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The Impact of Digital Communication on Society: A Managerial Approach

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Abstract: Our scientific approach is determined by the accelerated progress that acquires an exponential inertia in the field of intercultural communication on a global level through the virtual environment made available by digital platforms. In the past, intercultural communication could be achieved but only when tourists visited another country. Nowadays, the Internet has made it possible to communicate between people living at great distances, thus allowing different cultures to come into contact and become more aware of the global environment in which they are located. In the era of digitization, the availability of online services that are increasingly accessible to many people from as many different cultures as possible, diversity at an international level, has created a bridge of connection between people from all corners of the world. The hypothesis from which we start in our approach is that according to which, in a global society, intercultural communication is in full expansion. We believe that authentic intercultural communication goes beyond acceptance of difference, tolerance, and access to understanding and behavioral change. We thus aim to analyze the impact of digitization on society and the impact of virtual communities on the offline environment. Digital communication skills (especially intercultural communication) will become more and more important in the future, contributing to the personal development of young people and more.

Keywords: Management; Intercultural Communication; Digital skills

1. Introduction

In the specialized literature, there are many definitions of communication, it being defined as a human language used to transmit information (Ellis & Beattie, 2010), sometimes considering it to represent the process of giving information verbally or in writing and as being the nervous system of any group. (Cacciattolo, 2015) Even if the definitions of communication are vast and may differ according to the context in which the research is done or according to certain aspects that are sought to be highlighted, communication always takes into account five essential factors: an initiator, a receiver, a channel, a message and a code (Miller, 2012).

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Linking to the conceptualization, we discover that the term intercultural communication was first used by Edward Hall (1959) in the work "Silent Language", where he addresses issues related to the importance of nonverbal behavior in communication, defining nonverbal communication as an exchange that does not involves words.

Interculturality is a concept not only frequently, but even excessively used today, the name of a complex and controversial social and psychological phenomenon. Many times, we witness an emptying of meaning through inappropriate use or insufficient information on the phenomenon on the part of the user. At the same time, it is a research object for sciences such as sociology, psychology, communication and, last but not least, intercultural pedagogy.

"Research on the nature of intercultural communication has raised many questions, but produced few theories and far fewer answers. Many of the researches were associated with areas other than communication, especially with anthropology, international relations, social psychology, socio and psycholinguistics. Although the research subjects were numerous, the accumulated knowledge was not systematized" (Samovar & Porter, 2006).

Another approach in trying to define intercultural communication came from Samovar and Porter: "Intercultural communication investigates those elements of culture that most influence the interaction between members of two or more cultures when individuals are in interpersonal communication situations" (Samovar & Porter, 2006).

Hinner (1998) considers that intercultural communication can also be defined as the ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally with individuals from other cultures so that all individuals participating in the communication encode and decode the communicated messages and avoid as much as possible erroneous interpretations and evaluations

There are twelve sources of misunderstandings and errors in intercultural communication: the relationship between men and women, the manner of showing respect, the perception of time and space, taboos, business etiquette, non-verbal messages, language and the translator, clothing, argumentation and power of conviction, the political and religious environment, prejudices and the importance given to the written word. (12)

Intercultural Communication in the Digital Age has developed with the expansion of the Internet and the ubiquity of the means of communication of computer networks.

Social media plays a more important role than traditional media if we talk about intercultural communication. Social networking sites, online games, online courses that are taught on an international scale, online platforms that allow banks and other companies to create global services, blogs and other applications for phones, tablets, computers constitute the cyber culture that goes beyond the barriers of the states of the world.

2. Research Method

In our approach, we used the questionnaire method as a data collection method used in research to obtain information from a certain group of persons regarding the impact of digitalization on society. A questionnaire can be composed of open or closed questions. Before applying the questionnaire, I did an analysis of the target group and developed a sampling plan. Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of the total population that will be representative of the entire population. The application of the questionnaires could be done through the Internet. During the application of the questionnaire, it is

important to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents, as well as to avoid influencing the answers by the wording of the questions or the way of administering the questionnaire. The questionnaire was applied to a number of 250 people online during 4 months of data collection.

3. Results

205 interviewees answered the questionnaire and the analysis was carried out on the answers received, obtaining the following results.

