

FORMATION OF STUDENTS' ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

FORMAÇÃO DA CONSCIÊNCIA AMBIENTAL DOS ALUNOS ATRAVÉS DAS MÍDIAS SOCIAIS

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of students' environmental education in the context of rapid economic and social development is one of the priority tasks of forming a society, which is impossible without the active participation of higher education institutions, as well as awareness of the need for environmentally friendly use of natural resources and a frugal attitude towards nature. Furthermore, students are the driving force that can influence the state of the environment in the future, so it is extremely important today to organize the educational process to familiarize children and youth with environmental issues. The basis for the implementation of an effective environmental education strategy is the maximum unification of efforts for an effective result based on the definition of reference positions in formal and non-formal environmental education, the formation of the child's ability to purposefully observe, study and correctly evaluate objects and phenomena in the process of observation from the point of view of environmental thinking. This article aims to identify the key features of forming environmental awareness in students through social media. Methodology. During this study, analytical and bibliographic methods were used to study the scientific literature on the development of environmental awareness, as well as synthesis, analysis of information, system-structural, comparative, logical, and linguistic methods, abstraction, idealization, induction, a deduction for studying and processing data, and a questionnaire survey conducted by the authors of the study online to practically clarify the most critical issues related to the formation of environmental awareness in students using social media. Results. The study identified the leading, most important theoretical aspects of the issue of environmental awareness, as well as the point of view of scientists and university professors on the critical aspects of this issue.

Keywords: Environmental educational strategy. Environmental awareness. Rules of ecological life. Social media. Environmental education.

RESUMO

A implementação da educação ambiental dos alunos num contexto de rápido desenvolvimento económico e social é uma das tarefas prioritárias da formação de uma sociedade, o que é impossível sem a participação ativa das instituições de ensino superior, bem como a sensibilização para a necessidade de uma utilização amiga do ambiente dos recursos naturais e uma atitude frugal em relação à natureza. Além disso, os alunos são a força motriz que pode influenciar o estado do meio ambiente no futuro, por isso é extremamente importante hoje organizar o processo educacional para familiarizar crianças e jovens com questões ambientais. A base para a implementação de uma estratégia eficaz de educação ambiental é a unificação máxima de esforços para um resultado eficaz com base na definição de posições de referência em educação ambiental formal e não formal, na formação da capacidade da criança de observar intencionalmente, estudar e corretamente avaliar objetos e fenômenos no processo de observação do ponto de vista do pensamento ambiental. Este artigo tem como objetivo identificar as principais características da formação da consciência ambiental nos alunos por meio das mídias sociais. Metodologia. Durante este estudo, foram utilizados métodos analíticos e bibliográficos para estudar a produção científica sobre o desenvolvimento da consciência ambiental, bem como métodos de síntese, análise da informação, sistema-estrutural, comparativo, lógico e linguístico, abstração, idealização, indução, uma dedução para estudo e tratamento de dados, e uma pesquisa por questionário realizada pelos autores do estudo online para esclarecer de forma prática as questões mais críticas relacionadas à formação da consciência ambiental nos alunos que utilizam as mídias sociais. Resultados. O estudo identificou os principais e mais importantes aspectos teóricos da questão da consciência ambiental, bem como o ponto de vista de cientistas e professores universitários sobre os aspectos críticos dessa questão.

Palavras-chave: Estratégia de educação ambiental. Consciência ambiental. Regras de vida ecológica. Mídias sociais. Educação ambiental.

Introduction

Social media has now become one of the leading communication tools and a way to share information and news. At the student age, the influence of social networks, bloggers, web communities, etc., is particularly significant in shaping the personality. Social media resources have become an integral part of the everyday life of the modern generation. Therefore, they should become an important driving force for actively developing students' environmental awareness.

The theoretical part of this study substantiates the relevance, key areas and components of environmental education, and the means that can be used in HEIs in forming students' environmental awareness.

The practical part of the study includes an assessment of the main tasks of social media tools in the development of students' environmental awareness, the most essential elements of environmental awareness, as well as sources of information for the development of students' ecological understanding, and an

analysis of the priority forms of work using social media resources that should be given the most attention in the educational process of higher education institutions.

