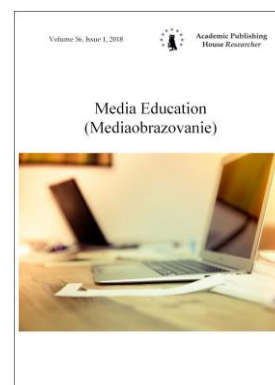




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## Digital-detox Technology for Vocational Guidance Selection of Applicants for Media Communications Area

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of digital-detox technologies. That means different practices, including conscious restriction of person from flow of information, control over a usage of gadgets and the formation of a responsible attitude to media content.

Their relevance is justified by the various changes that are taking place with a modern person in an information overload world. In such conditions each person especially a teenager needs a temporary refusal to use digital devices in order to "clean up" information, achieves a balance between the real and virtual life, and "turn on" communicative and social functions.

The article presents an experience in the use of digital-detox technologies for vocational guidance selection of entrant for training media communications areas. The authors describe the methodology and experience of research implementation based on the digital-detox camp "Offliner", in which teenagers were offered to completely abandon the use of digital devices for two days in exchange for offline interactions and familiarity with the directions of their future profession.

The research results presented in the article confirmed the effectiveness of digital-detox technologies for the improvement of communication skills and promotes of a model of responsible and environmentally friendly media consumption.

**Keywords:** digital-detox technology, digital-detox camp, media content, communication skills.

### 1. Introduction

The modern world is unthinkable without information technologies, which are associated with the production and processing of large amounts of information. This leads to research that actualizes the principles of harmonious coexistence of people and informational space. For example, how visual ecology relates a person and his environment in terms of visual perception and the impact of it on human well-being (Kolesnikova, 2013: 88). So, the amount of content is generated by the participants of information communication. Today it is not urgent to find information. Much more important thing is to choose information, separating relevant data from information garbage (Denisova, 2016: 22). In this context, digital-detox technologies are gaining special significance as the practice of filtering and limiting information flows. The urgent of the practice is related to the problem of information overload, which is inseparable from term «Information society» (Karavaev, 2013: 67; Webster, 2004: 25).

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The Internet has become the system for storing and transmitting big data, the sphere of realizing human potential and the basis for the formation of a new kind of reality that unites billions of users. The virtual environment has changed person's interests, goals, needs, motives of activity and the style of thinking. In «Communication Power» Manuel Castells claims, that only those who understand this transformation can adapt (Castells, 2007: 238-266). Nowadays, a large number of studies have been accumulated indicating that a high-tech environment deforms a person and affects his moral integrity and spiritual and ethical attitudes (Gnatik, 2017: 271; Kopteva, 2017: 72). The virtual environment has a greater impact on young people who are fluent in technology but are not able to critically perceive information. Social networks have a particularly negative effect on adolescents, reducing their communication skills (Bogdanova, Petrova, 2017: 103-105).

## 2. Materials and methods

The research was conducted in 2019 on the basis of a unique career guidance project of the department of Design and Media Industry Technologies of Omsk State Technical University (OmSTU).

*The purpose of the study* is to test the author's method of career guidance selection of applicants with a high level of involvement in the media communication areas of training of the department, based on the use of digital-detox technologies.

*Research hypothesis:* digital-detox technologies make possible to identify and develop the communication skills of adolescents, as well as form a responsible attitude to communications in the digital environment even before the start of professional training at a university.

In the course of the study, both general scientific theoretical methods and special scientific empirical methods and techniques were used.

1. Theoretical methods (analysis, generalization, deduction) allowed the authors to substantiate the relevance of the problematic within which digital-detox technologies are studied, to develop a basic conceptual apparatus, to consider various positions of researchers on the issues of overload information and deformation of the communication skills of a modern person under the influence of the digital environment, formulate a goal and define a hypothesis for empirical research.

2. Empirical research methods included preparing and conducting ascertaining, formative and control experiments, observing participants, describing and comparing models of their communicative behavior.

During the implementation of the ascertaining and control experiments, specially selected psychodiagnostic techniques were used in the form of testing, which made it possible to determine the level of involvement of the experimental participants (applicants) in educational areas in the field of media communications.

The formative experiment involved the organization of an anti-digital camp for applicants who had to completely abandon the use of digital devices and technologies for two days, and also actively participate in various formats of real interaction and interpersonal communication with each other.

So, the formative experiment assumed the use of the author's methodology based on the inclusion of digital-detox technologies in the process of career guidance training and selection of applicants. This made it possible to maximize the communicative potential of participants and develop a model of responsible behavior in the digital environment for them, to form a critical attitude to the content of media products.

