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READING CULTURE AS A FACTOR IN SHAPING THE SOCIAL IDENTITY OF YOUNG CREATORS

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Abstract

This article examines the significance of reading culture, particularly the reading of fiction, in shaping the social identity of young creators, specifically young poets and writers, based on theoretical and empirical research. Special attention is also paid to the analysis of the social identity and its stable elements, such as leisure activities, social functions, and social activity. In addition, within the framework of the article, an empirical study was conducted using the expert survey method, and conclusions and recommendations were formulated based on the obtained results. Furthermore, the indicators influencing the impact of reading on the social identity of young creators were identified.

Keywords: Social profile, book reading, social function, social status, leisure time, book, fiction literature.

Introduction

In Uzbekistan, as in many other sectors, significant attention is being devoted to the development of science, culture, and particularly the promotion of reading culture. Within the framework of the “Uzbekistan–2030” Strategy, the objective outlined in Clause 1.5 entitled “Ensuring Spiritual Development and Advancing the Cultural Sector to a New Stage”, specifically Goal 39, emphasizes the importance of widely popularizing the masterpieces of Uzbek and world

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literature, promoting reading culture in society, and developing information and library services for the population [1]. The identification of these tasks as priority directions of comprehensive reforms demonstrates the relevance and importance of research in this field.

Furthermore, special attention is being paid to young creators, particularly poets and writers, through measures aimed at supporting their activities, encouraging creative initiatives, and creating favorable conditions for strengthening the integration of science, education, and production [2]. On the basis of these initiatives, creative schools named after prominent writers have been established in the country. In this context, conducting a sociological analysis of the social profile of contemporary young creators has become a significant social necessity.

Literature review and methodology

In this article, the theoretical and methodological framework is based on the works of foreign scholars such as M.Woodmansee [12], M.S.Kagan [13], O.A.Krivtsun, B.Russell [14], and R.Barthes, particularly their studies devoted to the problems of the transformation of fiction in modern society. In addition, the research draws upon the studies of Uzbek scholars, including A.Umarov [11], A.Kholbekov, and K.Kalanov, whose works address issues related to the development of reading culture among youth and the enhancement of their creative and intellectual potential.

Furthermore, one of the sociological research methods — the expert survey method — was applied in the study. Within the framework of this expert survey, it was planned to analyze the dynamics of the social profile of young poets who were active in Uzbekistan in 1990 and 2020. In addition, the research examined key indicators of the social profile of young poets, such as status and roles, value orientations, creative motivations, leisure activities, and socio-political engagement.

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Experts were selected using a cluster sampling method from specialists actively working in the fields of science, culture, and literature. The composition of the experts involved in this sociological study included 12 literary scholars, 8 publishers, 8 poets, and 2 writers, totaling 30 experts. In terms of gender distribution, the expert group consisted of 18 male and 12 female participants.

Results and Discussion

In sociological and socio-philosophical literature, various approaches can be found that aim to explain the essence and meaning of the concept of the “creator.” These approaches can be generally grouped into two categories. The first group includes definitions derived from the distinction between art and craftsmanship, while the second group consists of definitions that differentiate between amateur and professional creativity [3]. In both cases, art is considered to possess a more authentic character compared to craftsmanship, just as professionalism is regarded as more authentic than amateur activity.

For example, according to data presented by N.Heinich, based on statistical economic studies published in France by INSEE, artists are considered to belong to the highly intellectual and educated social strata. However, earlier studies classified them within the same professional category as clergy and military personnel. N. Heinich also provides the following definition of the concept of a “creator”: “A creator is a person who, through their talent, produces an original work capable of providing aesthetic pleasure to people. The core of this category includes creators in the fields of visual arts, music, literature, and architecture. Sculptors, photographers, and designers can also be included in this category. However, technical creators, decorators, and craftsmen are not included in this list according to the nature of their professional activities” [10].

At the same time, researchers pay attention to such indicators as the status, value orientations, and leisure activities of creators when analyzing their social profile [4, 5]. In particular, the criteria of leisure activities and value orientations are

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significantly shaped under the influence of reading culture. Based on these indicators, the questions presented to experts were aimed at identifying changes in the status and roles of young poets, their value orientations, creative motivations, economic conditions, and patterns of leisure time use.

