EURASIAN EXPERIMENT JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (EEJHSS) ISSN: 2992-4111

©EEJHSS Publications Volume 6 Issue 3 2025

The Role of Technology in Shaping Future Generations' Values

Saudah Namukasa

Kampala International University Uganda Science Education

Email saudah.namukasa@studwc.kiu.ac.ug

ABSTRACT

Technology is a transformative force that continuously shapes societal values, particularly influencing future generations through education, communication, and ethical perspectives. As digital advancements accelerate, the ability to critically assess information and adapt to new technological landscapes becomes more crucial than mere memorization of facts. Historical parallels, such as the Industrial Revolution, illustrate how societal values shift in response to technological progress. While digital communication fosters global connectivity, it also exacerbates misinformation and societal divisions. The integration of artificial intelligence and virtual reality in education and daily life presents opportunities for enhanced empathy but also raises concerns about ethical implications and emotional detachment. This paper examines the dynamic relationship between technology and societal values, emphasizing the need for balanced education, ethical AI deployment, and digital literacy to mitigate adverse effects and promote informed decision-making in future generations.

Keywords: Technology, societal values, artificial intelligence, digital literacy, education, ethics, communication.

INTRODUCTION

There are few forces shaping upcoming generations to the extent of technology. Today technology makes previously unrealized advances almost daily, and a day is seldom conducted without utilizing technology for some purpose. As technology becomes more immanent to daily life, it weighs on society with norms of how to interact with it. Technology now is designed to be intuitive, focusing on ease of use; however, ease of use is not synonymous with optimal use. This is especially important to moral development and coming technological challenges. It is up to the educators and policymakers of today to understand and prepare for coming changes. Arguably, the single most important skill to be passed on is how to discern the reputable from the quacks. Education in the 21 century must adapt to this new reality and focus more on how to find information and evaluate its validity. Someone entering the workforce today will likely have four to five career changes, possibly in fields that do not yet exist. Understanding how to learn will become more valued than learning specific facts. Language is another aspect to change drastically in coming years. Firstly, the ubiquity of technology will push conciseness. It is already common for texts or emails to contain abbreviations or shorthand. The pendulum may not swing so far as to evolve a new written language, permanently marring people into two camps; yet, language is always evolving and quicker forms of communication necessary to convey a plethora of information efficiently may likewise become more prevalent. The crux of discourse in any society is meaning conveyed by words, the actual definition of which is always evolving. Because of that even the lexical connotations of congealing words will also evolve and trend toward concision. In the longest standing traditions of poetry brief and concise, the haiku or sonnet, are likewise the most respected. In addition language will become even more anglicized than it presently is and there will only be a few dominant languages in daily use. Much of that comes down to the key phrases, idioms, or expressions possess cultural and historic connotations that

arguably cannot be properly expressed or understood outside their native tongue. Because of this sort of subjective contextuality the business of international affairs (and quite possibly affairs of any kind handle betwixt the emergent global communities) become increasingly impersonal [1, 2].

Understanding Values in Society

A society consists of interconnected rules and norms that dictate individual interactions and understanding of the environment. These norms govern aspects like acceptable breakfast foods and attire, illustrating their deep cultural roots. Societies evolve by renegotiating these rules across generations. Core values, viewed as societal cornerstones, have shifted from Greco-Roman Stoicism to modern American ideals of freedom and autonomy. Values serve as the foundation of society, guiding behavioral expectations, moral standards, and cultural expressions. They influence personal beliefs, from community involvement to reverence for tradition and authority. While societal values shape individual beliefs from birth, personal values can diverge from societal expectations due to trauma, cultural distance, or norm rejection. This separation can lead individuals to conform, adapt, or oppose their upbringing. Technological advancements have historically influenced societal values, notably during the Industrial and Modernist movements of the 1800s. Changes like the transition from horse-drawn plows to steam-powered machinery faced societal backlash, showcasing resistance to evolving technologies. Thus, the origins and transformations of societal values are intricately linked to technological integration, necessitating an analysis of their mutual impact [3, 4].