## 3. Discussion

The problem of perceiving network information is mentioned in the works of J. Habermas, H. Arendt, E. Durkheim, who unanimously express the idea of the negative consequences of technology for teenagers. In conditions of redundancy and chaotic information flow, adolescents have the opportunity to use any Internet resources and create and post their own content on the network (Kozlova, 2018: 81-82).

The constant availability of social networking sites on smartphones has an enormous distracting potential and may lead to problematic usage behavior, especially among younger age groups. In this context, an emerging trend of using so-called digital detox applications (apps; e.g., iOS Screen Time) can be witnessed, which allows users to monitor and limit their smartphone

use as well as to consciously disconnect for a certain period of time. However, it remains unclear whether digital detox apps can indeed reduce negative consequences of using social networking sites such as problematic smartphone use and decreased well-being. Drawing from self-regulation theory, D. Schmuck investigated the relationships between using social networking sites, problematic smartphone use, and well-being among a sample of 500 young adults between 18 and 35 years of age. Thus, digital detox apps seem to be a valuable tool to prevent harmful effects of using SNSs on well-being among young people by reducing the risk of using the smartphone compulsively (Schmuck, 2020: 526-532).

New media provides new sources of information and communication that are crucial for participatory behaviors. Therefore, scholars conceptualize new media literacy that citizens should have to function successfully in this digital era (Tugtekin, Koc, 2020: 1922-1941). All this necessitates the formation of media competence and a model of responsible behavior in the digital environment among the younger generation (Kirillova, 2006: 62; Zhokhova, 2017: 199).

The flow of information constantly passing through the human brain often deprives him of the ability to adequately respond to the environment, makes him depressed (Anashkina, 2016: 56). In this state, the possibility of adequate mutual reflection and self-reflection is significantly reduced, the disappearance of the most important components of personality formation is recorded: deterioration of detailed figurative memory, transformation of oral speech, destruction of role-playing, etc (Tkhostov, 2016: 122; Yudina, 2017: 53). In modern psychiatry and psychology, this is explained by the so-called "Google effect", when a person is sure that "systemic knowledge, the acquisition of which requires intellectual efforts and time, he does not need, because this function is performed for him by the Internet" (Andreev, 2015: 207).

T.D.W. Wilcockson, A.M. Osborne and D.A. Ellis compare behavioural addiction of using smartphone to craving. These imply that abstinence from a related object (e.g., smartphones for heavy smartphone users) would lead to mood fluctuations alongside increased levels of anxiety and craving (Wilcockson et al., 2019).

Using her ethnographic work in a North American digital detox retreat, T. Sutton considers an anthropological approach to digital harm and addiction that emphasizes their socially constructed nature. Following the view that digital harms are socially constructed, she argues that digital technology will be removed in different places for different reasons, and that geographically bound cultural values are vital to understanding how digital harms come to be imagined and counteracted. Whether or not digital use will ever be proven to be clinically harmful, digital harm is best viewed as a «social fact» (Sutton, 2020: 17-22).

Discussing the problem of forming young specialists capable of navigating the interdisciplinary space of technoscience, M.V. Kovalchuk notes that "the mass of today's youth is not able to listen, speak, perceive for a long time, and this is due precisely to their passion for computers, the Internet, and pseudo-information. Our task is to select those students who have not formed a cluster consciousness, those who remain thinkers" (Persikova, Yatsishina, 2015: 111).

In such conditions, an accurate assessment of the available opportunities is necessary so that the transfer of high technologies is oriented towards development, and not towards destruction of the personality (Vozchikov, 2007: 5). Digital detoxification technologies are one of the factors that make it possible to neutralize the negative consequences of information overload.

In the Oxford Dictionary, the term "digital-detox" appeared eight years ago. They define a set of different practices aimed at deliberately abandoning digital gadgets in order to achieve a balance between the real and virtual world. The concept of digital detoxification is associated with the concept of media asceticism. This is a way of life, which is characterized by understanding the work of technologies and gadgets, their rational use, and not abandoning them (Soloviev, Belous, 2014: 79). The respond to the modern crisis defined by the fracture, anger, anxiety, nervousness, and information overload is the nostalgia for the 1990s. It is manifesting across a number of cultural fields, including television, music, and celebrity (Ewen, 2020: 574-580).