1. Among the people interviewed by gender, 58% were female respondents, and 42% were male;
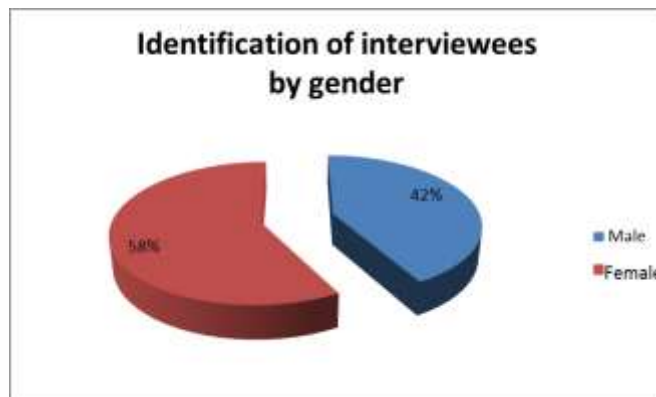
Figure 1. Identification of People by Sex
Source: survey results

2. Regarding the age of the people interviewed regarding the use of digital means of communication (which were grouped by several age categories), we found: under 30 years old - 11%, 31-40 years old - 34%, 41-50 years old – 36%, 51-60 years old – 11%, over 60 years old – 8%;
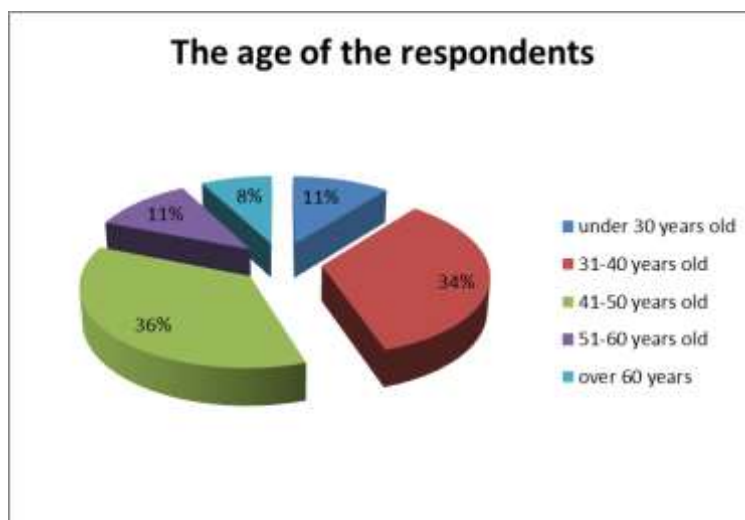

Figure 2. Identification of People by Age
Source: survey results

3. In what domain of activity do you work?

Out of the total number of respondents (205), 72 are from the business field, 52 from education and 81 from public administration.
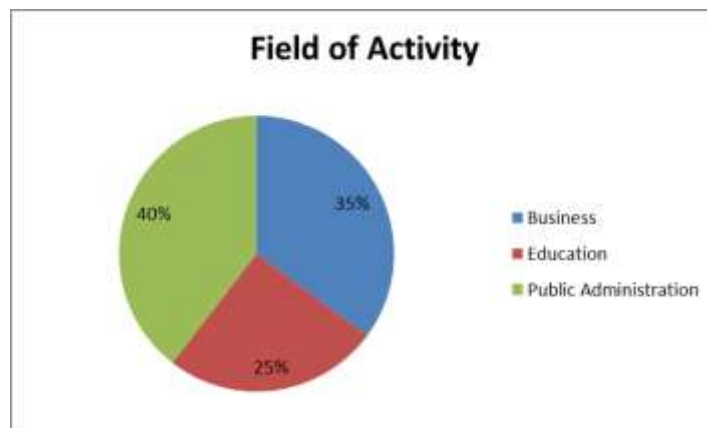
Figure 3. Identification of People by Field of Activity
Source: survey results

4. What is your length of service?

The majority of respondents (43 %) have more than 20 years of experience, followed by those between 11 and 20 years (39 %), then equally those with 6 to 10 years of experience and those under 5 years (9 %).
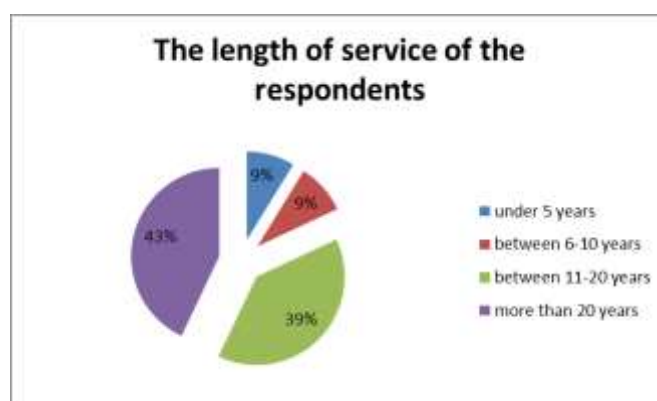