Historical Perspectives on Technology and Values

Technological innovations often reveal and challenge existing values so significantly that the history of technology intertwines with the history of value change and contention. The relationship between technological objects and human values has been extensively analyzed. Historical instances illustrate how major technological advancements, like the printing press, have shifted societal knowledge and norms, from the railways and telegraph to mass media like radio and television. Resistance to new technologies has been studied to understand the inherent infrastructure and values, revealing skepticism and controversy during transitions. However, the broader implications for current technological and value issues remain underexplored. Historically, values align closely with ways of life, with technology acting as both a catalyst and a foundation for change. Rapid technological advancements since the Industrial Revolution disrupt established lifestyles, causing people to resist change when social and cultural adaptations lag behind. This resistance is not strictly two-way; technology can propagate contested values vigorously. The influence of technology on values largely depends on a well-organized environment, while fast-paced change can lead to value ambiguity and erosion. The rise of digital technology introduces complex issues surrounding information, representation, and public/private dynamics. Existing legal, political, or moral frameworks often fail to provide adequate guidance for these challenges. Nonetheless, technology inherently provokes, obscures, and transforms modes of living and underlying values. Therefore, a historical perspective is crucial for anticipating and setting values amidst the advancing future of technology [5, 6].

The Impact of Digital Communication

Today's interconnected world, driven by technology, features a continuous exchange of information curated by major tech companies. This real-time flow transcends borders, replacing physical travel with rapid virtual data transfer, influencing society and core values. Instant digital communication accelerates connectivity, enabling individuals with internet access to engage in diverse idea exchanges. However, this connectivity has both positive and negative consequences, fostering unity while also contributing to divisions and creating inclusive communities alongside isolating echo chambers, potentially instigating social movements or unrest. This potential for coordinated action has fueled social change but has also led to online hostility. Increased digital engagement causes a decline in face-to-face interactions, especially among younger generations, resulting in a 40% drop in empathy and a rise in superficial relationships. These shifts can distort social media algorithms, shaping public perceptions and behaviors. As technology disrupts traditional communication, interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence decline, with rich language nuances increasingly replaced by brief expressions through emojis and character limits. This simplified communication might ironically lead to a renewed understanding of the importance of well-crafted language, suggesting that form can support substance. User-centric technology like social media has profound effects on contemporary values on personal, societal, and cultural levels. Social media platforms shape self-conception. As of 2023, an estimated 4.2 billion people actively use social media, especially appealing to those aged 18-25. Six principles of persuasion—consensus, consistency, scarcity, reciprocity, authority, and liking—play a key role. Platforms determine how individuals perceive their self-image, as the desire for validation and social approval influences their interactions. Apps like

Instagram and Facebook allow users to validate each other, with scientifically-backed likes and shares releasing endorphins, creating pleasure associated with social media interaction. Posts with higher likes are deemed superior, affecting self-image and potentially changing personal beliefs. This can lead to echo chambers, further exaggerating polarization and extremism in views. Additionally, social media platforms solidify societal norms and assist in trend creation. Users with larger followings often become successful influencers. Seventy-six percent of American teenagers prioritize following influencers' trends. Exposure to products via influential advertising significantly impacts purchasing behavior. Social media thus affects both the material and digital realms. Influencers can shape trends and impact the economy, positively raising awareness in areas like health, though they can also spread misinformation. Distinguishing credible information is challenging on social media, making individuals susceptible to believing and spreading falsehoods. This can seriously impact societal values and public trust, particularly in politically charged environments, sometimes leading to extreme consequences. Conversely, exposure to diverse viewpoints can help create different narratives. Understanding the interplay between social media and future societal values requires recognizing both positive and negative aspects of this dynamic interaction [7, 8].

Technology In Education

The 21st century global society is evolving rapidly, primarily driven by technology's development, diffusion, and utilization. For future generations, technology will assume a significant role across economic, social, educational, political, and cultural domains. The emergence of technological tools and their integration into human life arise from a robust educational system influenced by education and culture. Technologies significantly impact the educational environment and shape students' values. This highlights the need for educators to focus on a balanced value development in students, acknowledging technology's role and its innovative transformations. Technology in educational institutions serves as tools and as an instrument for developing new curricula, teaching forms, and assessment techniques. Equipment like computers, multimedia projectors, interactive whiteboards, and the internet are extensively utilized across all educational institutions today. Additionally, robotic technologies are essential in computer studies. Research findings can benefit future studies and ergonomic designs, where a robot's success relies on speed, efficiency, purpose clarity, adaptability, and human interaction. Although technology's integration into education is widespread, its impact on various students' value systems differs. Designing educational environments allows for technological use, potentially leading to new student values within socio-cultural contexts. The amount of time spent interacting with technologies—such as computers or traditional learning methods—varies. It's essential to engage in discussions about new technological equipment's varied interpretations, including computers and the internet, in students' learning experiences with social scientists' assistance [9, 10].