Based on the study results, the authors of this article have drawn conclusions regarding the issues raised. Thus, it has been found that the main tasks of social media tools in the development of environmental awareness of adolescents are to form a responsible attitude to the use of natural resources and to raise students' awareness of the rules of ecological life in society. At the same time, the survey showed that the main components of environmental awareness are awareness of the nature of the relationship between the environmental and social crisis, awareness of the global nature of the ecological crisis and the need to address it, and the ability to engage in productive environmental and social communication. At the same time, the most effective sources of information for developing students' environmental awareness are attending online conferences, round tables, lectures on ecological competence and environmental awareness, and news from social networks. The study found that the top priority social media tools that should be given the most attention in the educational process of higher education institutions to optimize the formation of students' environmental thinking are online training and online marathons, live broadcasts, and stories on Facebook or Instagram, and informational and motivational videos on YouTube, Telegram channels and TikTok.

Literature review

A modern, qualitatively new environmental education system should ensure the education of the younger generation, which will realize a way out of the ecological crisis and overcome the consumer attitude to nature. Nowadays, the violation of environmental balance has led to the spread of genetic, allergic, infectious, parasitic, and oncological diseases, most of which are associated with ecological factors (Hess & Maki, 2019).

Fostering a high level of environmental awareness and culture in future professionals, the ability to apply ecological knowledge both in everyday life and while performing professional duties is an essential prerequisite for quality

professional education. Environmental education is of great national importance, as it is aimed at solving significant socio-economic, environmental, and geopolitical problems (Aldieri et al., 2019).

The study of ecological thinking and culture is closely related to various disciplines. For researchers, it is essential to determine the right approach to raising students' awareness as a factor in forming a holistic society, not only at the level of knowledge but also as a way to apply it in future professional activities.

Ecological awareness is a person's formed worldview of the environment. Environmental awareness can change throughout a person's life, and in this process, acquiring environmental knowledge formed through the system of educational institutions is extremely important (Mandryk, Malovanyi & Orfanova, 2019).

In HEIs, environmental education is a continuation of the knowledge acquired in preschools as a formal component and through well-known family values, culture, and media as an informal component of ethical education (Godemann et al., 2021; Locatelli, 2018).

Higher education institutions form important environmental knowledge based on various methods of obtaining it. The result of such educational activities is the student's environmental awareness, responsibility for learning, environmental protection and rational use of natural resources, and understanding of the person's place in the natural environment (Findler et al., 2019; Rivera-Torres & Garcés-Ayerbe, 2018).

There are two areas of environmental education in HEIs: professional ecological education, which includes training specialists for various economic sectors, and a basic normative discipline for experts in all fields (Valero-Gilab et al., 2021; Marta, Leal & Miranda, 2018).

The formation of students' environmental awareness occurs due to the presence of basic normative environmental disciplines in educational programs and the effective use of various teaching tools, the most important of which are media resources (Aleixo & Leal, 2018; McCowan, 2019).

Aims

The research aims to determine the position of HEI teachers and scientists on the peculiarities of forming environmental awareness among students through social media.