Figure 4. Identification of People by the Length of Service
Source: survey results

5. What studies have you completed?

Among the respondents, 51% declared that they have a master's degree (ISCED level 7), 20% a bachelor's degree (ISCED level 7), 17% a doctorate (ISCED level 8) and 12% short-term education (ISCED level 5).
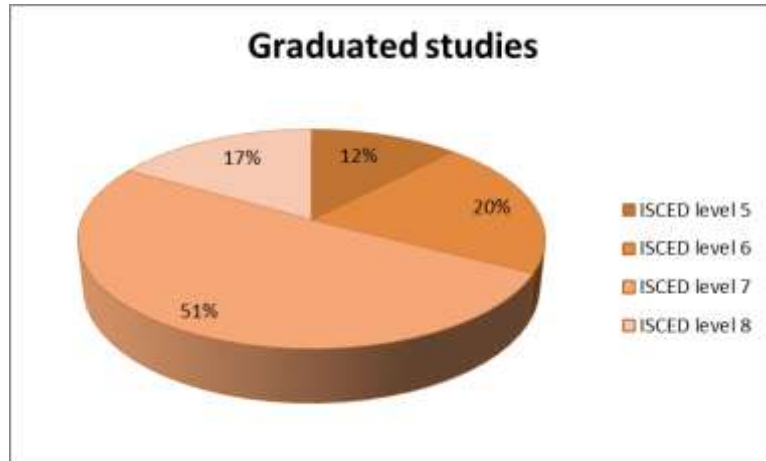
Figure 5. Identification of People by the Graduated Studies
Source: survey results

6. The environment of residence;

The distribution of the questionnaire through social media made it reach respondents from the rural environment (6%), the majority being from the urban environment (94%).
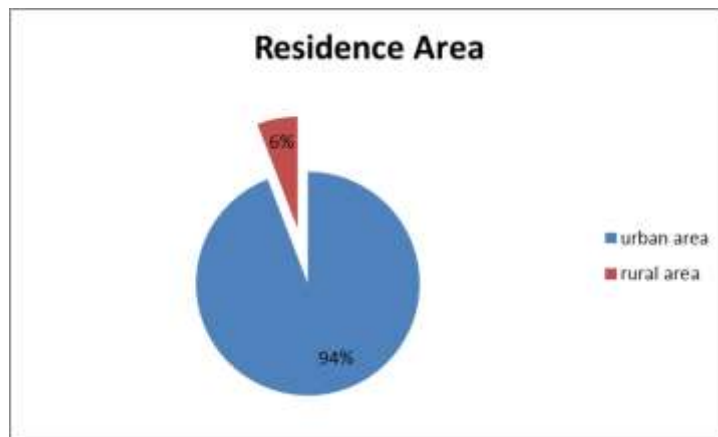

Figure 6. Identification of People by Residence Area
Source: survey results

7. Using a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the following statements regarding the importance of open source information management (from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree);

The terms "informative" and "power" have become essential in the development and delimitation of states in modern society. According to the respondents, the two terms seem to have an impact on the development and delimitation of states in modern society. As can be seen, people from the business field agree with this statement (45.8%), and those from education and public administration totally agree (44.3% and 48.2%, respectively).
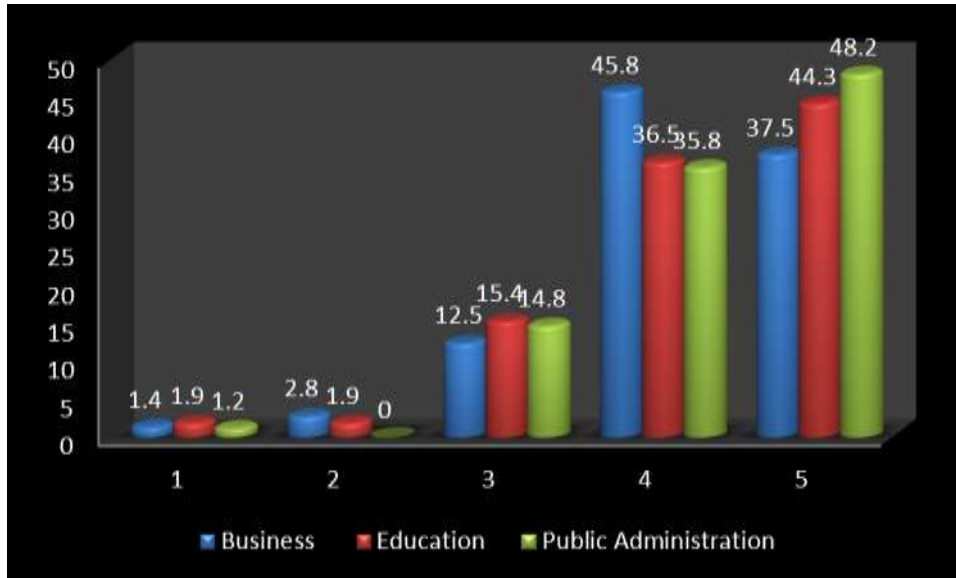
Figure 7. The Importance of Open Source Information Management
Source: survey results

