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Media Resources in the Raising of Prosocial Behavior of Schoolchildren

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Abstract

One of the relevant and insufficiently developed topics in modern education is the use of a media-educational approach in the education of prosocial behavior of schoolchildren. The purpose of the article is to study the prosocial content of the popular VKontakte media resource, as well as to identify the attitude of teenagers to posts asking for help in social networks. Research methods: analysis of scientific literature, quantitative and qualitative analysis, focus group method. The sample included students of grades 8-9 (n = 34 people). As a result of the study, it turned out that the most popular areas of prosocial activity in VKontakte among subscribers are calls for help to animals and solving environmental problems. Schoolchildren are interested in charity content, especially presented in photo, video, and short personal history formats, but they do not read posts that cause negative emotions and, in general, do not trust calls for help. Most teenagers call helping another person an important thing, sharing the humanistic principles of helping. Due to the popularity among schoolchildren, social networks are an effective tool for broadcasting altruism, empathy, values of helping other people and society, which allows them to be used in media education of prosocial activity of adolescents.

Keywords: social networks, teenagers, media education, prosocial behavior, altruism, empathy.

1. Introduction

Modern schoolchildren communicate, express themselves, study and socialize not only in the real, but also in the virtual world of the Internet. In the Decade of Childhood, digital media became the most popular pastime for children and teenagers. Teenagers spend up to 8 hours a day on gadgets, in addition to the time spent using media for educational purposes, while recognizing that they like media activity (watching online videos, video games, using social networks, delayed TV viewing) (Rideout, Robb, 2019).

The pandemic of the new coronavirus infection COVID-19 has intensified this effect from 2020. For years, the word "online" has become the dominant educational practice in Russian schools. Online learning and online education has become a reality of modern school life.

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Traditional models of school educational work are steadily giving way to media educational and network approaches.

Today's digital environment is not just a huge flow of information where you can get news and entertainment, but also, most importantly, a platform for communication the practitioner. According to E.L. Vartanova, "one-dimensional" media – those that do not provide the opportunity to ensure communication in addition to information, will not bring the audience back (Vartanova, 2021). A significant part of the life of teenagers is activity in social networks. According to WCIOM (WCIOM, 2019), 89 % of teenagers log into social networks every day, spending 4-5 hours a day watching content, chatting with friends and playing online games (Bányai et al, 2017).

However, new educational standards emphasize the need for personal development, the formation of socially significant knowledge, and the acquisition of experience in socially significant cases. One of the tasks is to create conditions for the formation of a humanistic worldview, a stable system of moral, civic and patriotic values of modern youth.

Our research is aimed at studying the influence of media on the prosocial behavior of schoolchildren, their perception of prosocial media content, emotional and cognitive reactions, motivation to help, readiness to transfer online prosociality into real life. Given the data on media consumption, we assumed that teenagers positively perceive prosocial content posted on social networks.

2. Materials and methods

Research design. To identify the most popular prosocial problems on the Internet, a content analysis of the topics of the posts of prosocial groups with the participation of schoolchildren was carried out.

To study teenagers' perception of prosocial content in social networks qualitative research using a phenomenological approach was chosen in the networks. This approach is an inductive and descriptive method that facilitates the understanding of human experience (Merriam, 2009). To ensure transparency and study rigor, summary criteria for qualitative research reporting (COREQ) were applied (Tong et al, 2007).

The object of the analysis was the social network VKontakte. The study was conducted in two stages. At the first stage, the most successful social projects were studied VKontakte with the participation of schoolchildren. Their popularity was studied by a quantitative method based on a thematic query in the search engine. At the second stage, a focus group study was conducted. Students answered questions related to the perception of prosocial content, based on the results of which the influence of media on the value-motivational, emotional and cognitive spheres of schoolchildren was assessed. Texts, images, audio and video fragments of the news feed were offered as incentive material VKontakte, available on request "#charity".

The methodology of the study was based on a questionnaire developed by us (Appendix), revealing the attitude of schoolchildren to prosocial behavior and consisting of two parts. In the first part, the students expressed their attitude to charity on social networks, the second part was dedicated to their reactions to the current query "# charity" in the social network VKontakte.

Ethical Considerations. The methodical council of the school gave ethical approval. The consent was obtained from the parents or legal representatives of the students. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and that all conversations would be recorded. The participants were volunteers and could opt out of the study at any time.