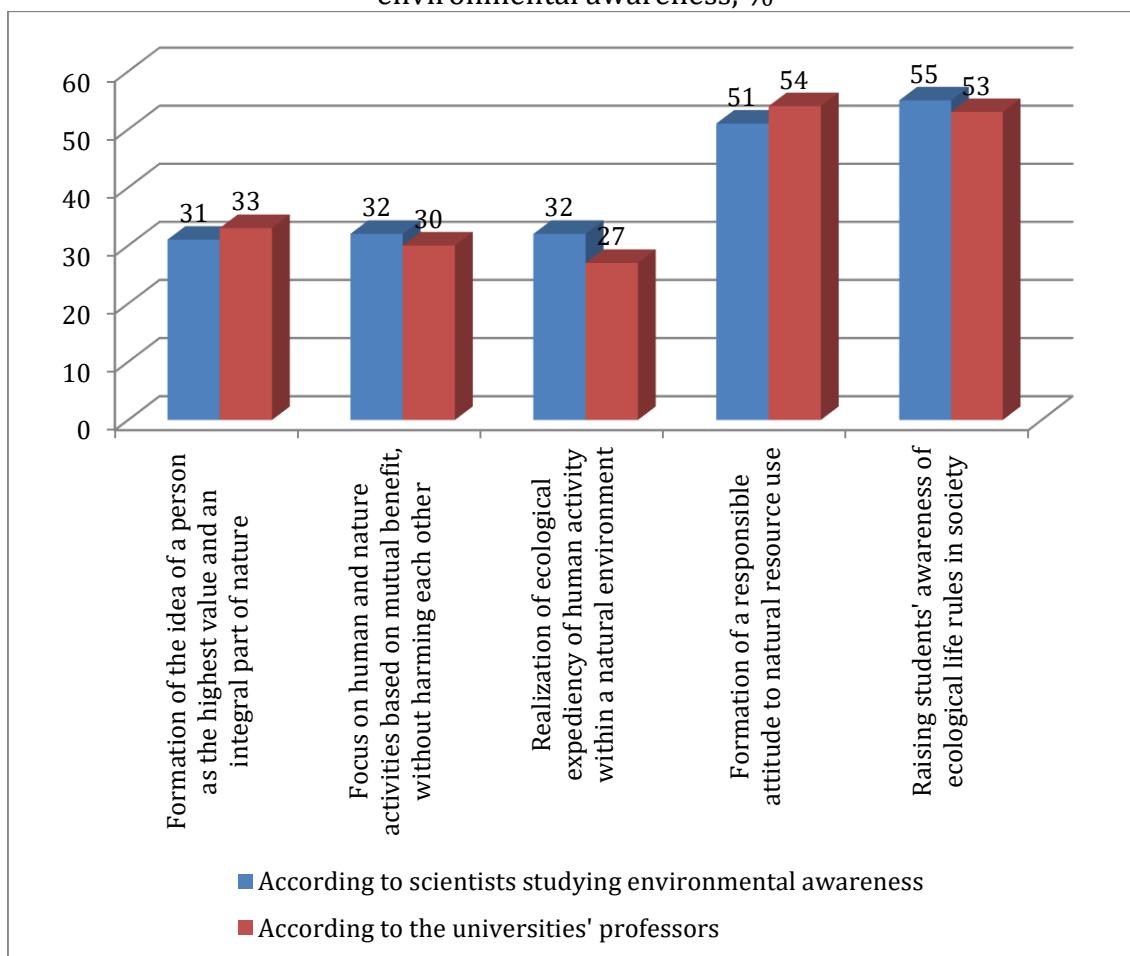
Materials and methods

A practical study of current trends in the development of students' environmental awareness was conducted by interviewing 251 scientists who work on environmental awareness and 221 university professors who conduct scientific research in 27 higher education institutions in Poltava, Khmelnytskyi, Lviv, Odesa, and Kyiv regions of Ukraine. The authors of this research conducted the survey using the Google Forms service.

Results

According to the survey participants, today, the main tasks of social media tools in developing teenagers' environmental awareness should be as follows (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – The main tasks of social media tools in the development of students' environmental awareness, %