8. In a knowledge-based age, information management is the main axis of the mechanism that directs socioeconomic processes;

Respondents agree that information management and creative processes generate new knowledge. According to the data in the table below, people from the business field totally agree with this statement, compared to the respondents from public administration and education who agree (50.6%, respectively 44.3%). We can deduce that respondents from the business environment rely on and use information from the online environment to a greater extent than the other respondents.
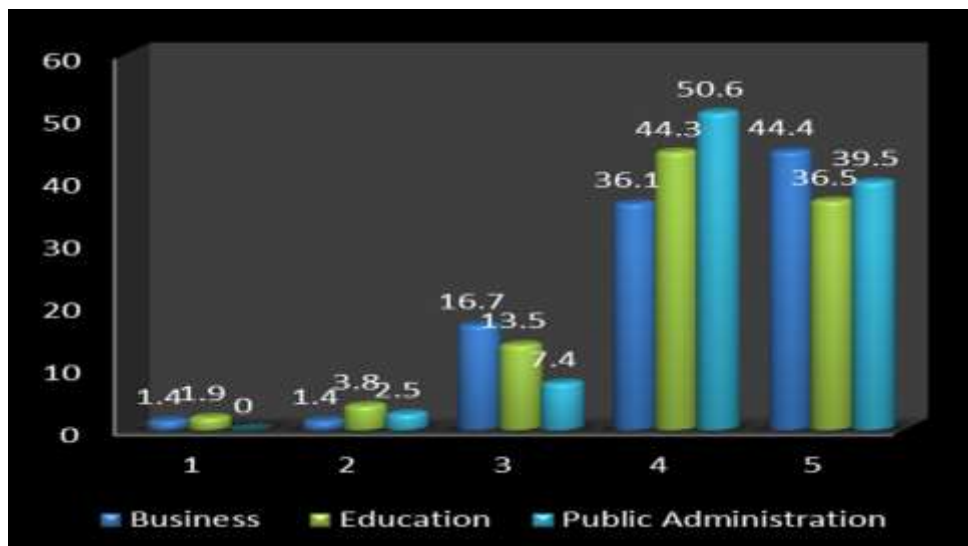

Figura 8. Information Management is the Main Axis of the Mechanism that Directs Socioeconomic Processes
Source: survey results

9. Looking at the evolution of information and technology, there is the possibility of moving towards a model that is based on the logic of constantly changing networks.;

47.3% of all respondents agree with the above statement (45.8% from business, 50% from education and 46.9% from public administration), which may mean that respondents are not completely convinced of the evolution information and technology, as well as the continuous change of networks.
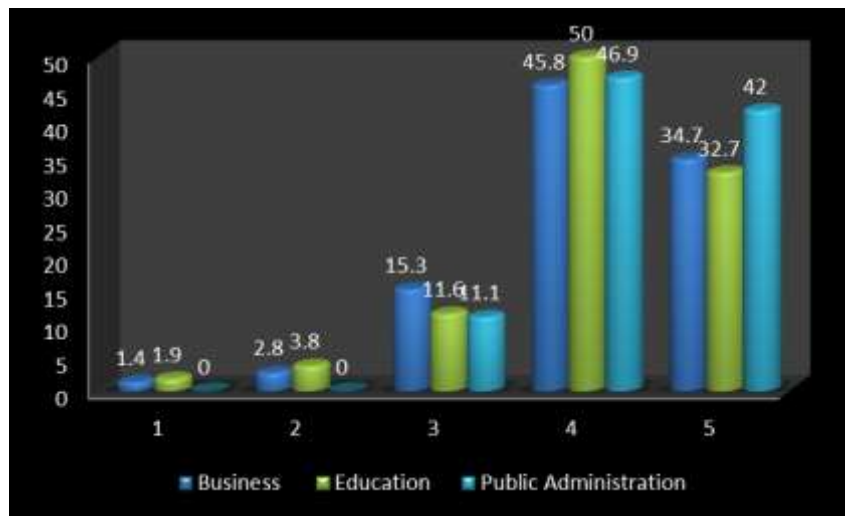