Virtual Reality and Empathy

Emerging research into the potential of technology in shaping future generations' values has opened up unique opportunities and challenges. While it is widely believed that teenagers are strongly influenced by the media and their surroundings, less attention has been paid to the potential role of technology in shaping attitudes and values in the future. New technology is often considered as entertainment or practical tools, rather than a formative medium that can shape users' value system. The potential roles of heating technology, such as artificial intelligence and emotional chatbots, as a future educational and therapeutic model for children and adolescents are promoted. Future research into the social and developmental impacts of innovative technology on values and beliefs is encouraged. In addition, a further interdisciplinary and inclusive approach to research that considers technology, media, sociology, psychology, and education is proposed. Four research studies suggesting the value of arts and resilience education for adolescents in promoting child mental health and wellbeing are summarized, to illustrate the potential of a mixed method, arts-based approach in understanding children's technology literacy education and emotional awareness. Cross-border and inter-organization dialogue between scholars, artists, educators, public institutions, and private companies are encouraged. To re-examine eventual policies and to better mitigate the risks and benefits of new media in shaping values, more meaningful and productive future research is called for. By creating multi-body avatars, new impressive educational materials may provide an empathic understanding of the point of view of others who are very different due to certain attributes. An alarming trend is the rise in destructive and violent behaviors conducted by young people who do not seem to feel empathy towards other people suffering. Although interpersonal relations are likely to become increasingly more distant and non-psychological, a virtual look through somebody else's eyes can induce the same feelings one would feel if in that person's shoes. In this respect, virtual reality shows great potential as a communication medium capable of eliciting empathy.

Participation in a virtual role plays game as a homeless person significantly decreased negative attitudes towards those living on the street. When embodying an avatar of an elderly individual, younger participants experienced a notable increase in their moderate level of pathos for the aged. Extensive data on interracial and intergroup bias demonstrate a consistent finding. Prejudice reduces when images are manipulated with a technique that allows them to look morphologically similar to the user. If used unjustly, it may also result in false memories and inappropriate feelings. Youth growing up in a world of virtual wonders are easily immersed in intense and sometimes addictive feelings of presence that compel them to respond as if in the real world to threats, in what is known as the Proteus effect on behavior and physiological arousal. Participation in a conflict within an immersive virtual environment notably affects moral judgments against potential victims, possibly due to a decrease in compassionate response [11, 12].

Artificial Intelligence and Ethics

Emerging Technologies and Values have a complex relationship, characterized by narratives like technological determinism and technocratic triumphalism, which reflect differing societal attitudes toward technology's influence on human events. These narratives highlight critical issues in ethics, politics, and psychology related to technology's role in shaping society and identity. Regardless of the era or culture, they address transformations involving trust, control, human agency, and cooperation, as well as events tied to increasing power dynamics and perceptions of reality. Emerging technologies act as powerful artifacts embodying social and economic power, creating opportunities for elites to manage territories and populations. Technologies evolve into social systems, each structured around power, energy, and control while interacting with complex dynamics and different entities involved in localized changes. Artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersystems now significantly contribute to these systems, serving as social interfaces and simplifying complex data phenomena. Surveillance systems demonstrate AI's profound societal implications. Although AI systems enhance data processing through pattern analysis, they tend to serve ultra-high organizations, complicating access and manipulation. In the western world, AI raises major concerns regarding privacy, democratization, and potential biases, yet its public backlash is still in its early stages [13, 14].

Gamification of Learning

Gamification applies game mechanics to non-game contexts, gaining prominence since its inception in 2002 and a surge in 2011. It leverages intrinsic motivations to influence behavior, beneficial for businesses and advocacy. A significant research area is education, especially as the US high school graduation rate reaches 81.4 percent, lower than other nations. Gamification can enhance engagement and retention, offering benefits like personalization, choice, and immediate feedback. Among fourteen gamified media projects analyzed, four demonstrated lasting effects, such as fostering charitable actions and motivating careers in medicine and baking. However, drawbacks exist, including potential overreliance on extrinsic rewards, harming genuine learning experiences. Critics point to low engagement, with some students distracted by the gamified experience. The implementation of gamification varies, and poor designs may foster competition over collaboration, promoting negative values. Although not all games are unsuitable for education, striking a balance between enjoyment and meaningful learning is essential for successful gamified education [15,16].