Various directions of digital-detox that exist in the world refer us to the criticism of the consumer society, the media-ecological concepts of M. McLuhan and N. Postman, to the digital asceticism of D.J. Siegel, D. Roc and J. Kabat-Zinn and the popularization of meditation techniques.

An analysis of using digital-detox technologies in Russia and abroad allows to form the next classification. It is mobile applications for the development of environmentally friendly media consumption, specialized educational courses, television projects and camps.

The key point in the study of digital-detox technologies is understanding that it is not full rejection of media products. It is the technology of rejection and regulation of digital flows. In the book “How to survive without Internet after overdose” T. Croise describes his own experience of turning off. “The best way to rethink using of technologies is to cut yourself off the Internet to understand that benefits it gives, and also to establish the limits of your future being online” (Croise, 2014: 15).

The rules, governing the interaction of humans and digital technologies, are in the stage of formation and fixation (Kozlova et al., 2019: 281). The example is a book “Modern manners: tools to take you to the top” of the American etiquette’s expert Dorothea Johnson and Hollywood actress Liv Tyler. In that book there is a description of using the smartphone in the public place (Johnson, Tyler, 2013).

Phubbing’s limitations and implications are discussed in the M.A. Liebert’s research. Such behaviors that interrupt social interactions have been described as phubbing. The present study focused on phubbing behaviors within the context of parent-child households and aimed to examine the associations among parents' phubbing, the parent-child relationship, children's self-esteem, and problematic mobile phone use by adolescents (Liebert, 2019: 779-786).

Technological ill-being is an expression of the tension between an individual’s social attributes and aspirations when using modern IT and a system of norms, rules, and values imposing constraints on him or her. A. Leclercq-Vandelannoitte considers the ethical issues introduced by excessive uses of ubiquitous information technology at work have received little attention, from either practitioners or ethics scholars. This article suggests the concept of technological ill-being and explores the ethical issues arising from such ill-being, according to the individual and collective responsibilities associated with their negative effects (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2019: 339-361).

Considering the issue of the digital-detox more global, Manchester Metropolitan University scientists puts forward a concept of “digital disengagement” to discuss new socio-cultural, economic and political demarcations and implications surrounding the relationship between digital media, culture and society. At present, despite a proliferation of calls to reduce both the range of digital devices and communication platforms, and the time spent using them, and despite a growing body of academic work on disconnection or opt-out, disengagement from the digital is still conceptualised by media research as a spatiotemporal or an ideological aberration. To challenge this framework, they propose a paradigmatic shift and invite digital media scholarship to denaturalise the digital by centring digital disengagement both as a complex phenomenon currently unfolding and as a conceptual entry point into thinking about sociality, agency, rights and everyday life more broadly (Kuntsman, Miyake, 2019: 901-913).

Now the interest to digital-detox technologies is growing in order to integration with tourism, catering, fashion, beauty, sport, education and other industries. For example, the problem of technology overuse – and related mental health and addiction issues – has spilled over into the tourism context. Recent literature has also suggested that heavy use of technology while travelling could potentially have negative impacts on the overall tourist experience; and that tourists might search for “disconnection” while travelling. As a result, this study focuses on the recently emerged and scarcely understood phenomenon of “digital free tourism”, exploring participants' motivations for voluntarily abstaining from, or limiting their use of, technology on their travels. The findings aid relevant theory by identifying four main factors that motivate tourists to participate in digital free tourism – escape, personal growth, health and well-being, relationships – and highlight several exploratory subthemes underlying these motivators. Considering digital free tourism not as an inconvenience but a travel choice, this study can finally aid practitioners to better promote digital free tourism as a tourism product; maximizing the participants' related benefits and positive experiences (Egger et al., 2020).

In another example M. Szablewicz describes the work experience with the students in order to courses Media and Society, Introduction to Mass Media, Digital Culture. Students describe dominant news media discourse about digital and social media, elucidate connections between dominant discourse and the perceived effects of technology and recognize and critique arguments that rely upon reductionist theories about the nature of technological change (Szablewicz, 2019: 180-184).

According to the forecasts of researchers, the digital-detox direction will last until 2030 and will cover new areas of our life, including education. In this regard, the effectiveness of using

digital-detox technologies in pedagogical practice requires additional analysis and scientific assessment within the framework of empirical research.

#### 4. Results

The study was conducting from 13<sup>th</sup> of May to 12<sup>th</sup> of July in 2019 in order to career guidance activities of department Design and Media Industry Technologies, Omsk State Technical University (OmSTU). This department is an example of technical and humanitarian areas of training integration. There are three areas of training: "Informational systems and technologies", "Advertising and public relations in commercial sphere" and "Design in media industry". This collaboration means teaching the digital technologies, which is need to creating modern media products. So, it is urgent to form the model of responsible student's behavior in the network, because it is their future professional area.