Participants. A total of 34 people were included in the study. The inclusion criteria were: (a) a student of the Bunkov school of the Ivanovo region; (b) age 14-15 years; (c) participants could adequately express emotional states; (d) willingness to participate voluntarily; (e) having a personal account on a social network Vkontakte. The required sample size was determined, and four focus groups were conducted from 7 to 10 people each who met the inclusion criteria.

Data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted between January and February 2022. The interview questions presented in the Appendix were formulated by the authors in accordance with the objectives of the study. The moderators had academic degrees of doctors of psychological sciences, were trained and had experience in qualitative research. A teacher of Russian language and literature working with schoolchildren took part in the study.

The interview lasted 45 minutes (school lesson). Two co-authors conducted interviews, one recorded and analyzed the answers in detail participants, including nonverbal behavior and expressions during each interview. Each participant received a small gift – a black Xiaomi gel pen

as a reward for participation. The information saturation of the data was achieved and verified after 4 interviews.

Data analysis. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed within 24 hours after the interview. Topics and subtopics were independently extracted from the data by experienced researchers using a seven-step phenomenological method (Colaizzi, 1978). All participants at the end were had read and agreed with the content of the interview recordings. Quantitative analysis (calculation of percentages) was also used to process the results of the study.

3. Discussion

An approximate program of education for general educational organizations developed in 2019 by the Institute of Education Development Strategy of RAE sets the task of "prosocial self-realization of schoolchildren" in the framework of extracurricular activities through "participation in volunteer actions, activities for the benefit of specific people and the social environment as a whole." It is noted that education should be carried out through "the organization of socially useful activities that give children the opportunity to get an important experience for their personal development of activities aimed at helping other people, their school, society as a whole; to develop in themselves such qualities as caring, respect, the ability to empathize, the ability to communicate, listen and hear others".

The listed tasks actualize the importance of prosocial behavior among schoolchildren, which is focused on bringing benefits to others and society as a whole (Eisenberg et al., 2006), and also gives personal advantages. Compared to other peers, prosocial adolescents have higher academic performance at school, better interpersonal relationships, they are less aggressive, earn higher salaries when they become adults (Eron et al., 1987; Vergunst et al., 2019). Prosocial behavior can lead to a sense of happiness and well-being (Aknin et al., 2013; Martela at Ryan, 2016), assessed as safe for society (Kislyakov, Shmeleva, 2018; 2021).

Thus, understanding how the experience of using digital media contributes to the development of the prosociality of adolescents can give advantages to both the individual and society. The stated problems are extremely relevant, since teachers and psychologists face a number of tasks related to the formation of prosocial behavior at different age stages in an increasingly popular digital environment for schoolchildren.

Adolescence is a sensitive period for the development of prosocial skills and personality traits (Patton et al., 2016; Soto, Tackett, 2015). At this time, not only physical, but also cognitive changes occur affecting social functioning. Specific features of adolescents' neurodevelopment, such as increased emotional reactivity, susceptibility to peer influence, impulsivity and the desire for novelty, make them sensitive to environmental influences, including digital media (Lee et al., 2014). During this period, prosocial behavior moves from the family context to the context of peers (van Rijsewijk et al., 2016). In adolescence, prosocial content may have a longer lasting effect than in adulthood (Bushman, Huesmann, 2006), growing self-reliance may allow adolescents to participate in a wide range of prosocial activities.

Numerous studies have been devoted to the study of prosocial behavior abroad and in Russia (Batson, 1987; Carlo, Randall, 2002; Kislyakov, Shmeleva, 2018, 2020, 2021; Kukhtova, 2021; Padilla-Walker, 2018), but the study of the influence of the rapidly developing media environment on the formation of adolescent prosociality still requires the attention of researchers.

Studies that do not always appear in the scientific discourse of psychology differ in consistency and integrity. In our opinion, there are several reasons for that:

1. Complexity and multidimensionality of the object of study. Modern researchers understand prosocial behavior as a construct that includes various types, goals, forms of social actions, motivation, degree of cost, results (Carlo, Randall, 2002; Coyne et al., 2018; Padilla-Walker, 2018), which makes it difficult to create global diagnostic tools and creates difficulties in interpreting the results.

2. The study of prosocial trends in the media environment is problematized by the incredibly rapid pace of the evolution of digital technologies and gadgets. Often researchers do not have enough time to respond to these changes. Thus, Western studies did not respond to the appearance of Facebook in 2004, to the appearance of smartphones, especially iPhone in 2007, which globally changed the current digital context. Errevgers and co-authors, studying the use of digital media by teenagers in 2017, were forced to adapt the EU Kids online questionnaire, because respondents no longer understood some points ("visiting chats", "using file sharing sites").