Figura 9. Looking at the Evolution of Information and Technology, it May Create a Model Based on Constantly Changing Networks
Source: survey results

10. Technology has a powerful effect on the competitive landscape, enabling companies to coordinate value activities across geographically distant locations;

46.8% of the total number of respondents completely agreed with this statement, the choice being predominant in each field (47.2% business, 46.2% education and 46.9% public administration). We can infer that the respondents have either been in a position to coordinate activities in remote geographical locations through technology, or have witnessed such operations.
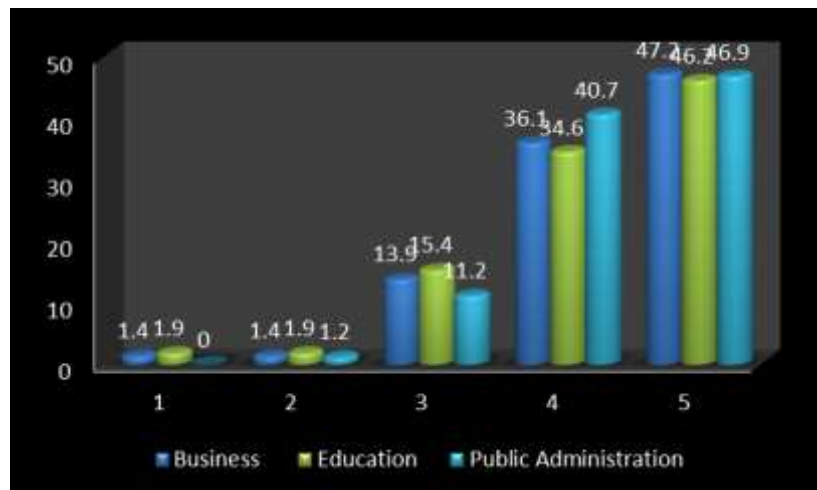

Figura 10. Technology has a Powerful Effect on Competition, Allowing Companies to Coordinate High-Value Activities in Remote Locations
Source: survey results

11. The continuous development of technologies as well as the effects of globalization change the meaning of cultural identity;

The emergence and development of the online environment, as well as the effects of globalization, had and continue to have an impact on cultural identity. Respondents from public administration agreed with this statement (45.7%), those from the business environment totally agreed (41.6%), and those from

education both agreed and totally agreed (40 ,4%). We believe that these answers were recorded as a result of the respondents' observation of the changes registered at the global level from the point of view of technology and globalization: the replacement of the values of a group with Western or global customs and values; excessive exposure to one culture, regardless of where a person comes from, which can contribute to the loss of cultural identity; cultural tensions and conflicts, such as immigration issues and cultural differences.
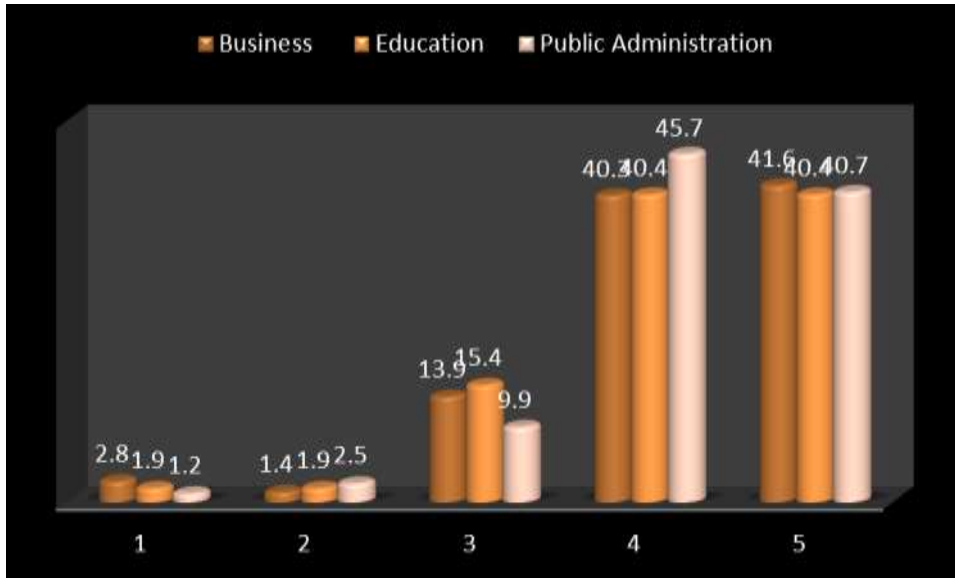