The research was based on a vocational guidance project unique for Russian pedagogical practice. The project is a digital-detox camp, organized in the resort area of the Omsk region. It was attended by 36 applicants, 12 curators and organizers, 4 associate professors and 2 senior lecturers of the Department of Design and Technologies of the Media Industry. The idea of digital-detox camp is complete abandon all digital devices (smartphones, personal computers, smart watch, etc.) for two days in exchange for offline activities and live interpersonal communication with new people.

All information about digital-detox camp was posted on the website and in the official groups of the project *Vkontakte* and *Instagram*, and was also actively disseminated through students and applicants enrolled in preparatory courses for the Unified State Exam in social studies at OmSTU and OmSU.

Targeted advertising in the indicated social networks was also used, which contained the following information: "Are you planning to become a student of the OmSTU? Welcome to our world! The world of live communication, emotions and hobbies! The world of people living here and now! Welcome to the most daring project of OmSTU. This is digital-detox camp "Offliner"! Pass the selection and become part of our creative team! Life online!" The targeting period was 30 days (from April the 1<sup>st</sup> to April the 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019), the coverage was 4388 people.

Thus, by May 1, 312 applications were received from Omsk schoolchildren of 11th grade, as well as students of technical schools and colleges of the last year of study. The selection of 36 applicants to participate in the digital-detox camp was based on a simple random sample in accordance with the number of places provided.

Psychological and pedagogical research was carried out through ascertaining, formative and control experiments.

*The aim of the ascertaining experiment* is to find out the level of the involvement to media communication (advertising, public relations, journalism, copywriting, SMM, etc.).

In order to ascertaining experiment, the diagnostics was carried out, using three psychological techniques:

1) Diagnostics of communicative and organizational inclinations, which involves testing on 40 closed questions of a psychological test and allows to determine the level of development of these personality traits (Fetiskin et al., 2002: 184-186).

2) Diagnostics of the ability to self-government in communication. This technique is used when it is necessary to determine the degree of adaptation of a person to various situations in communication and to its participants (Fetiskin et al., 2002: 117-118).

3) Diagnostics of emotional barriers in interpersonal communication V.V. Boyko, which is aimed at identifying the level of communicative control of the tested personality (Fetiskin et al., 2002: 118-119).

The analysis of diagnostics tasks' results allows to form three teams for the digital-detox camp according to level of the involvement to the media communication's area.

There were eight applicants with high level of the involvement to the media communications in the first team. These teenagers have got a need for communicative and organizational activities, they show initiative in communicating with people, easily adapt in a new team and are able to adapt to the communicative behavior of a partner, defend their opinion and are ready for dialogue, know how to control their emotions during communication, including and negative.

There were sixteen applicants in the second team. This is the largest team. The teenagers have got the average level of the involvement to the media communications. These applicants

showed a desire for contacts with new people, but, mainly, with the initiative from a partner, they also had a high need to be in communication with themselves, and not to adapt to the communicative style of the interlocutor, a tendency to partnership in dialogue, but only in the presence of a favorable emotional background of communication, inability to control negative emotions during communication.

There were twelve applicants in team number three. These applicants have got a low level of the involvement to the media communications. They were diagnosed with a weak desire for communication and resentment if the partner is not ready to take the initiative (for example, does not call or does not greet first when meeting), stiffness and awkwardness when interacting with new people. They demonstrated a rigid communication model, an inability to adapt to a communicative situation and emotional instability, which creates significant communication difficulties.

After the ending of the ascertaining experiment three teams became a participants of the digital-detox camp for two days. On camp's basis, a technique, developed by the authors, was applied specifically for conducting a formative experiment.

The technique is based on the complex systematization of theoretical material on digital-detox technologies and their inclusion in the learning process and career guidance selection of applicants. Digital-detox technologies are gaining special relevance today in the context of high teenagers' involvement in digital environment. It is so important to give up digital devices for a short time. This is necessary for information "cleaning", switching to analog activities, "turn on" communicative and social functions.

The use of digital-detox technologies in order to vocational guidance for adolescents is an innovative experience for the Russian education system and pedagogical practice in general. Subsequently, it can be implemented in relation to primary school students. It will allow to instill the hygiene of digital consumption at earlier stages of personality formation.