The Role of Parents and Guardians

Considering the continuous production and consumption of digital content, it is crucial to analyze how future generations' values can be shaped. Nowadays, all phases of life are directly or indirectly associated with different technological applications. Thus, it is vital to initiate an open dialogue among families about the use of technology. By examining the proposed strategies, one may investigate whether they will be applicable in guiding future generations. Modeling positive behavior, talking openly about the use of technology, educating about the use of digital content, implementing timeframes and boundaries, and telling children to navigate the digital landscape are recommended strategies. Devices, screens, and data usage patterns are increasingly seen in daily life and increase the presence of technology in the living space. The observations below raise the question of the potential side effects of a life intertwined with digital content, as there are potentially positive aspects and momentous gains. The current generational change will also be pioneers in the digital revolution era. As a result of these changes, activities and routines have continuously evolved with the increasing velocity of digitalization. It is remarkable that these kinds of values constitute the shared space of each family and highlight the parent's role in shaping values. The results of the study also focus on the awareness that ongoing technological transformations will shape future generations' life values. However, it is seen that the process will not be formed by the softness of the matter, but will require a proactive approach. Because of this, parents and future parents have to touch upon the presence of technology in life and to discuss a series of strategies [17, 18].

Peer Influence in A Digital Age

Twenty-five years of desktop publishing, email, texting, and myriad social media platforms have molded generations of youth for whom a cradle-to-grave affinity for digital tools is the norm. Intergenerational frustrations notwithstanding, parenting practice and the values of young children scramble to accommodate the growing symbiosis of off-line/online activity. Pedagogical and research communities, caught mostly off-centre, cast a wary eye at the inevitable behavioural, cognitive, and emotional spill-over engendered by a seamless, all-enveloping personalized media environment. In an exploratory stance, this special issue session considers innovative research spanning several countries, each offering unique insights into the 'familiar bewilderment' of children's cocoons of proximal techno-cultural opportunities and hazards. As digital tools and playthings become increasingly ubiquitous, it is useful and timely to take stock of what children (especially young children) do within those worlds, as well as contemplate the continuing relevance of offline mentorship and affective anchors within those mixed environs that characterize contemporary learning milieus [19, 20].

Cultural Shifts Due to Technology

Technological innovations and cultural shifts have brought significant changes and challenges globally, deeply affecting cultural expressions, traditions, and societal values. While globalization, propelled by digital culture, tends to standardize world cultures, it also pressures societal boundaries, potentially causing a backlash termed antidotism. Technology, as part of societal fabric, facilitates change but its absorption can be uneven and often viewed as foreign. Cultural identity is contested, especially in societies fearing loss of their identities. Culture encompasses habits, beliefs, and a way of life, seen as both valuable and vulnerable to technological erosion. The tension between technology and culture suggests they influence each other's evolution. The primary concern is to navigate the historical and ongoing interactions between technology and cultural constructs during rapid technological growth. Historical and contemporary examples illustrate cultural shifts due to technology, examining various forms and their transformations, such as millinery artistry and technē mortuária, mobile communication, and indigo dyeing. This investigation reveals diverse cultural changes and challenges regarding biodiversity, value systems, and cultural production. Observations made will be guiding, applicable only to the studied instances, and will suggest reflective conclusions [21, 22].

Globalization and Access to Information

Neither the Internet nor the World Wide Web are the same thing, but there's a common confusion of one for the other. The Internet is actually a world-wide interconnection of networks through the routing of data, and infrastructures composed of cables, computers, servers, switches, routers, satellite connections, wireless connections, fiber optic connections, etc. The World Wide Web is a part of the Internet, where documents and resources are identified by URL address are stored. The Web is a universe composed of billions of interconnected documents, pages, media elements, etc. Being a part of the Internet, it is crucial to have a Web infrastructure that allows data transmission through it. Because of it, there are censors, filters or traffic management systems in some regions or from some Internet Service Providers. Information technologies, digital services, and internet have considerably modified the daily routine and practices of consuming and sharing knowledge and cultural items. In not even thirty years, everything – the way people read, learn, listen to music, watch films – has drastically been transformed. In a more general way, the very way people grant reality to things arises from digital peripherals and digital screens. From a philosophical and epistemological point of view, it is somewhat puzzling to comprehend how is it possible that the simple reading of digital data can fulfil a symptom of reality. Fontained by digital data, fonts and pixels give birth to full and entire worlds, works, ideas, beliefs, items, transactions, etc. Each day more, a growing number of transactions and communications is done through digital support. There is a dematerialization of the ordinary things, the ones that was so far inhabiting the landscape around people. In the strain of the concepts that organizes human minds are a consequence of their environment. Therefore, information technology got to be scrutinized with regards of the way they are shaping the very nature and texture of the things, of the items. To entities of a digital nature, a new version of epistemology is required. At the root of digital items, there is – probably – something in common to all of them, but also peculiarities that make them what they are: digital [23, 24].