Messengers and social networks have replaced visiting chats, most respondents did not know what file-sharing chats were (Erreygers et al., 2018a).

3. The imbalance in research attention towards "bad content" and negative media effects compared to positive content and positive effects. There is a paradoxical fact: prosocial behavior on the Internet is much more widespread than antisocial, while much less has been studied (Erreygers et al., 2018b; Greer, 2018). Only recent studies have focused on the potential positive aspects of media use, recognizing that Mass media plays a key role in the social life of adolescents (Hjetland et al., 2021).

By prosocial media resources social media (television, websites and mobile applications, volunteer pages in social networks, prosocially oriented computer games, etc.) are meant, that promote the values of voluntary helping behavior that is carried out in an electronic context (the context of social networks), with the intention of bringing benefits to specific others or promoting harmonious relationships with others" (Erreygers et al., 2018a). Examples of online prosocial behavior are: comforting a friend with the help of digital technologies, exchanging resources and information online with a classmate, and helping peers on social networking sites.

Belgian researchers exclude online donations to charities, online volunteering and assistance to online organizations from the online prosocial behavior of adolescents, since prosocial behavior focuses on specific other people and on the relational nature of behavior among teenagers (Erreygers et al., 2018). Foreign studies have shown that prosocial media can develop empathy, reduce aggression, cause prosocial emotions underlying prosocial behavior. D.A. Gentile and colleagues found that prosocial video games are associated with more frequent help and collaboration (Gentile et al., 2009). A study by R. de Leeuw and her colleagues showed that prosocial news, in which teenagers demonstrated helpful behavior, encouraged teenage viewers to donate money or create a project for a charity (De Leeuw et al., 2015). Research conducted by Sarah Coyne and colleagues (Coyne et al., 2018), found a positive association between viewing prosocial media content and prosocial behavior towards strangers, but no impact when it came to donations and volunteering. S. Erreygers et al. developed a scale to assess the involvement of adolescents in prosocial behavior on the Internet and proved the influence of online games, some audiovisual content on prosocial experiences, and also established a positive correlation between prosocial behavior offline using digital media (Erreygers et al., 2018a).

Studies of parental participation in media consumption by (Holmgren et al., 2019), L. Padilla-Walker (Padilla-Walker et al., 2018) have shown that supportive active control is the only parental monitoring strategy that promotes prosocial behavior of adolescents through exposure to prosocial media content.

A study of the Minnesota teen community revealed a positive relationship between moderate levels of Facebook social network usage and volunteering, which led to taking into consideration the potential that social networking sites as tools have to attract the younger generation of volunteers (Lee, 2019). Researchers acknowledge the fact that the potential aspects of the social networks usage on the adole online prosocial behavior have not been studied sufficiently (Lysenstøen et al., 2021, Schønning et al., 2020).

4. Results

Semi-structured interviews provided a platform for studying teenagers' perception of prosocial content on the VKontakte social network. Based on the data analysis, three topics were identified: (a) attitude to prosocial issues, (b) emotional reactions to prosocial content, (c) cognitive aspects. The detailed characteristics of the participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants characteristics

Characteristics	Amount (%) or average
Sex	
Male	14
Female	20
Age	14,6
Grade	
8	12
9	22

Based on the analysis of the content of the VKontakte social network, the most popular pro-social projects were identified by the criterion of the largest number of subscribers, presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Prosocial projects on the VKontakte social network

Field	Project title	Number of subscribers (per) *
Ecology	Ecology of Russia	354600
	Ecosphere: ecology + technology = life	39500
	EcO One Ecology and Technology	12300
	Plant a forest	15100
	The Green Bull	7400
	These funny animals	275000
	All-Russian Animal Protection Movement	53000
Helping homeless animals	White Fang. Society for the Protection of Homeless Animals	43000
	Give a paw	38000
	Give the good	38000
	The knackers.no	32000
	Cultural volunteers, an all-Russian project	3900
Culture volunteers	Cultural volunteers, regional project (Ivanovo region)	290
	Assistance to war veterans	126000
Assistance to people with disabilities	Victory volunteers	126000
	Time is priceless	8900
	Green marathon <i>Running Hearts</i>	7600
	Gulfstream	6100
	Ekaterina Inozemtseva Charitable Foundation	4900