The aim of the formative experiment is to improve the applicant's communicative skills and to form the model of responsible behavior in the digital environment using the digital-detox technologies. It is necessary to level up the involvement to media communicative professions.

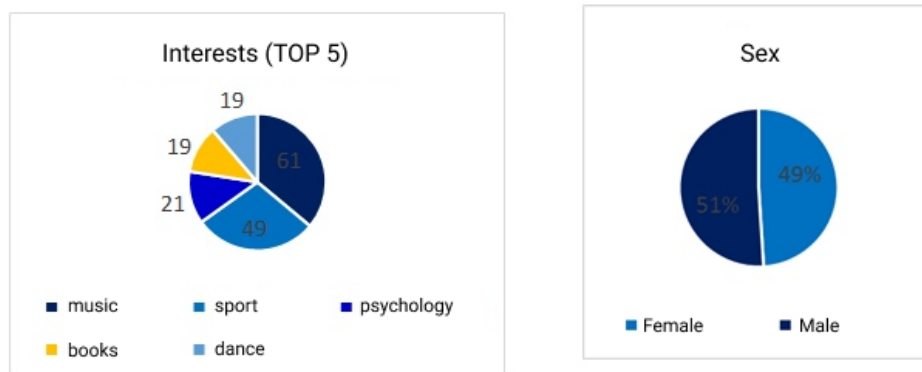
*The development and implementation of the digital-detox camp* included the following aspects.

An important part was played by the format of the experiment and its consonant name "Offliner". The name is derived from the concept "offline" and reflects the concept of the project.

The slogan "Life online" created by the authors, as well as the competitive nature of the tasks for the three teams, were aimed at awakening in the participants the desire to "turn on" and "try" life in a real, not digital dimension.

The visual design of the interior and other elements of the digital-detox camp became important in creating an environment conducive to interpersonal communication with new people, in particular, green and red colors were selected, symbolizing the well-known semantics of "on" and "off" signs.

Special products with digital-detox camp symbols were developed to identify participants. These include name badges, branded T-shirts and caps, pens and notebooks for attending seminars, mosquito repellent for open air tasks. Also, the participants were given signs with "likes", "dislikes" and a series of different "emoji" that they could use when performing tasks. This was done to overcome communication barriers and increase the competitive spirit.



**Fig 1.** Interests of audience

The formative experiment was carried out according to the developed map and the schedule of competitions of three teams in the digital-detox camp "Offliner". When planning the schedule, the need to alternate active tasks, diet and rest for the participants was taken into account. The selection of tasks was based on the analysis of the interests of adolescents. The preferences of the entrants were identified using the web analytics service "Pepper ninja". All applicants were in specialized communities *Vkontakte* for admission to universities.

Camp activities was directed to the achieving goal of the formative experiment. It is the improvement of the applicant's communicative and social skills, leaving the usual digital space and switching to interpersonal communication, not mediated by information technologies, creative self-realization and the formation of a team spirit.

Besides, digital-detox camp "Offliner" was organized not only as research base, but also as a career-oriented image project of the Department of Design and Technologies of the Media Industry, OmSTU. The presence of such youth-oriented events at a university is a significant factor in its competitiveness and affects the recruitment of applicants (Shmatko, 2016: 598).

When planning activities of the digital-detox camp, sponsorship integrations were also envisaged, which made it possible to ensure its prize fund. The competition between the three teams, taking place over two days, was conceptually divided into a red "Day OFF" ("turn off" day) and a green "Day ON" ("turn on" day) (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Digital-detox camp activities

«Day OFF» (6 <sup>th</sup> , June)	«Day ON» (7 <sup>th</sup> , June)
Otkrytyj micrOFFon (offline meeting)	PersONalnaya trenirovka (physical jerks)
Igry prestolOFF (team games)	Bolshye gONki (quest)
PrOFFilaktika na kanale (free time)	Press-kONferentsia so zvezdoy (speaker's performance)
PrOFFessia budushchego (particularized workshops, communications with students and professors of OmSTU)	Gluhoi telefON (team games)
Vmesto tysyachi sIOFF (poetry workshop)	Specialnyj correspondent (public speaking workshop)
Poy, kak KirkorOFF (karaoke battle)	NagradON (rewarding participants, presentation of prizes from sponsors, response from teams)
KinOFFestival (watching a film in the open air and discussing it)	Zakrytie sezONa (summarizing digital-detox camp, making up reviews and comments from teams)
FotOFFinish (creating emoji photos)	










The formative experiment program implied a change in the role of the teachers participating in the digital-detox camp. On the first day, the teachers were the organizers. By their own example, they showed the model of a professional in the field of media communications, which the applicant should be guided by when forming an attitude towards the future profession, digital technologies and the digital environment. On the second day of the digital-detox camp, teachers were in a guiding, corrective and accompanying role, offering teams methods for solving tasks and motivating participants to develop a creative approach to their implementation.

