such personal qualities as professionalism, communicability, creativity, independence, all that will help to synthesize, analyze, and apply the acquired knowledge in the future. University teachers, developing the cognitive sphere of students, should also take into account the fact that it is necessary to pay due attention to the cognitive activity of students, their independence, the ability to use methods of self-education, self-development (personal and professional qualities), flexibility of thinking (Castels, 2000; Sadovnichy, 2006; Tsvetkova, Frolov & Frolov, 2006; Glazunova & Dolinnaya, 2019).

Modern digital technologies allow developing cognitive activity, mastering certain knowledge and methods (Leshchinsky et al., 2011; Sorokoumova, 2019; Bayanova et al., 2019b; Lopanova et al., 2020). These digital technologies are becoming even more effective in the situation of the coronavirus pandemic (Cherdymova et al., 2020; Puchkova et al., 2020). The Internet has opened limitless opportunities for obtaining information, and online courses open limitless opportunities for obtaining high-quality free education.

The following positive characteristics of online projects can be distinguished. Considering the following levels (individual, general) of digital educational technologies' use during the coronavirus pandemic, it is possible significantly to enrich educational technologies. As for the individual level, in this case we can say that the educational institution independently implements distance courses or educational programs. As for the general level, in this case, an educational institution can use distance courses from those universities that it deems necessary on its educational portal. The appearance of such platforms makes it possible to improve the quality of education during the coronavirus pandemic, since teachers of various Russian educational institutions can develop their own distance courses and broadcast them on a large territory.

It should be noted that often the process of socio-psychological adaptation of first-year students proceeds spontaneously, and yet not all students, getting into the atmosphere of the university, are able to adapt quickly, hence the need for a deeper study of adaptation problem of yesterday's applicants to university life appears (Gritsenko, Alexandrov & Danilchenko, 2019; Bayanova et al., 2019a; Solovyov, 2007; Kozlovskaya & Em, 2020; Prikhodko et al., 2020; Kalugina et al., 2018; Kvon et al., 2019; Kolenichenko, 2019; Manuilov, 2002; Albegova, 2006).

Social adaptation is a type of interaction of an individual or a social group with the social environment, the result of which is the coordination of self-assessments and actions of the subject of activity with the characteristics of the environment, active adaptation to its changing conditions, through changing stereotypes of consciousness and behavior, forms of social organization and regulation of lifestyle, directions and technologies of activity (Volkov & Okonskaya, 1975; Vetrov & Klushina, 2002; Nividnichy, 2007; Zaripova et al., 2014, Voityuk, 2017; Yudin, 2000; Bayanova et al., 2020;).

The content of the adaptation process of first-year students can be presented in the form of a diagram (Figure 1)