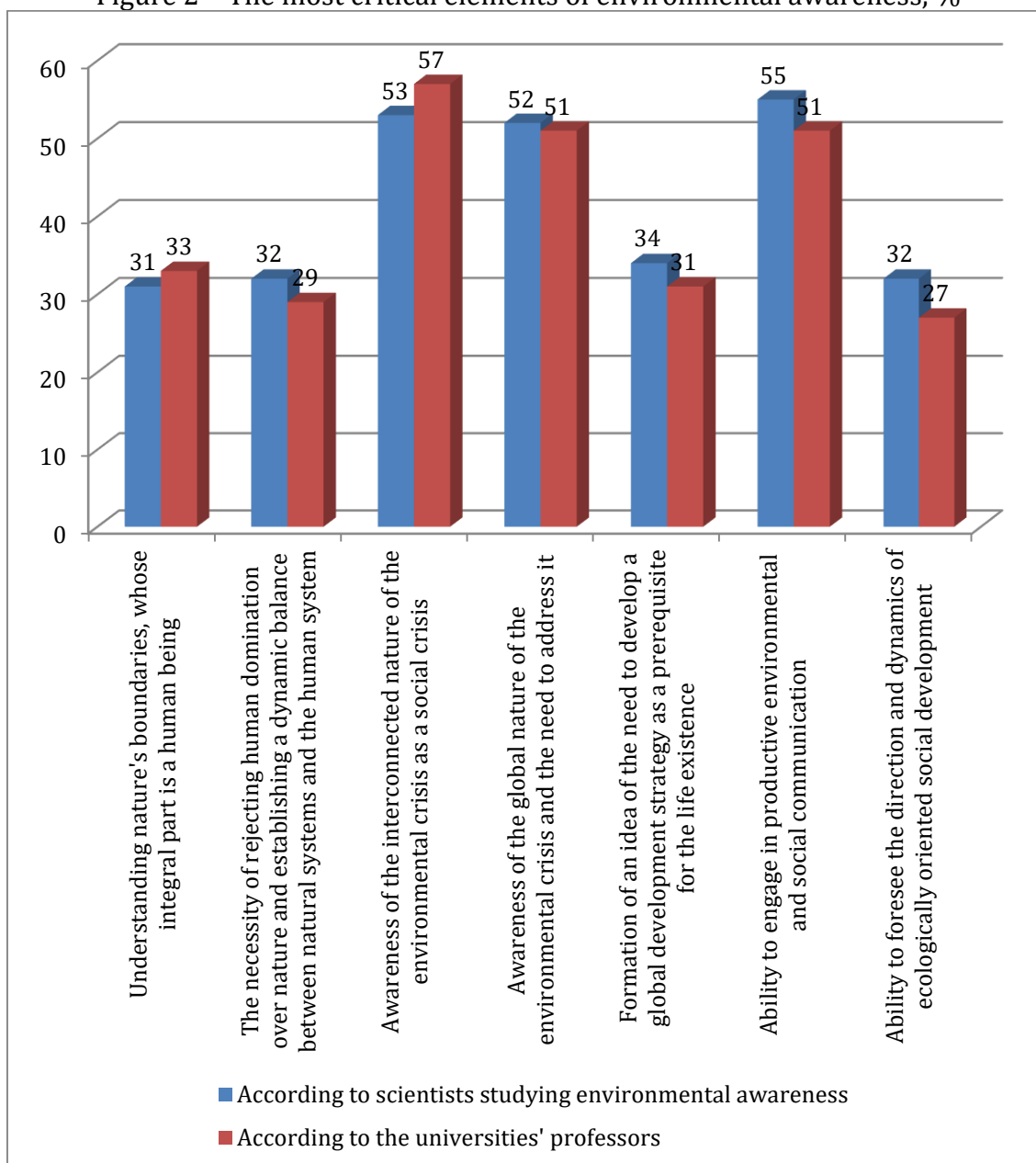


Source: compiled by the authors.

As Figure 1 shows, the key tasks of social media tools in developing students' environmental awareness are to form a responsible attitude to using natural resources and to raise students' awareness about the rules of eco-friendly living in society.

The respondents identified the most critical elements of environmental awareness while completing the survey (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – The most critical elements of environmental awareness, %



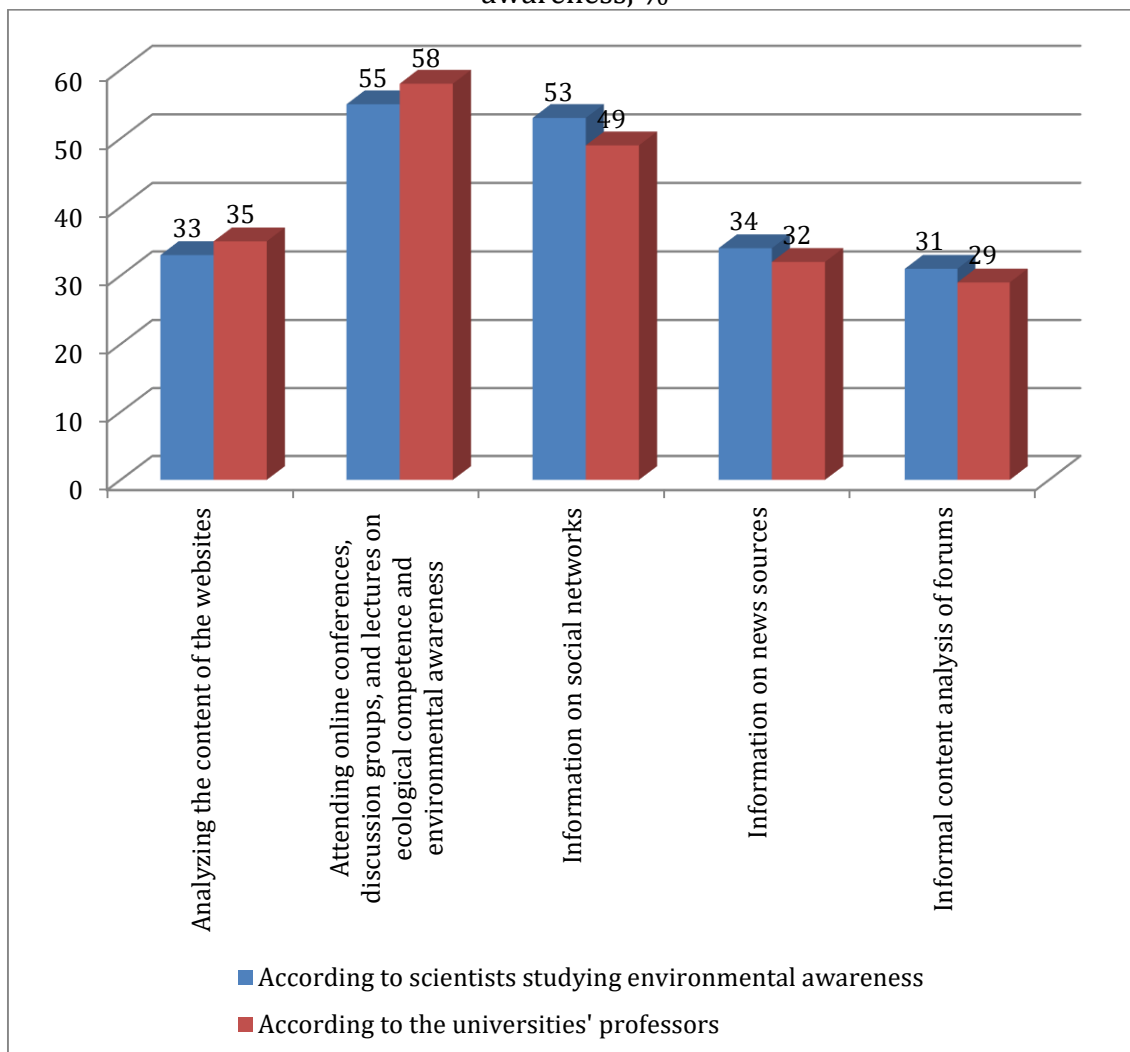
Source: compiled by the authors.