Figura 11. The Continuous Development of Technologies as Well as the Effects of Globalization Change the Meaning of Cultural Identity

Source: survey results

12. Threats generated by new technologies can affect society or the security of personal data;

Threats to the security and protection of personal data, disruption to existing jobs and industries, and social isolation can be considered technology threats. Respondents from business (41.7%) and public administration (45.7%) fully agree that new technologies can affect society, and those from education predominantly agree (44.2%).
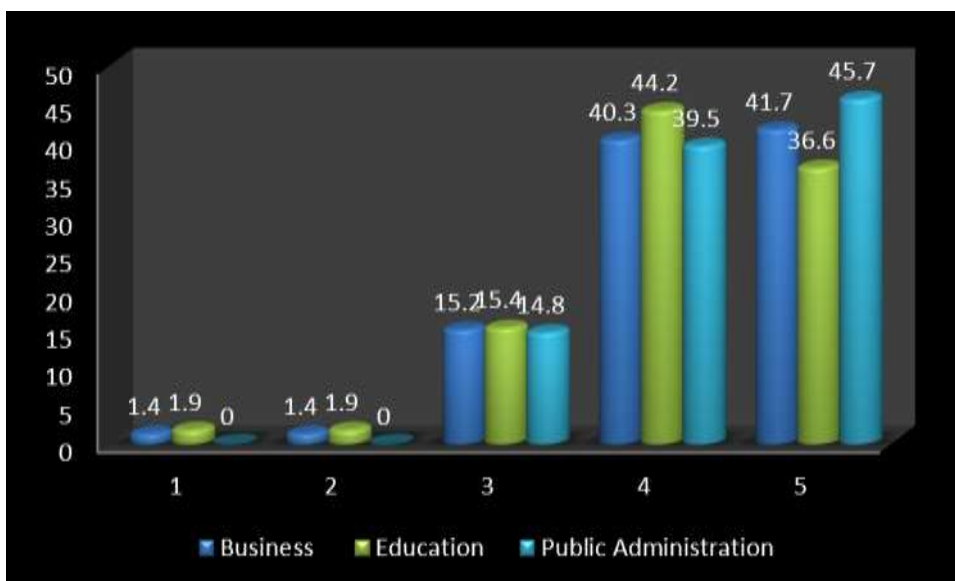

Figura 12. The Threat Generated by New Technologies Can Affect Society or the Security of Personal Data

13. The power of new technologies creates interconnected opportunities and threats with the potential for rapid change;

New technologies can provide significant opportunities for economic growth, efficiency and human well-being, such as: access to information and education, improved health services, reduced costs and improved efficiency in industries such as transport and energy. On the other hand, new technologies can create threats, such as job losses due to automation or increased dependence on technology and exposure to cyber security risks. Respondents from public administration totally agree with the potential of new technologies (55.6%), as well as those from education (44.2%), and those from business agree (34.6%).
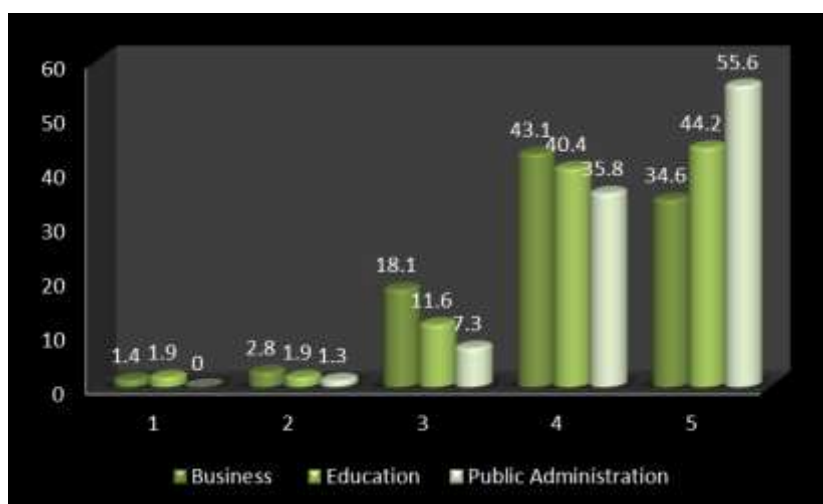