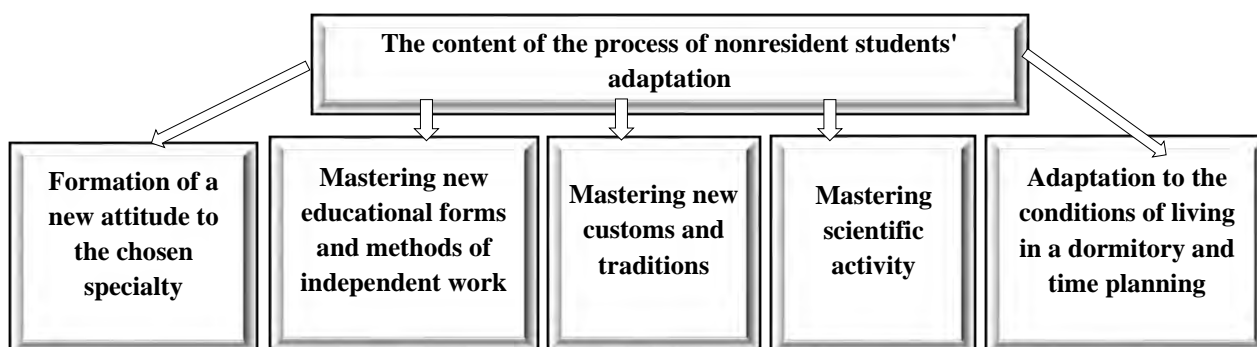


Figure 1. The content of the process of adaptation of nonresident students

## **1.2. Purpose of Study**

Most researchers consider the specifics of human adaptation in its ability to consciously influence the environment. Social adaptation is the process of integrating an individual into a social group, where an individual will accept the values, norms, standards of this group. (Rubchevsky, 2003; Azbukina & Mikhailova, 2006; Korobeynikov, 2019; Shamsutdinova, 2009; Vislova, 2017; Svechnikova, 2019; Shamsutdinova, 2008).

Thus, social adaptation is a process that contributes to the active adaptation of subjects to a new environment and helps to develop common norms, values, attitudes and regulated rules of action. During social adaptation, various transformations of the individual can occur, which allow him/her to identify him/herself with the carriers of the value orientations of this society.

The objectives of this study were the following: to identify the levels of adaptation of first-year students during the coronavirus pandemic to the university environment/to the conditions of the hostel/city; to determine the motives of students entering the university in another city; to reveal the problems that students had to face during their studies at the university/ when living independently in a hostel/ living in a new city; to identify the nature of student relationships in a group.

## **2. Research Methods**

The methodology of this study was based on an experiment aimed at identifying the features of social adaptation of nonresident students to the educational process at the university.

### **2.1. Participants**

The participants of the study were nonresident first-year students at Russian universities living in the dormitory. The participants were purposively sampled.

### **2.2. Data collection tools**

The research used a survey in the collection of data. As a research method, the questionnaire method was used, which allowed the research to identify and analyze the peculiarities of adaptation of first-year students from other cities to the university environment and requirements. The structure of the questionnaire included the following units: adaptation to the university environment, adaptation to the conditions of the hostel, adaptation to an unfamiliar city. The questionnaire developed by the authors are shown in the Appendix A section of this study.

### **2.3. Data collection procedure**

Thus, in the study, the process of adaptation of first-year students from other cities is considered through the following components: adaptation to the university; adaptation to the hostel; adaptation to the new city.

### **2.4. Analysis**

Analysis of the collected data for this research was conducted through frequency analysis. The data was represented in percentages and thereafter analyzed.

## **3. Results**

### ***Features of Non-Resident Student Adaptation to University Environment***

According to the results of the study, the relationship between the level of adaptation of nonresident students to the university and gender was revealed. It is revealed that the majority of young men have a fairly high level of adaptability, there are fewer girls in this category, a relatively high level of adaptability is observed in (37%) girls and (30%) boys; an average level of adaptability is revealed; (25%) girls and (13%) boys have a relatively low level of adaptability, (3%) boys and (4%) girls. (table 1)

**Table 1.** The level of adaptation of nonresident students to the university environment (gender aspect)

The level of adaptability	young men	Girls
High	54 %	34%
Above average	30%	37%
Average	13%	25%
Low	3%	4%

Thus, in general, the surveyed nonresident first-year students have a high level of adaptation to university conditions. The majority of nonresident students surveyed did not face any problems in the educational process, since many issues were immediately solved using digital technologies. When considering the influence of the area where students came from on the level of adaptation to the university, it turned out that almost all students who entered the university from other countries had a high level of adaptation (89%). The difference between the level of adaptation of students from regions nearby to the university and other localities is not significant: 51% of students from the nearby region and 49% of students from other regions have a fairly high level of adaptation to the university environment, 21% of nonresident students from nearby regions and 23% of students from other regions have a high level of adaptation.

Having considered the students' academic performance (the timeliness of passing assignments, tests, sessions and grades received at the session), it was determined that the girls passed the session more successfully than the boys (93 % of the girls passed the session, tests and tasks on time, and 36% of the girls received excellent grades at the session). Among the young men, 51% passed the session, tests and tasks on time, and 30% received excellent results at the session. In general, most of the nonresident students, surveyed (92%) passed the session, tests and assignments on time, (71%) received good grades.