* rounded up to hundreds

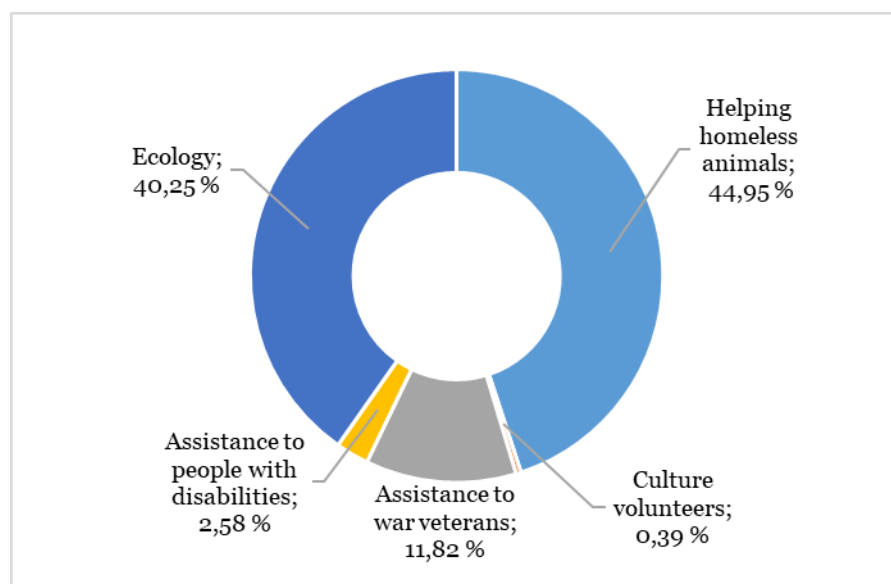


Fig. 1. The popularity of prosocial topics in the social network VKontakte

Social networks are an important resource for attracting volunteers and creating conditions for online volunteering. Tens and hundreds of thousands of subscribers, a lot of likes and comments indicate the relevance of the topic. The VKontakte social network is considered as a suitable platform for creating media projects.

O. Petrova and colleagues implemented the idea of teenagers searching for heroes for their posts and preparing material about them, which had an impact on a stable motivation to talk about the chosen character, to exchange media in social networks, to comprehend heroism from a social point of view, to active behavior in social networks, self-realization and socialization (Petrova, Belyakova, 2020).

The most popular prosocial topics for teenagers on the VKontakte network include projects aimed at helping homeless animals and solving environmental problems (85 %); there is an order of magnitude fewer subscribers in the directions "helping veterans", "helping people with disabilities", cultural volunteers (12 %, 3 %, 0 %, respectively). These results correspond to our earlier study of students' preferences in choosing volunteer activities (Kislyakov et al., 2019). Such a choice can be explained both by teenagers' understanding of the problems of ecosystem conservation, and by their mastered activity in the process of educational work of schools.

Content with environmental themes and animals evokes strong positive emotions in schoolchildren, which can be a predictor of prosocial behavior (Kleemans et al., 2017; McIntyre, 2015). Demonstration of stories of rescue, assistance to those in need, photo of a tree—they create a positive mood, confidence in the future, and mobilize the viewer to contribute to solving the problem. The most successful projects in terms of the number of subscribers attract attention with visual orientation, regular publications, the possibility of feedback from the creators of the project and other participants, i.e. made professionally from the point of view of media science (Morozova, Popova, 2020).

During the focus group study, it turned out that the majority of the surveyed teenagers have a positive attitude to charity: "*this needs to be done*", "*it's important for society*", "*I feel good about charity*", "*helping others is wonderful*", only three participants were indifferent to the problem. More than half of teenagers have experience of participating in charity events (volunteering in public events, helping sick children shown in TV commercials, participating in charity fairs). As a motive for helping, schoolchildren call humanism, the desire to help ("*I just want to help*"), nobility ("*a noble person should help others*"), satisfaction from doing good an act ("*a person feels good when he helps*"), hope for reciprocity ("*the good will return like a boomerang*").

All students have accounts in social networks, the most popular are the VKontakte and Telegram networks. Posts about charity were met by all respondents. However, it turned out that the vast majority of students do not read articles and notes with calls for help on social networks if photos, videos cause them negative emotions, because it is difficult for them to cope with feelings of pain and pity ("*it hurts to look at it*", "*I want to cry*", "*I can't read it*", "*not interesting*"). Several schoolchildren admitted that they read such posts, put likes, make reposts ("*it's interesting*", "*the scarier, the more interesting*").