After the completion of the work of the digital-detox camp "Offliner", a *control experiment* was carried out. In the course of the experiment, a repeated diagnosis of the level of involvement of its participants in professions in the field of media communications was carried out. The test results using three psychological methods within the ascertaining and control experiment for comparison are presented in Table 2.

The Table 2 shows, during the control experiment, in the digital-detox camp all three teams showed a positive dynamic in the development of their communication skills and an increase in the level of communicative control. The greatest progress was achieved in the second team, using author's methodology based on the use of digital-detox technologies. Before participating in the formative experiment, applicants, who had an average level of involvement in the media communications, were able to improve their communication skills to a greater extent than applicants

with an initially high and low level. According to the first two diagnostic tests, the results significantly increased, their growth for each member of the second team ranged from 38 % to 67 %.

**Table 2.** Dynamics of the results of control and ascertaining experiments

Technique	Kind of experiment	Dynamics of the results in team № 1 (with high level of involvement in activities in the field of media communications)			Dynamics of the results in team № 2 (with average level of involvement in activities in the field of media communications)			Dynamics of the results in team № 3 (with low level of involvement in activities in the field of media communications)		
		Scoring range according to methodology	Range of points actually scored during the experiment	Character of dynamic	Scoring range according to methodology	Range of points actually scored during the experiment	Character of dynamic	Scoring range according to methodology	Range of points actually scored during the experiment	Character of dynamic
Diagnostics of communicative and organizational inclinations	Ascertaining experiment	13-20	13-17	positive 	8-12	9-12	positive 	7≤	4-7	positive 
	Control experiment		15-18			15-17			6-8	
Self-management ability diagnostics during communication	Ascertaining experiment	17-25	17-18	positive 	8-16	11-16	positive 	7≤	6-7	positive 
	Control experiment		20-23			19-22			7-10	
Diagnosis of emotional barriers in interpersonal communication	Ascertaining experiment	6≤	5-6	positive 	6-12	9-12	positive 	≤13	13-18	None 
	Control experiment		4-5			7-10			12-18	

The rate of positive dynamics in the first two tests in the first team and the third team with high and low level of involvement in professions of media communications was lower. The control experiment showed an increase the results of the participants of both teams from 17 % to 57 %.

Digital-detox technologies to a lesser extent had an impact on the elimination of emotional barriers in interpersonal communication. Table 2 shows that, according to the third test, the greatest positive dynamic was observed, as in the first two tests, in the second team. Nine of the twelve members of the third team did not show any dynamics when assessing emotional barriers in interpersonal communication. The results of their testing during the ascertaining and control experiments did not change.

Thus, during the approbation of the author's methodology, based on the use of digital-detox technologies in the learning process and career guidance selection of applicants, positive dynamics of varying degrees was recorded. This allows to speak about the relevance of further research and



the feasibility of expanding the empirical base for assessing the impact of digital-detox on personality formation.

## 5. Conclusion

The research, carried out on the basis of a unique career guidance project digital-detox camp “Offliner” of the Department of Design and Media Industry Technologies of OmSTU, led to positive results in several areas at once. From a scientific point of view, the main goal was achieved. The author's method of career guidance selection of applicants with a high level of involvement in media communication areas was tested. The effectiveness of using digital-detox technologies for identifying and developing the communication skills of adolescents, as well as forming their responsible attitude to communications in digital environment.

To provide a more professionally oriented enrolling for media communication specialties of OmSTU, a high interest in digital-detox was confirmed by the applicants. Seven participants of the digital-detox camp from the first team, fourteen participants from the second teams and four participants from the third team entered in 2019 at OmSTU for educational programs “Information systems and technologies in the media industry” and “Advertising and public relations in the commercial sphere”.

From the point of view of the implementation of important strategic tasks of OmSTU, the digital-detox camp has become one of the projects on the basis of which an “opportunities environment” is created for university entrants and students, initiatives are generated, professional and social self-realization is carried out. In the opinion of the authors, the approved format of the digital-detox camp can become not only an annual career guidance event of the Omsk State Technical University, but also a socially significant project for the Omsk region.

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