Figura 13. The Power of New Technologies Creates Interconnected Opportunities and Threats with the Potential for Rapid Change
Source: survey results

14. The impact of new technologies in the collection of information from public sources is significant and contributes to the increase in mobility, availability and ways of accessing, collecting, processing, storing and using sources and the development of new interpretations;

The use of the Internet and digital tools has increased the accessibility and efficiency in gathering information from various sources such as government websites, media, social media and others. Also, data analysis and processing technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, have enabled the automation and improvement of the information collection process. 47.8% of all respondents agree significantly the impact of technology in the collection of information from public sources. The highest percentage was registered among people from education (53.8%), followed by those from public administration (50.6%) and business (40.3%). We believe that the period of the COVID-19 pandemic also had an impact on the choice of answers, as a result of which many activities took place in the online environment.
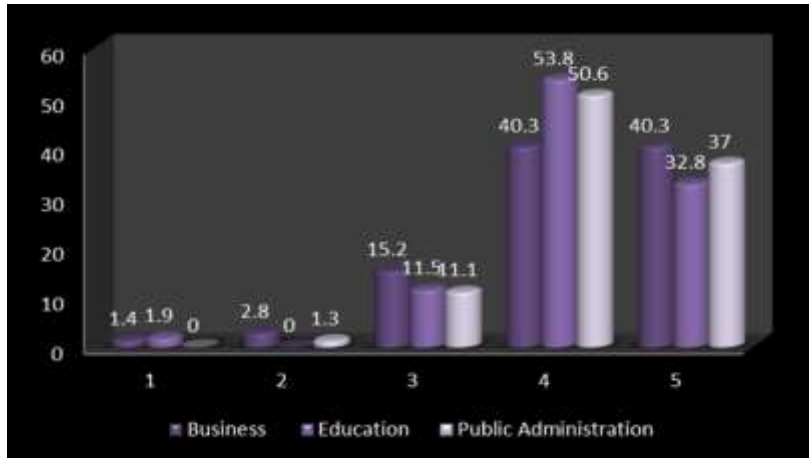
Figura 14. The Impact of New Technologies in the Collection of Information from Public Sources is Significant
Source: survey results

15.The expansion of virtual space influences people's lives;

The expansion of virtual space has grown significantly in recent years thanks to advanced technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality. It has enabled increased accessibility and efficiency in many areas such as communication, education, entertainment, business and even medical services. To cope with new technologies, employees need training and skills in the field. Thus, 47.0% of respondents from public administration fully agree, followed by 44.4% from business and 44.2% from education.
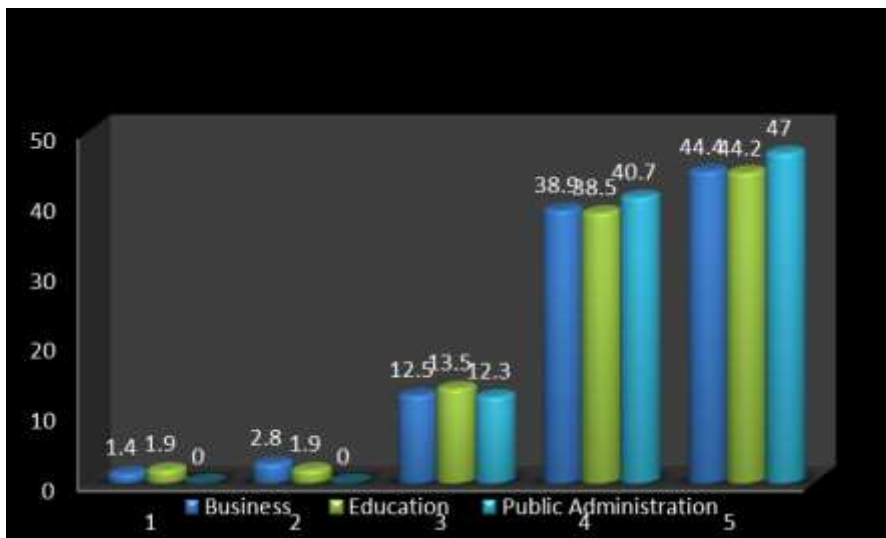

Figura 15. The Expansion of Virtual Space Influences People's Lives
Source: survey results

