

Natalya A. Zaichenko

Ph.D, Professor

National Research University Higher School of Economics - Saint Petersburg

Daria P. Khurda

Master's student

‘Education Administration’ Master Program

National Research University Higher School of Economics - Saint Petersburg

The Ethical Capital of an Educational Organization in the Context of Digitalization

Abstract: The organizational resilience of educational institutions is a key factor in their development in a transforming environment. School digitalization presents a new challenge for managers: it is necessary to adapt analog educational rituals to the digital environment and establish qualitatively new principles of interaction among educational stakeholders. It can be assumed that the resource for these changes is the ethical capital of the organization, which encompasses agreed-upon norms, practices, and value orientations that shape the organizational culture and facilitate the balanced adaptation of all participants in educational relationships to the changed environment. Ethical capital is implemented by employees through adherence to professional etiquette agreed upon within the specific organization. With the transition to the digital environment, the ethical capital of the organization is enhanced through the updating of digital etiquette, which defines the behavioral norms in the new conditions.

The aim of our research is to determine the level of consistency in digital etiquette in schools as a potential resource for organizational resilience. Empirical data is presented in the form of materials from contextual research, thematic analysis of literature, and results obtained from focus groups.

As a result of the conducted diagnosis, the following preliminary findings were obtained: (1) Digital etiquette in schools is an unexplored phenomenon and consists of a list of inconsistent spontaneous interactions; (2) Educational stakeholders (teachers and students) are not prepared to formulate norms and rules for digital educational interactions and are not ready to harmonize them among themselves; (3) The ethical capital of educational organizations is not actualized for use in the conditions of the digital economy.

Keywords: ethical capital, educational organization, digital ethics, digital etiquette, educational digitalization.

Introduction

In recent years, the education system has faced significant challenges due to the global COVID-19 crisis, updated standards [10], and federal experiments [4, 8, 15]. One such experiment is the project to create a digital educational environment in schools that needs to be implemented universally by 2024 [7, 11]. The instability of the external environment has

made it evident that the organizational resilience of educational institutions needs to be considered, especially in the inevitable digitalization of education since educational organizations "can be more easily affected by any crisis or changing policy" [24].

Organizational Resilience

Organizational resilience was first defined by A. Meyer as the ability of an organization to respond to failure and restore the previous order [21]. We consider this definition more broadly, believing that the goal of any organization is not just to maintain a stable order but to develop a level of adaptability that enables the organization's recovery and growth. We understand organizational resilience as the "process of positive development in a risky and uncertain environment throughout the organization's lifespan" [3]. Resilience is an important factor in successfully dealing with unexpected threats and crises [19].

The formation of resilience can be achieved through both direct practices [1] and indirectly through interactions and everyday behavior of employees [17]. These include "behavioral and contextual capabilities" [11], such as a "healthy culture" [25], which requires a focus on strengthening employees' teamwork skills and creating an organizational culture that promotes team spirit during challenging times [20]. A healthy culture encompasses values and behavior models that support the well-being of employees and enable effective interactions among them.

Interaction rules based on the values of a specific organization can serve as a resource for resilience. Systems of rules that regulate employee interactions help understand the principles, essence, and outcomes of these interactions. It is known that the interaction of the same people with the same abilities and motivations under different systems of rules leads to completely different aggregate results [2]. In educational organizations, the role of moral rules becomes even more relevant due to the relational nature of their activities [2]. However, the process of digitization in educational organizations is occurring spontaneously, and the participants of educational relationships (N=1486) overwhelmingly (82%) do not understand "the rules by which the school will operate in the digital era" [5].

Ethical Capital

Rules and norms of behavior fall within the realm of ethics, which serves as the foundation for an organization's ethical capital. Currently, the concept of ethical capital is not well-established in research practice and evokes "a forceful and emotional response" [22]. This term is not recognised in the six capitals model but runs as a common thread through two or three of them [23]. Researchers define the capacity of ethical capital as the ability to "not just create value, but to define and refine values that an economy possesses" [17]. Ethical capital is a "collective value" [23] that determines an organization's behavior, decisions, and strategy. It also becomes an institutional condition for "employees to realize their human capital" [9]. In the context of this study, we understand the ethical capital of an organization as the combination of aligned norms, practices, and value orientations that shape organizational culture and ensure the balanced adaptation of all participants in educational relationships to the changing environment.