When studying the frequency of students attending classes, significant differences are revealed between girls and boys: (82%) girls always attend classes, while boys in this category only 52%. In total, 71% of nonresident students regularly attend classes at the university.

Satisfaction with the organization of the educational process was considered through three separate signs: satisfaction with the quality of education, provision of educational and methodological literature and relations with teachers. The study revealed minor differences in satisfaction between boys and girls. 61% of boys and 35% of girls are completely satisfied with the organization of the educational process. In general, 82% of nonresident students surveyed are satisfied with the organization of the educational process. Studying the communication of nonresident students with groupmates, it is revealed that 41% of girls and 45% of boys have a wonderful communication at the university. Girls (58%) and boys (54%) communicate well with everyone.

According to the results of the study, there are no significant differences between girls and boys, for example, 1% of boys and 1% of girls communicate with few people. As the study shows, the majority of the surveyed students, 61% of boys and 58% of girls, noted that they did not encounter problems in the educational process; 15% of girls and 13% of boys indicated that they faced a problem of self-organization (under this problem, students indicated: the unaccustomed self-management and time planning, heavy waking up in the first shift, the desire to skip classes, procrastination). In addition, 13% of girls noted that they had difficulties in the educational process due to the large amount of independent work. For 23% of boys and 20% of girls, the problem is the rapid assimilation of a large amount of material (under this problem, students indicated too fast pace of the lecturer, a rapid change of topics studied). In general, there are insignificant differences between boys and girls. According to the results of this study, there were obvious differences between the motives for choosing a university for girls and boys: 30% of girls and 15% of boys focused on prestige when choosing a university; 30% of girls and 31% of boys indicated the presence of prospects as a motive.

An important place in the process of adaptation of students is occupied by adaptation to independent life in the hostel. It is very important that the student not only learns to live independently, but also follows the rules of the hostel. According to the results of the study, significant differences were

revealed between the level of adaptation of girls and boys. The absolute majority of girls (83%) have a high level of adaptability to independent life in a hostel, while boys in this category are 53%. 43% of boys and 13% of girls have a relatively high level of adaptation to the hostel; 4% of boys and 4% of girls have an average level. Based on the data obtained, it can be concluded that students who decided to study in a foreign city were ready for an independent life in a hostel. The majority of the surveyed students have a high level of adaptability, which indicates that the adaptation process was successful. Identifying the problems that students faced when living independently in a hostel, it was revealed that the majority of students (49%) of girls and (60%) of boys indicated that they faced everyday problems in the hostel. Household problems should be understood as: difficulties in cooking in the shared kitchen, lack of necessary household appliances, laundry, cleaning problems, queues for the shower and toilet, many of them also noted poor living conditions (dirty rooms, old furniture, etc.); in addition, 35% of girls and 37% of boys indicated that they faced social problems in the hostel, social problems should be understood as various difficulties of interaction with roommates and unit. It was determined that 13% of girls and 10% of boys faced financial problems, namely, a lack of money for food, poor-quality food. More girls than boys did not encounter problems in the hostel. In general, there are insignificant differences between boys and girls.

Therefore, we can conclude that among the nonresident first-year students studying in Russian universities, students with a relatively high level of adaptation to the university environment, a high level of adaptation to the hostel and to the new city predominate.

#### **4. Discussion**

To fully understand what the adaptation of students is to study at a university, it is necessary to fully understand the concept of social adaptation and study this phenomenon from all sides. The need for social and educational adaptation usually arises when the social conditions familiar to the individual change or when the way of interaction with the familiar environment changes (El-Ouali & Mouhadjer, 2019). Adaptation is also presented as part of the process of self-awareness in the process of socialization, when an individual tries to open up and understand his/her attitude to social roles, as well as looking for new relationships and social connections. It is also necessary to consider what approaches exist in foreign and domestic sociological science in the interpretation of the concept of *socialization*.