In response to the question, “How many poets who were active in public administration in the 1990s do you know? Or why did creators, particularly poets, have a high social status during that period?” nearly 95% of the experts gave similar answers. According to their opinions, in the 1990s creators, especially representatives of literature such as poets and writers, had a high social status. This was largely due to the socio-political context of that period, which encouraged poets and writers to be socially active. It is well known that during 1989–1990, issues such as granting the Uzbek language the status of a state language, achieving national independence, and restoring national history became highly relevant. Poets and writers played an important role in presenting these socio-political issues to the public and contributing to their resolution. In this sense, poets acted as active participants in shaping public opinion and promoting the ideas of independence. Based on these factors, experts emphasize that the social status of poets and writers during that period was significantly higher than it is today. For this reason, the participation of poets in public administration was considered a social necessity.

By summarizing the analysis of the responses provided, it can be concluded that there is a noticeable difference between the social status of poets in the 1990s and that of today. In the 1990s, the status of a poet required not only creative activity but also the performance of several social roles. Along with writing poetry, poets also appeared as public figures and propagators of social and political ideas. Today, however, the roles of poets as public figures and ideological promoters are gradually losing their social significance. As experts noted, this situation is largely due to the formation of specialized professionals in public administration and public opinion management. Nevertheless, despite this tendency, young poets

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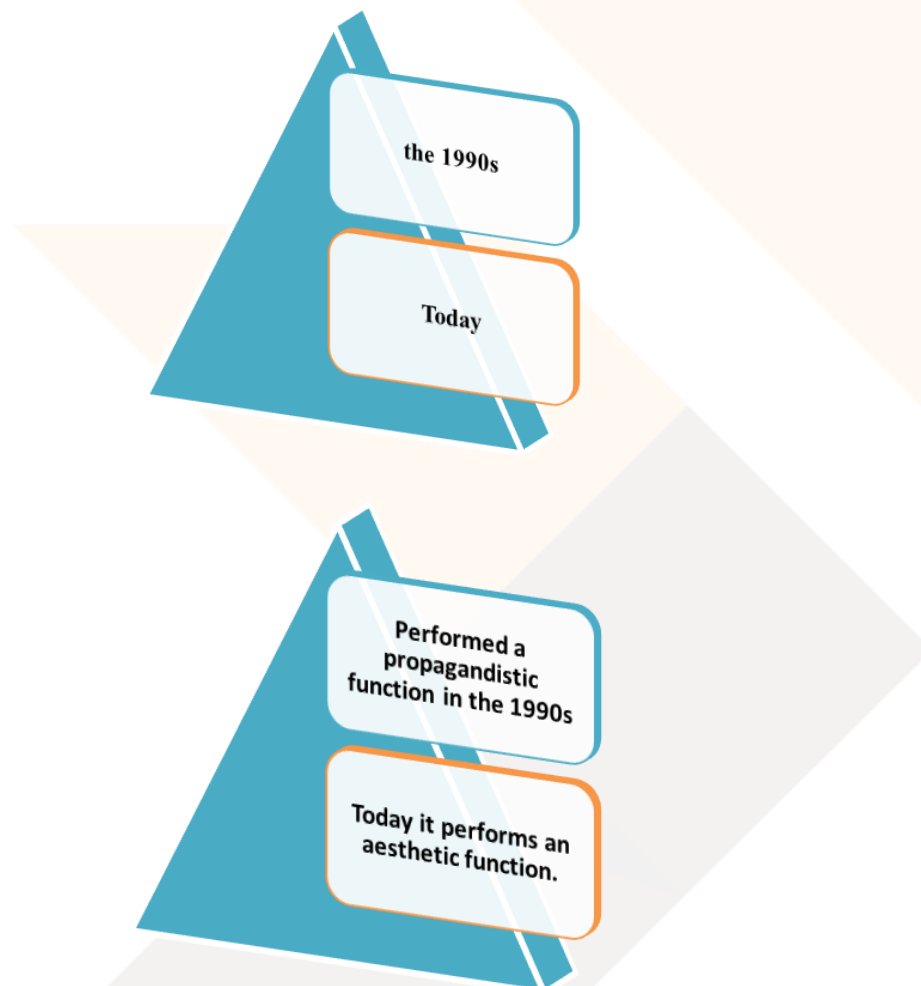
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still demonstrate an aspiration toward socio-political engagement. Moreover, state awards such as the “Zulfiya” Prize and the “Golden Pen” (Oltin Qalam) award were introduced precisely to enhance the social functions of poets. In this regard, the dynamics of the social status and roles of poets and writers from 1990 to 2026 can be observed in the following diagram (see Figure 1).



