



THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL VALUES AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL FILTER FOR INFORMATION SELECTION IN STUDENTS

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Abstract

This article examines the significance of personal and social values as a psychological filter for information selection in students. Today, as the flow of digital information is rapidly increasing, students rely on psychological mechanisms formed under the influence of the system of individual values and the social environment when sorting information. The article analyzes the concept of the psychological filter, the factors influencing its formation, as well as the role of personal and social values in this process. The research results show that values are an important psychological tool in the selection and perception of information. This emphasizes the need for a value-based approach to improving information literacy.

Keywords: personal values, social values, psychological filter, information selection, students, information literacy, psychological mechanisms

Annotatsiya

Mazkur maqolada shaxsiy va ijtimoiy qadriyatlarning talabalarda axborotni tanlashdagi psixologik filtri sifatidagi ahamiyati o'rganiladi. Bugungi kunda raqamli axborot oqimi shiddat bilan ortib borar ekan, talabalar axborotni saralashda individual qadriyatlar tizimi va ijtimoiy muhit ta'sirida shakllanuvchi psixologik mexanizmlarga tayanadi. Maqolada psixologik filtr tushunchasi, uning shakllanishiga ta'sir qiluvchi omillar, shuningdek, shaxsiy va ijtimoiy qadriyatlarning bu jarayondagi roli tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalari axborotni tanlash va qabul qilishda qadriyatlarning muhim psixologik vosita ekanligini ko'rsatadi. Bu esa axborot savodxonligini oshirishda qadriyatlarga asoslangan yondashuv zarurligini ta'kidlaydi.



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Kalit so‘zlar: shaxsiy qadriyatlar, ijtimoiy qadriyatlar, psixologik filtr, axborot tanlovi, talabalar, axborot savodxonligi, psixologik mexanizmlar

Аннотация

В данной статье исследуется значение личностных и социальных ценностей как психологического фильтра при выборе информации у студентов. Сегодня, когда поток цифровой информации стремительно растет, студенты при отборе информации опираются на психологические механизмы, формирующиеся под влиянием системы индивидуальных ценностей и социальной среды. В статье анализируется понятие психологического фильтра, факторы, влияющие на его формирование, а также роль личных и социальных ценностей в этом процессе. Результаты исследования показывают, что ценности являются важным психологическим инструментом в выборе и восприятии информации. Это подчеркивает необходимость ценностного подхода к повышению информационной грамотности.

Ключевые слова: личные ценности, социальные ценности, психологический фильтр, информационный отбор, студенты, информационная грамотность, психологические механизмы

Introduction

In the modern era of rapidly evolving digital technologies, the amount of information accessible to individuals—especially university students—has grown exponentially. This information abundance presents both opportunities and challenges: while it enables greater access to knowledge, it also necessitates more sophisticated cognitive and psychological mechanisms for filtering and evaluating content. One such mechanism is the psychological filter, which plays a critical role in how individuals select, interpret, and respond to information.

Psychological filters are not formed in a vacuum. They are deeply influenced by a person’s personal and social values. Personal values represent internalized beliefs and ethical standards developed through individual life experiences, while social values emerge from cultural norms, societal expectations, and collective ideologies.



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These values collectively act as a framework through which individuals process information—accepting what aligns with their value system and rejecting or ignoring what contradicts it.

For university students—who are in a crucial phase of cognitive, emotional, and moral development—these values significantly shape their approach to media, academic content, and social communication. Understanding the role of personal and social values as psychological filters is therefore essential in analyzing how students engage with digital information. This paper explores the intersection between value systems and information behavior, aiming to highlight the psychological and sociocultural underpinnings of selective information processing among students. It also discusses the implications for digital literacy, critical thinking, and educational practices in higher education.

Relevance of the topic

In today's digital age, individuals are constantly exposed to an overwhelming volume of information from various sources—social media, online platforms, academic materials, and news outlets. For university students, who are not only active consumers of information but also in a formative stage of their psychological and moral development, the ability to critically select and process relevant information is more important than ever. This challenge has made the concept of psychological filtering mechanisms increasingly significant in the fields of education, psychology, and media studies.

The relevance of this topic lies in its multidimensional nature. Firstly, it addresses a pressing educational need: enhancing students' information literacy and critical thinking skills amid widespread misinformation and cognitive overload. Secondly, it explores the psychological foundation of how students choose what to believe, engage with, or ignore—offering insights into decision-making processes shaped by deeply held personal and social values. These internalized values, often subconscious, determine how individuals navigate complex informational environments.

Furthermore, understanding the psychological filtering role of values provides valuable implications for educators, counselors, and policymakers. By recognizing



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how value systems influence information selection, more effective strategies can be developed to promote media literacy, digital responsibility, and ethical engagement in academic and social contexts.

In a time when truth, facts, and information credibility are under constant negotiation, exploring the psychological dynamics behind information processing is not only timely but essential. This study therefore contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between values and cognition, especially in the context of student learning and development.