Elements of population migration have always been and will always be important for every society, so the issues of human adaptation to the peculiarities of a new area and society remain relevant. Unlike students who entered the university in their hometown, nonresident students find themselves in a new and completely unfamiliar environment for them. Not only is the principle of teaching changing, but also the living conditions familiar to the student, such as the social environment, living conditions, and financial resources change (Bhuyan, 2021). The student should be prepared for the difficulties of independent life and learn to organize him/herself (Durmuscelebi & Kusucuran, 2018).

Having considered the problems of adaptation of nonresident students in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic, it should be noted that most of the students lack direct communication with their peers and the created chats and groups help (Tezer, 2020). Consequently, we can recommend that the curators take care of organizing such communication and general meetings in advance in order to avoid confusion of first-year students and difficulties in finding the primary necessary information. In addition, using digital technologies, one can recommend creating a separate category on the main page of universities, where the navigator information will be posted for first-year students by faculty, which will also contribute to a more successful adaptation of students to the university environment (Kurt & Yavuz, 2018).

#### **5. Conclusions**

The problem of adaptation of first-year students from other cities to study at a university and a new life in general is quite widespread. The student's professional and personal development depends on how successful the adaptation process will be. It is very important that the student adapt well in the first year, as this will contribute to his/her productive and successful work in the learning process.

Having analyzed the impact of digital technologies on the social adaptation of students to the educational process in the university environment during the coronavirus pandemic, we can draw the following conclusions:

- In general, the interviewed first-year students from other cities have a high level of adaptation to the university environment, even in such difficult conditions of the coronavirus pandemic,
- The majority of nonresident students surveyed did not face any problems in the educational process, since many issues were immediately solved using digital technologies.
- There is a certain relationship between the level of adaptation of nonresident students to the university and gender;
- The majority of young men have a high level of adaptability, there are almost two times less girls in this category;
- More boys than girls are also completely satisfied with the organization of the educational process.

In everyday life, the greatest problems for students are the unaccustomedness of independent farming, independent time planning, and a difficult rise for training in the first shift, the desire to skip classes, procrastination, laziness, and a large amount of independent work.

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#### **Appendix A- Questionnaire**

The questionnaire developed by the authors included the following questions:

1. What are your motives for entering a university in another city?
2. What problems did you face during the coronavirus pandemic while studying at the university?
3. Do digital technologies help in solving emerging problems at the university?
4. How do digital technologies help you adapt to the university environment?
5. How do you characterize the relationships of students in your group during the pandemic?
  - High level of mutual understanding
  - A relatively high level of mutual understanding
  - Average level of mutual understanding
  - Relatively low level of mutual understanding
  - Low level of mutual understanding
7. What are your relationships with your group-mates?
  - They are wonderful; I have many friends
  - They are good; I try to communicate with everyone
  - Good, but I would like to improve
  - In different ways, depending on the situation
  - I do not communicate with many people
  - I do not communicate with anyone
8. How often do you communicate with other students using Internet technologies?
9. How satisfied are you with the organization of the educational process?



10. How much do digital technologies help you in solving organizational issues?
11. Do you observe the rules of the hostel (cleanliness in the unit, in the common kitchen)?
  - I always observe
  - I partially comply with
  - I never observe
12. Are you satisfied with your life in the hostel in general?
13. Do you conduct your life independently?
14. How do you plan your time?
15. How much do you know about the city?
  - I know the city well
  - I partially know the city
  - I only know the places where I live and study
  - I practically do not know the city
  - I can move around the city only with the help of a navigator
16. How often do you use digital technologies in studying the urban environment?
17. Does anyone help you in the development of urban space?
18. To what extent have you adapted to the rhythm of the city?
  - Fully adapted
  - Partly adapted
  - I have not adapted yet
19. Have you started using digital technologies more during the coronavirus pandemic?