In response to the question, “What means did young poets use to gain public recognition in the 1990s, and what means do they use today?”, 25 experts provided generally similar answers. According to their responses, in the 1990s and early 2000s the appearance of poets on television and the publication of their

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poems in the press played a crucial role in gaining recognition among the wider public. This was largely because television and print media were the primary sources of information during that period. For instance, literary newspapers and journals such as “Uzbekistan Adabiyoti va San’ati,” “Yoshlik,” and “Sharq Yulduzi” were published in large circulations. The table below illustrates the circulation of these newspapers and journals over different years.

The newspaper “Uzbekistan Adabiyoti va San’ati” had a circulation of 1,000,000 copies in 1990, 10,000 copies in 2000, 5,000 copies in 2010, and 5,000 copies in 2020.

The journal “Yoshlik” was published with a circulation of 200,000 copies in 1990, 5,000 copies in 2000, 3,000 copies in 2010, and 2,000 copies in 2020.

The journal “Sharq Yulduzi” had a circulation of 200,000 copies in 1990, 6,000 copies in 2000, 5,000 copies in 2010, and 3,000 copies in 2020.

The remaining five experts expressed a somewhat different opinion regarding the ways in which young poets gain recognition among the general public. According to them, publishing poems in newspapers, journals, or even on social media today does not necessarily make a poet widely known, since the social and aesthetic demand for poetry has somewhat decreased [6]. However, due to the development of the show business industry, some young poets prefer writing lyrics for songs. First of all, this approach provides economic benefits; at the same time, poets whose poems are used as song lyrics tend to gain public recognition more easily. Based on the analysis of the responses presented above, it can be concluded that today the public recognition of young poets requires the adoption of a specific authorial strategy that reflects new trends in art and literature [7]. Such a strategy involves not only the form and content of poetry but also the poet’s appearance, public image, collaboration with other forms of art, and the visualization of poetry [8]. Moreover, this type of authorial strategy, which incorporates the above-mentioned elements, can also be considered a modern form of the social profile of young poets.

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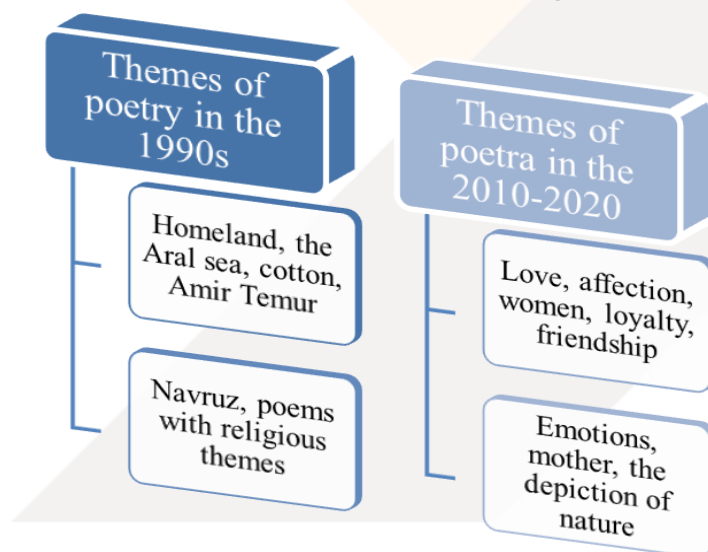
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In describing the social profile of young poets, the analysis of their value orientations is of great importance. Taking this into account, sociologists pay particular attention to the value orientations of creators. Another significant aspect of the value orientations of creators, especially young poets, is that they are often regarded as promoters of values within society. However, according to the views of A.G.Zdravomyslov, “in crisis situations, the promotion of values does not always produce the expected results; moreover, there is no single universally accepted interpretation of the value system” [9].

In this regard, in order to determine the value orientations of young poets, we focused on the themes of their creative works. Experts were asked the following question: What themes were predominantly addressed in poetry during the 1990s, and which themes are considered relevant today? The experts responded as follows.