According to the survey, the key elements of environmental awareness are the awareness of the nature of the ecological crisis as a social crisis interconnection, the understanding of the global scope of the ecological crisis and the need to solve it, and the ability to engage in productive environmental and social communication.

According to the respondents, the leading information sources for the development of students' environmental awareness are (Figure 3):

- attending online conferences, roundtables, and lectures on ecological competence and environmental awareness;
- information from social networks.

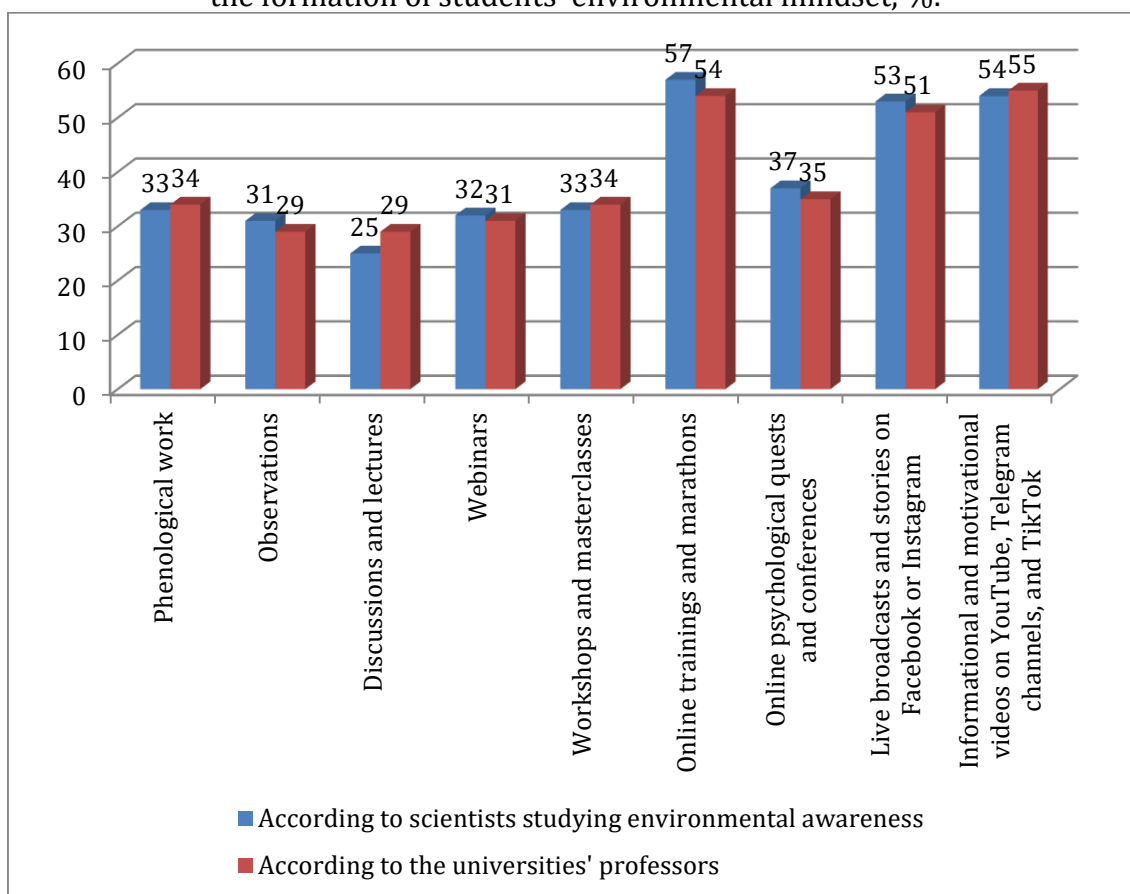
Figure 3 – Information sources for the development of students' environmental awareness, %