The Digital Divide

Technology has become essential in daily life, affecting personal and professional domains. The idea that a common set of societal values is emerging to replace traditional ones is debated, particularly regarding the digital divide, which highlights unequal access to technology and the internet among socio-economic groups. Functional theory posits that those lacking access to technology may form differing functional

values compared to those who have it, as value systems may shift with material resources, specifically technology. In a digital world dominated by smartphones and social media, access to these tools influences the values that develop. This can lead to a society where value divides overlay existing social gaps, resulting in significant technological immobility for some groups. Educational divides are likely to widen as many educational resources are computer-based, but access to broadband remains expensive, especially in developing countries, hindering the acquisition of essential tech skills. Furthermore, industries increasingly operate through technology, which favors the tech-savvy in employment and reinforces socio-economic divides. To bridge this gap, community centers and libraries should offer training on web access, maximizing both online and offline opportunities. Only those with access to technology can adapt to ongoing developments. If a value system reflects life conditions and technology shapes those conditions, the technologically disadvantaged will remain disconnected from the motivational aspects of technology, perpetuating value systems tied to relative deprivation in areas such as natural resources and local markets [25, 26, 27, 28].

Mental Health and Technology Use

The rapid rise of technology and the digital age comes hand in hand with growing anxiety and concern about the mental well-being of future generations. Children and young people have swiftly become absorbed in the endless possibilities and opportunities technology can offer, yet at what cost? Digital technologies have the power to inform, educate, and entertain, as well as deepen global connections through innovative multimedia applications. COVID-19 has only helped propel young people into the digital age even faster. Digital skills have proven to be a valuable asset and have, with great rapidity, become indispensable throughout the months of national and regional lockdowns. However, the seductive allure of screens has imposed a significant shift in daily routines, and for some, resulted in a complete reliance on digitalised reality. The realisation that technology is not an imperative, nor an irreplaceable mode of daily function, could serve as a revelatory moment to some. In this boisterous digital age, the absence of a mobile phone, laptop, or tablet can render the user almost obsolete in society. This is particularly applicable to younger generations who have grown up surrounded by and entirely dependent upon technological gadgets. Such dependence brings with it a nested plethora of unforeseen and often hidden risks. Recently, the growing mental health concern, and in particular, the anxiety and depression experienced by rapidly increasing numbers of young people, has been linked with the augmented screen time and the intensity of social media usage. Social isolation, the inability to disclose and share real emotions and experiences with others, the obsessive need to gain self-validating affirmation from virtual platforms, but also the relentless and crushing need to abide by the ever-increasing beauty and fitness standards, have fuelled the breeding ground for joyless and dystopian childhood and adolescence. The exponential rise in cyberbullying incidents, as well as the pandemic spread of self-harming and eating disorder websites have aided in the uncovering of the often explicitly sinister side of the social media universe. Together, they have created, and continue to do so, a population in the vice of anxiety, sadness, and loneliness and at the expense of an ever more voracious technological zeitgeist [29, 30, 31, 32].

CONCLUSION

Technology is a double-edged sword that both reinforces and reshapes societal values. As future generations navigate an increasingly digital world, their ability to critically engage with technology will define their ethical and social outlook. While digital advancements offer unprecedented opportunities for learning and global connectivity, they also introduce challenges, such as misinformation, privacy concerns, and ethical dilemmas surrounding artificial intelligence. To ensure that technological progress aligns with positive societal values, it is imperative to integrate digital literacy into education, encourage responsible AI development, and foster a balanced approach to technological adaptation. Future research must focus on mitigating negative consequences while maximizing technology's potential to cultivate informed, ethical, and adaptable future generations.

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CITE AS: Saudah Namukasa (2025). The Role of Technology in Shaping Future Generations' Values. EURASIAN EXPERIMENT JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, 6(3):110-117