The main themes of poetry in the 1990s included the Motherland, the Aral Sea, cotton, Amir Temur, Navruz, and religiously inspired poetry. In contrast, the dominant themes in 2010 and 2026 are love, affection, women, loyalty, friendship, emotions, motherhood, and nature (see Figure 2).



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Based on this diagram, it is possible to compare the value orientations that constitute one of the key indicators of the social profile of young poets. More specifically, from the perspective of creative activity, young poets who were active during the 1990s–2000s were interested in themes such as achieving and strengthening independence, restoring national and religious values, rehabilitating the names of historical ancestors, criticizing the authoritarian system, and raising the issue of the Aral Sea. In other words, poets of that period, as individuals, tended to prioritize national values.

In contrast, the poetry of young poets who were active during the 2010–2020s is characterized by themes such as love, affection, self-awareness, and depictions of nature. In simpler terms, the creative works of poets of this period demonstrate the dominance of personal and utilitarian values. According to sociologist V.A.Yadov, “an individual’s value orientations manifest themselves in their professional and creative activities as well as in actions aimed at satisfying their needs” [8].

In response to the question, “What is the purpose of reading fiction, particularly poetry, for readers in the 1990s and today?” 95% of the experts (27 respondents) provided generally similar answers. According to them, in the 1990s poetry performed not only an aesthetic function but also an important social function. For instance, poetry possessed both artistic and journalistic significance, and many existing social issues were reflected in poetic works. As an example, out of 17 poems published in the April 1993 issue of the journal “Sharq Yulduzi,” 11 were devoted to social topics such as saving the Aral Sea, issues related to cotton production, and supporting women. Likewise, about 90% of the poems published in the magazine “Mushtum” during that period addressed social issues.

In contemporary poetry, however, greater emphasis is placed on pure artistic expression free from journalistic elements. At the same time, journalism itself has developed as a separate genre aimed at addressing socio-political problems. In the current context, where journalism—especially internet journalism—is rapidly

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developing, reflecting social issues in poetry has become increasingly difficult. This is because modern social problems require not only description but also analytical interpretation from multiple perspectives. Naturally, such tasks require specialists capable of accurately presenting and analyzing social issues rather than poets.

When constructing the social profile of young poets, it is also necessary to pay special attention to the indicator of leisure activities. Sociologists define the concept of leisure time in different ways. Some scholars define leisure time as the time outside labor activity, while others consider it a socially organized process shaped by society. According to this view, individuals satisfy their physical and spiritual needs by engaging in activities that correspond to their personal interests [7].

Experts were also asked the following question: “What differences do you observe between the leisure activities of young poets in the 1990s and those of today?” According to their responses, during 1990–1995 literary clubs for young poets and writers operated regularly under the Writers’ Union. These clubs often included 80–100 participants, and young creators spent much of their leisure time participating in them. In addition, poetry gatherings, creative evenings with prominent poets, and literary competitions were frequently organized. As a result, a sense of closeness and strong communicative interaction developed among young creators.

Today, clubs for young poets, young writers, and young translators also operate under the Writers’ Union. However, their membership usually does not exceed 20-25 participants. Events such as the Durmon Republican Seminar of Young Creators and various creative evenings are organized. Nevertheless, it can be noted that these events do not fully ensure solidarity among young creators as a social group. Currently, young poets tend to spend their leisure time according to their individual interests. For example, their activity can be observed in various creative groups, channels, and pages on social media. However, these processes

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do not contribute to restoring the communicative function of literature—particularly poetry – nor do they ensure solidarity among young poets as a social group.

Conclusion

By summarizing and generalizing the analysis of the responses and observations presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn.

The social profile of young poets is primarily understood as a set of information about their status and roles, creative motivations, value orientations, and economic conditions. It also involves describing and analyzing the dominant characteristics of the creative personality, social attitudes, and patterns of behavior. Based on this description, it can be stated that the social profile of young poets in Uzbekistan has undergone certain changes between 1990 and 2020.

This dynamic can be conditionally explained by the formation of three main types of social profiles among young poets:

1. The social profile of young poets who prioritize aesthetic values based on the principle of “art for art’s sake.”
2. The social profile of poet-songwriters who prioritize utilitarian values.
3. The social profile of young poets who aspire to perform ideological and propagandistic functions.

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