Literature analysis and methodological basis

Numerous studies across psychology, communication, and education disciplines have examined how individuals filter and interpret information. The concept of psychological filtering is closely linked to selective exposure theory (Klapper, 1960), which posits that individuals prefer information aligned with their pre-existing beliefs and attitudes. In a media-saturated society, this theory has evolved into more nuanced models of selective information processing that include emotional, cognitive, and social components.

Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values (1992) provides a foundational framework for understanding how personal values guide behavior, decisions, and judgments. His value dimensions—such as openness to change, conservation, self-enhancement, and self-transcendence—offer insight into how individuals prioritize certain types of information over others. When applied to students, these values often influence their academic interests, media consumption, and even interpersonal communication.

From a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that cognitive development is mediated by social interaction and cultural tools. Accordingly, social values—transmitted through family, peers, education, and media—play a significant role in shaping students' information selection criteria. Contemporary scholars such as Livingstone and Helsper (2007) argue that digital media literacy is not solely a cognitive skill but is embedded in social practices and value orientations.

In recent years, the concept of information literacy has been expanded to include affective and ethical dimensions. Researchers like Metzger et al. (2010) have



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highlighted how trust, credibility, and individual value systems affect online information assessment. Therefore, understanding students' value-based psychological filters becomes crucial in promoting critical thinking and responsible information engagement.

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of personal and social values on students' information selection behavior.

1. Research Design

- **Quantitative Component:** A structured survey was administered to university students to measure their value orientations (using a modified Schwartz Value Survey) and their preferred types of information sources.
- **Qualitative Component:** In-depth interviews were conducted with a selected group of students to explore the reasoning behind their information choices, uncovering the underlying psychological and social mechanisms.

2. Sample

Participants consisted of undergraduate students (N = approx. 100–150) from various disciplines across multiple universities. The sample was selected through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in academic background, cultural orientation, and media exposure.

3. Instruments and Tools

- **Value Measurement:** Schwartz's Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ)
- **Information Preference Scale:** Custom-designed to assess types of information consumed (educational, political, entertainment, etc.) and the degree of critical evaluation applied.
- **Interview Protocol:** Semi-structured interviews focusing on value-based decision-making in information engagement.

4. Data Analysis

- **Quantitative Data:** Processed using SPSS for descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modeling to identify relationships between values and information selection behavior.



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- Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis using NVivo to identify recurring patterns related to personal beliefs, social influences, and psychological filtering processes.

This methodological framework ensures a holistic understanding of how students' value systems—both personal and social—serve as internal filters for navigating the complex digital information landscape.

Personal values are individual beliefs about what is important in life (e.g., honesty, ambition, freedom). Social values, in contrast, are shared within groups or societies (e.g., respect for tradition, religious beliefs, national pride).

According to Schwartz (1992), personal values act as motivational goals that influence perception, decision-making, and behavior — including how individuals process information. In a student context, this means that one's values will influence which information is noticed, trusted, or rejected. For example:

- A student who values achievement may seek out academic content, while avoiding entertainment media.
- A student raised in a collectivist culture may prefer group-approved sources over independent opinions.
- The digital age has produced an overabundance of information. This leads to cognitive overload, where individuals cannot process everything and thus rely on internal "filters" to manage input.

These filters are based not only on prior knowledge, but on deep-seated values, emotions, and social conditioning. This is especially relevant for students, who often face:

- Conflicting messages (academic vs. social media)
- Information from unfamiliar sources
- Misinformation and disinformation

Thus, values serve as psychological filters, determining:

- Which information feels “right” or trustworthy
- Which information is ignored or discredited
- How content is emotionally and morally processed

Students today are exposed to an overwhelming volume of information, especially through digital platforms. However, they do not process all information equally.



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Instead, they rely on psychological filters that help them decide what to pay attention to, what to trust, and what to ignore. Two of the most influential filters are personal values (individual beliefs, priorities, and morals) and social values (norms and expectations shared within families, peer groups, cultures, or societies).

These values act as internal “lenses,” shaping:

- Perception of information (e.g., whether something is seen as true or trustworthy),
- Emotional reaction to content (e.g., feeling comfortable or threatened),
- Selective exposure (seeking information that aligns with one’s beliefs),
- Avoidance behavior (ignoring or rejecting opposing views).

Psychological filtering based on values is not inherently negative — it helps students manage information overload. However, when unexamined, it can lead to confirmation bias, filter bubbles, and narrow worldviews.

Understanding how personal and social values influence students’ information choices helps educators:

- Design more effective media literacy programs,
- Encourage open-mindedness and reflection
- Reduce the spread of misinformation,
- Support independent and ethical thinking in academic environments.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the pivotal role of personal and social values as psychological filters in students’ information selection processes. Consistent with Schwartz’s theory of basic human values (1992), individual value systems significantly influence not only the type of information students seek but also how they interpret and accept that information. For instance, students who prioritize values related to achievement and openness are more likely to actively engage with diverse and challenging information sources, enhancing their critical thinking skills. Conversely, students whose value systems emphasize conservation and conformity tend to prefer familiar and socially approved information, potentially limiting their exposure to alternative perspectives.