16.Does increasing dependence on cyberspace, the availability of new technologies and information, cyber features and attacks on all aspects of society create vulnerability and require cross-cultural communication?;

Defending against cyber threats is becoming increasingly important through the use of cyber security technologies, user education and the implementation of security rules and procedures. 45.9% of all respondents totally agreed with this statement. Opinion shared by 41.7% of people from business, 48.1% from education and 48.1% from public administration. The result is natural considering that day by day the dependence on cyber space is increasing, and new technologies and information are becoming tools of cyber attacks.
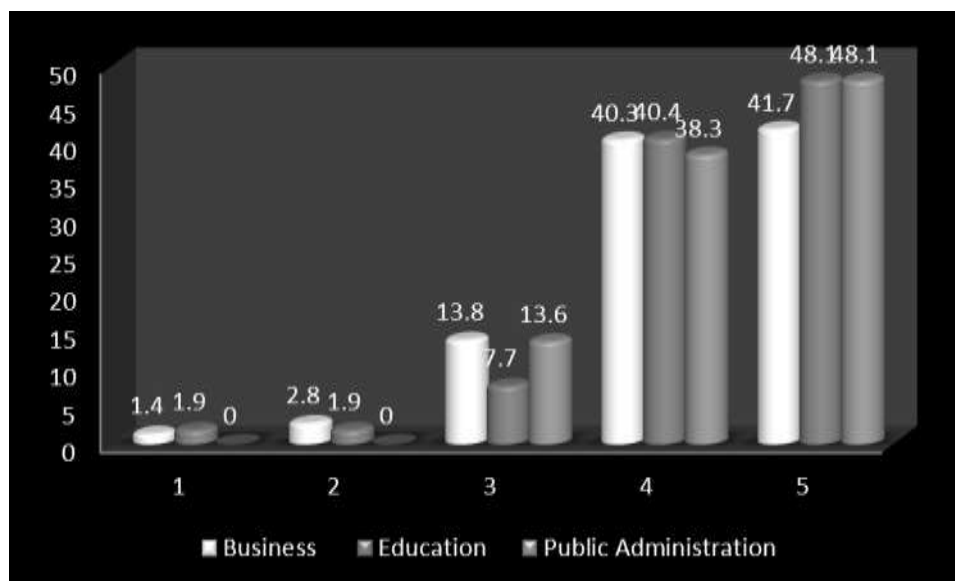
Figura 16. Increasing Dependence on Cyberspace Creates Vulnerability and Requires Intercultural Communication
Source: survey results

4. Conclusion

The discussion of the findings includes an analysis of the opportunities offered by new technologies in the era of digital globalization. Digitization is one of the current trends, together with globalization and the increasing impact of the new "living-online" generations. Our research has shown that people are interested in intercultural communication and realize that they are witnessing the opportunities that digitization offers to facilitate this process. By analyzing key economic and social trends, we can hypothesize the increasing impact of technologies on people's lives. We can also forecast further globalization, providing more opportunities for companies and individuals. Digital communication skills (especially intercultural communication) will become increasingly important in the near future.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Increasing the frequency of communication, which determines the improvement of social relations as well as the increase of devotion to the organization. Technological progress offers the possibility of video conferences, which come very close to face-to-face conversation. The elimination of communication barriers caused by hierarchical differences It allows the formation of flexible work groups	The most effective method of communication is face-to-face. It takes three times more to reach the same level of trust and comfort with the people they interact virtually, but they don't know each other personally. Lack of informal communication affects collegial relationships

Figure 17. Advantages and Disadvantages of Electronic Communication

The main objective of digitization in Romania is to contribute to the profound transformation of the economy, public administration and society, increasing performance and efficiency in the public sector, by creating new types of value based on digitization, innovations and digital technologies.

The extremely rapid growth of digitization can be done by acting simultaneously and coordinated on three strategic axes, which provide us with a digital ecosystem capable of functioning, innovating and transferring innovative digital services and products for the benefit of society and the economy:

- Digital public administration - the rapid transition, through a process of digital transformation of public administration in Romania, from the still unconsolidated status of e-Government, to that of smart government. This transition is achieved by compulsorily going through the fundamental stage of data-driven governance.

-Digital economy - The digital transformation of the Romanian economy, with a focus on SMEs, which represent 99% of Romanian companies

- Digital education - digitization of the educational process by including technology at a transversal level in all educational processes, but especially by implementing policies to acquire/increase/improve digital skills at the level of the entire Romanian society.

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