Source: compiled by the authors.

An important result of the survey is identifying the most preferred social media tools that should be given the most attention during the learning process of higher education institutions to optimize the formation of students' environmental mindset (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – The most preferred social media tools that should be given the most attention during the learning process of higher education institutions to optimize the formation of students' environmental mindset, %.



Source: compiled by the authors.

The survey results show that the most effective and requiring special attention to stimulate their use in learning to develop students' environmental awareness are online trainings and marathons, live broadcasts and stories on Facebook or Instagram, and informational and motivational videos on YouTube, Telegram channels and TikTok.

Discussion

Nowadays, most experts consider the essence of the environmental education concept primarily in terms of the modern and promising direction of the general continuous educational process aimed at forming a personality that will

meet the requirements of civilization at the beginning of the XXI century and can respond to the current challenges of social development. Such challenges include the aggravation of environmental problems in the world in the second half of the XX century. Environmental education is necessary to solve them (Budihardjo et al., 2021; Sachs et al., 2019).

Most people's environmental awareness develops spontaneously. This process requires the formation of scientific, ideologically interpreted knowledge to structure it. It is important to remember that the formation of environmental awareness is a process of reorientating an active position and means a person's careful attitude to nature and conscious environmental activity (Francisco et al., 2021).

Today, greening the educational process in both preschool and general education institutions and higher education is particularly important in forming multi-level environmental education.

Environmental education in higher education institutions is characterized by developing young people's organizational skills, for example, in conducting environmental activities that seek to independently solve a specific environmental problem with practical results (Skrypnyk, Shevchenko & Zamoroka, 2021).

Social media play an essential role in raising environmental awareness of society (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021).

It applies equally to radio and television programs and the use of environmental topics in the entire information complex of society. Today, there are many sources of information that can be attributed to media resources, such as the publication of scientific and methodological literature, book and illustrated exhibitions, classes in secondary schools, a large number of television programs devoted to environmental issues, online conferences and lectures at universities among students, websites, and other Internet resources (Mallick & Bajpai, 2019; Chen & Xiao, 2022).

For environmental beliefs to become real drivers of human behavior, they must reach a certain level of maturity and focus. A comparative analysis of scientific sources shows that studenthood is the most sensitive period for forming an

ecological attitude toward oneself and the world. This attitude emerges through information gathering, learning, self-education, and communication. One of the ways teenagers learn about the modern world is through the Internet, interactive communication in social networks, group posts, etc. (Unterhalter et al., 2018; Kousar et al., 2022).

Conclusions

The analysis of the scientific literature on the study topic and the questionnaire survey results showed that the effective development of environmental awareness of a modern student, who perceives information from social networks mostly uncritically and unsystematically, is possible only with a comprehensive impact and systematic work.

The competent integration of traditional and modern methods of psychological and pedagogical influence contributes to the formation of the competence of independent cognitive activity of students. Furthermore, it allows them to consciously perceive and understand environmental information from social networks and other sources. According to this, adequately formed environmental awareness and environmental imagination of teenagers will help them analyze the factors that caused the modern alienation of nature and society and the deepening of the ecological crisis on the planet, develop and implement measures to optimize the environmental situation.

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