The strongest impression from the viewed content on the request "#charity" was made by photo and video posts, short personal stories, especially about sick children ("*sick girl with mom*", "*boy with long eyelashes*", "*boy with slanting eyes*"). Schoolchildren understand that charitable organizations that post this information seek to demonstrate the values of helping others, love for one's neighbor, kindness, mercy, acceptance ("*to love as it is*").

Several people expressed doubt, saying that in the photos presented, the children do not look sick, and therefore do not cause sympathy. When viewing the content, only individual participants of the focus group had an interest, an awareness of happiness "*I am healthy*", but the vast majority remained indifferent. The information that the teenagers saw (stories about sick children, homeless animals) turned out to be so toxic that it turned out to be quite difficult for them to cope with the feeling of pity and compassion that arose. It is quite obvious that social hygiene of networks is necessary, because sad pictures with animals and children are not perceived, and the information noise created prevents the emergence of emotional reactions of adolescents, which are necessary for their personal development.

The students noted that they had not learned anything new for themselves, several people replied that they had learned new diagnoses; the information provided did not arouse confidence ("*it is not known where the collected money will go*"). The students did not like the stories posted in the feed, long posts were especially difficult to perceive ("*long to read*", "*does not fit into the screen*"). Also, the participants of the focus group noted that, having done a good thing, they wouldn't tell anyone about it / only a close friend / girlfriend ("*you don't need to help others for show*", "*you don't need to help for the sake of image and fame*", "*this is immodest*").

The focus group study, in general, revealed a positive attitude of schoolchildren to charity. When providing assistance, they are guided/plan to be guided by moral motives, empathy and pity, as well as personal satisfaction from doing a good deed. The prosocial motivation of teenagers is not always altruistic, some are not ready to provide assistance to the detriment of their own interests. The same motives as the most frequent ones were discovered by Portuguese psychologists during numerous interviews with adult online volunteers of different nationalities (Silva et al., 2018). That is, the ideal ideas of adolescents about the motives for providing assistance coincide with the motives of those who actually provide assistance, which indicates prosocial behavior as a universal archetypal value, understandable at any age and in different cultures.

Positive emotions caused by viewing prosocial posts, they contribute to the formation of more prosocial thinking and prosocial behavior, encouraging the viewer to contribute to helping those in need (Haagerup, 2014; Kislyakov, Shmeleva, 2020; Mares, Stephenson, 2017; Obar, Wildman, 2015).

S. Erreygers (Erreygers et al. 2018b) proved that the more teenagers visited social networks or used audiovisual media, the more prosocial their behavior was on the Internet and the more prosocial reactions they could receive from others. Based on the studies that indicate a link between prosocial media content and prosocial behavior (Coyne et al., 2018), it can be assumed that the consumption of positive audiovisual media content and messages can stimulate online prosocial behavior among adolescents.

The results of the study by L. Lavertu (Lavertu et al., 2020) confirm the profound impact social networks have on the lives of users, because prosocial behavior occurs not only in the presence of an audience online, but also offline, in 'reality'. Their conceptual model of the extended warming effect that social networks give, describes a process in which the visibility of an online audience posed in an offline environment leads to an increase in public self-awareness, which, in its turn, increases the external motivation of prosocial behavior.

This conclusion gives the reasons why Generation Z behaves better and more prosocial than previous non-digital generations (Hessekiel, 2018; Iqbal, 2018). This resonates with C. Archer-Brown et al. (Archer-Brown et al., 2018), who found that the intensity of social networks predicts strategies for managing online experiences, suggesting that younger generations are more eager to gain/avoid losses regarding their online audience.

Distrust of some posts asking for help occurs, in our opinion, for several reasons. Firstly, such messages are too common in the media space, and children stop paying attention to them. Secondly, it is difficult for a person to cope with the feeling of sadness, compassion and pain from watching such content, and this makes you want to scroll through the tape without delving into the essence of the message. Posts that cause negative emotions and fear pose a threat to the information and psychological security of the individual (Kislyakov et al., 2021).