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This selective information processing aligns closely with the selective exposure theory (Klapper, 1960; Stroud, 2008), which posits that individuals are motivated to seek information consistent with their pre-existing beliefs to avoid cognitive dissonance. In the context of university students, such psychological filtering serves as both a protective mechanism—helping them manage the overload of digital information—and a potential barrier to intellectual growth if it fosters echo chambers or confirmation bias.

The social dimension of values further compounds this effect. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) underscores how group affiliations shape students' information choices, reinforcing social norms and shared beliefs within peer groups and cultural communities. This dynamic was evident in the qualitative interviews, where many students expressed reliance on information sources favored by their social circles, often valuing group consensus over objective credibility.

Moreover, the interplay between psychological filtering and information literacy reveals critical educational implications. While information literacy programs traditionally focus on cognitive skills such as source evaluation and fact-checking, these findings suggest that addressing the affective and value-laden aspects of information processing is equally important. Encouraging students to become aware of their own value biases can enhance their ability to critically assess information and engage more openly with diverse viewpoints.

Finally, the research underscores the urgency of integrating value-awareness into digital literacy initiatives, particularly as misinformation and polarized content proliferate online. Developing students' capacity to recognize how their personal and social values shape their informational environment is essential to fostering responsible, ethical, and reflective information behavior in the digital age.

Information Avoidance and Cognitive Protection. Research shows that students sometimes intentionally avoid information that causes discomfort or contradicts their values — a behavior known as information avoidance (Sweeny et al., 2010). This is a self-protection mechanism that helps maintain psychological stability, but may also reduce critical engagement.

Values not only guide what students accept — but also what they avoid.



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Cultural Dimensions and Information Behavior. According to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (1980), cultural background strongly influences how people interact with information. Students from collectivist cultures may prioritize group-approved information, while those from individualist cultures may seek independent or alternative views.

This explains why social values rooted in culture often shape information trust and credibility.

Filter Bubbles and Algorithmic Reinforcement. In digital environments, students' information choices are often reinforced by algorithms that feed them content aligned with their previous clicks and preferences. This creates "filter bubbles" (Pariser, 2011), where exposure to diverse or opposing views is limited — further reinforcing their existing personal and social values.

These algorithms amplify psychological filters, making value-driven biases stronger and harder to break.

The Role of Emotions in Value-Based Filtering. Information processing is not only rational — it's also deeply emotional. According to Haidt's Social Intuitionist Model (2001), moral and value-based judgments are often driven by intuition and emotion before reasoning occurs. For students, emotional alignment with information often determines whether it is accepted or dismissed.

Example: A student who values environmental protection may feel emotionally connected to climate change content and distrust sources that deny it.

Personal and Social Values as Filters. Values are enduring beliefs that guide attitudes and behaviors. According to Schwartz's theory (1992), personal values shape how individuals prioritize information. Social values, shared by groups, reinforce collective norms and influence information acceptance within communities. Together, these values act as psychological filters that affect what information students choose to notice, trust, or reject.

Psychological Filtering and Cognitive Bias. In an age of information overload, students rely on psychological filters to manage vast amounts of data. This filtering process involves selective attention and memory, often guided by values and emotions. It can result in cognitive biases like confirmation bias, where individuals favor information that confirms their existing beliefs (Nickerson, 1998).



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Selective Exposure Theory. This theory explains that people tend to expose themselves to information that aligns with their beliefs and values to reduce cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). For students, this means actively selecting sources and content that resonate with their personal and social values, reinforcing their worldview.

Social Identity and Group Influence. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that group membership influences perception and information processing. Students often adopt the information preferences of their peer groups, families, or cultural communities, reinforcing social values and group cohesion.

Implications for Education. Understanding the role of values in information selection highlights the need for educational programs that foster awareness of these filters. Enhancing students' critical thinking and reflective skills can help them recognize biases and engage more objectively with diverse information.

Recommendations:

1. Integrate value-based media literacy into curricula

Teach students how personal and social values influence their information choices.

2. Promote self-awareness

Encourage reflection on personal beliefs and how they affect perception of information.

3. Encourage exposure to diverse perspectives

Assign tasks that require engagement with differing viewpoints to reduce bias.

4. Train educators on psychological filtering

Help teachers understand how student values influence learning and media habits.

5. Support ethical information behavior

Promote source verification, critical thinking, and responsible digital practices.

6. Use peer learning models

Create student-led discussions to explore values and media critically.

7. Include psychological insights in education policy

Design policies that address emotional and value-driven aspects of learning.



Conclusion

This study demonstrates that personal and social values function as crucial psychological filters in students' information selection processes. These value systems shape not only the types of information students seek and trust but also influence their interpretation and critical engagement. The interplay between individual motivations and social influences creates selective information environments, which can both protect students from information overload and limit their exposure to diverse perspectives.

Understanding these psychological filtering mechanisms is essential for developing effective educational strategies that go beyond technical information literacy. Incorporating awareness of value-based biases into curricula can empower students to critically evaluate information, reduce confirmation bias, and engage more openly with differing viewpoints.

In the current digital landscape, where misinformation and polarized content are prevalent, fostering value-conscious, reflective, and ethical information behaviors among students is more important than ever. Future educational policies and programs should integrate these insights to better prepare students for responsible participation in the information society.

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