Thirdly, quite often the presentation of the material is not optimal for the perception of adolescents: it is uninteresting, of the same type, and in some cases aggressive and toxic. On the contrary, it is well perceived by schoolchildren informative and entertaining positive content without a moralizing intonation, which corresponds to the results obtained by WCIOM (WCIOM, 2019). With its help, students can be instilled such personal qualities as empathy, care, responsibility, the desire to participate in the life of society, showing prosocial activity.

5. Conclusion

Teenagers' reaction to charity content posted on the social network VKontakte turned out to be ambivalent. Recognizing the importance of good deeds, schoolchildren often do not trust requests for help in online communities, give explicit preference for positive and entertaining content.

The results of our research allow us to formulate practical recommendations for their use in school media education. In order for the school to become a space of civil, spiritual, moral, patriotic media education, it is necessary to optimally use the potential of media communications.

It is advisable to include the module "media volunteering" (in particular, regional) in the plans of educational work of schools in the direction of volunteerism (volunteering). The form of such work can be, for example, the creation of a school a media center or blog where volunteer practices are popularized, thematic prosocial content is created covering assistance to veterans, sick children, environmental protection, preservation of historical and cultural monuments, assistance to homeless animals, etc., contributing to the development of children's motivation to help, the development of altruism and empathy.

It is important to acquaint schoolchildren with the directions of volunteering, with volunteer sites, with the best prosocial content in social networks, thereby increasing trust in charity. This can be achieved with the help of online conferences of experienced volunteers for schoolchildren, live broadcasts from the event site, online social design, etc. The skills of preparing not only photo and video materials, but also infographics and audio materials (podcasts, audio illustrations, audio texts, etc.) are becoming in demand. At the same time, it is much more effective to choose simple plots that demonstrate altruistic qualities individuals who are able to awaken in adolescents an emotional and sensual attitude to the world and influence the development of their readiness to help others and society selflessly. It is also important for website designers to strive to make prosocial behavior more visible and shorten the user's path to accepting prosocial behavior in real mode and, if possible, receiving external rewards online.

Media education involves the possession of teachers, classroom teachers, tutors, psychologists of new formats of work with adolescents (social networks, online conferences, online contests, online forums, blogs, subscriptions, messengers), without the professional use of which educational, educational online communications are difficult today. For example, to teach prosocial behavior, B.G. Sipes (Sipes et al., 2022) offer A Domain-General Developmental "Do-GooD" Network Model of Prosocial Cognition in Adolescence, based on the connection between the prosociality and neural networks, which will only increase throughout... adolescent development.

Among the conditions for realizing the pedagogical potential of media in pedagogical science and educational practice, didactic, educational, developmental tasks, various functions of media products are highlighted (illustrative, motivational, axiological, hermeneutic, analytical, correctional, adaptive, heuristic, etc.), criteria for the selection of media products taking into account the cultural level, semantic saturation, developmental orientation, the assertion of humanistic norms and values (Tyunnikov et al., 2022).

It is necessary to take into account the dynamic development of social networks and the Internet environment and use media education technologies taking into account the peculiarities of media behavior of adolescents. Longitudinal, cross-sectional studies will allow us to assess the impact of online content on development prosocial behavior of adolescents, which will be gradual and cumulative.

Appendix

Table 3. Interview quesitons

No	Questions
<i>Part 1</i>	
1	What is your attitude towards charity? Why do people help others?
2	Have you participated in charity? In what way? What kind of help could you provide?
3	What social networks do you use? How often do you see information about charity when browsing social networks? What subject? How did you react to it?
4	Do you read articles and notes with calls for help if photos, videos cause you negative emotions or are limited to "reposts", approval marks ("likes")?
<p><i>Now you will have 5 minutes to get acquainted with the posts about charity on the VKontakte social network. To do this, type the query "#charity" in the search bar on your VKontakte page. Study the information presented there, view the news feed (News section), read stories, look at images/videos, read comments, as if it were your friend's page on a social network or the page of the group you are a member of. After that, we will continue the discussion.</i></p>	
<i>Part 2</i>	
5	What attracted your attention (photos, drawings or poster images, videos, animation, text, etc.)? Which of the posts viewed made a greater impression on you?
6	What values, lifestyle, in your opinion, do the users (charitable organizations) who have posted this information strive to demonstrate?
7	What emotions did you have when viewing this content?
8	Did you learn something new while watching?

-
- 9 Did you have a desire to help after viewing the page (people, animals, nature)?
 10 Do you trust the information provided (people, organizations) in general? Why?
 11 What didn't you like while viewing it?
 12 Would you like to help others find out about it?
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