In the context of digitalization in education, the ethical capital of a school is actualized through managerial resources, as the updating or transformation of analog rituals can significantly change educational interactions, helping all participants in educational relationships adapt to the new environment. We believe that the content of ethical categories

in the digital environment remains unchanged; however, the form and order of implementing ethical norms and rules change. The "aligned order of actions in the digital environment" [14] is defined as digital etiquette.

Digital etiquette is a relatively new phenomenon that is "currently in the stage of its formation and development, and thus, it has been little studied" [6]. If we consider that established rules and norms of analog interactions significantly reduce costs associated with aligning positions, decision-making, and achieving goals, then the effectiveness of digital interactions will also be influenced by the presence (or absence) of aligned norms. Therefore, we hypothesize that the level of consensus on digital etiquette as a means of implementing the school's ethical capital is a factor in organizational resilience.

The aim of this research is to identify the level of consensus on digital etiquette in educational organizations.

Methodology

Due to the uncertainty surrounding the concept of digital etiquette and the absence of a standardized ethical code for educational organizations, empirical data collection was conducted through thematic analysis of research materials and subsequent work with focus groups in educational institutions

Thematic analysis of the literature was conducted following the PRISMA¹ model and divided into three stages. Initially, research studies relevant to the topic were identified. The search was performed using keywords such as "digital ethics," "digital etiquette," "online communication rules," and "online interactions" in both Russian and English languages, within the RINC and Scopus databases. After removing duplicates during the screening stage, 112 materials remained for review. The screening process applied the following criteria: academic research published no earlier than 2010, addressing digital ethics and etiquette in the context of individual interactions (excluding artificial intelligence, mass media, and other unrelated areas). Subsequently, 64 materials were selected for review, and their texts were reviewed to identify components of digital etiquette. In total, 32 research materials were included in the final sample.

All elements of digital etiquette found in the selected texts were classified into a table presented to a pilot focus group. The purpose was to determine the level of consensus on these elements within the pedagogical community and identify the components that are inherent to educational interactions. The pilot focus group consisted of 12 staff members from various educational institutions in St. Petersburg, aged between 22 and 40 years. The following discussion topics were addressed: (1) the current stage of development of digital etiquette in schools; (2) whether there is a shared understanding of digital etiquette within the pedagogical community; (3) and the consensus on norms of interaction in the digital environment in educational relationships. The results of the focus group revealed significant discrepancies within the pedagogical community regarding the essence of digital etiquette. However, there was unanimous agreement among the respondents on the necessity for its development and the alignment of norms for digital educational interactions. Through the discussions, unanimously agreed-upon components and those that did not receive unanimous definition (30%) were identified and not considered as aligned.

¹ Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

Based on the focus group material, specifically the elements agreed upon by the participants, we created a table (Table 1) with the provisional title "ethical portfolio" that includes 35 ethical norms in digital interactions. We define the ethical portfolio as "a list of etiquette elements that it appears reasonable to align within institutions to foster digital ethics" [13].

Table 1. Ethical Portfolio of a School [13]

1	Use your real name when signing up for accounts.
2	Represent individuals who may not be familiar to your primary recipient, if they are copied in the message.
3	Choose appropriate photos and backgrounds that align with the context of professional communication.
4	Adhere to the rules of professional correspondence.
5	Avoid excessive use of emojis.
6	Proofread messages for errors before sending.
7	Avoid writing messages in all capital letters or breaking words (e.g., LiKe ThIs).
8	Join classes and events without delay.
9	Maintain a professional dress code when participating in online events.
10	Start conversations with greetings and end with farewells.
11	Seek permission from individuals before forwarding their emails or making reposts.
12	Avoid immediate callbacks if you have called but received no answer.
13	Refrain from sending emails during non-working hours.
14	Keep personal accounts private and avoid adding teachers as friends.
15	Maintain separate personal and student accounts on social networks and email.
16	Use file names that make it easy for recipients to locate them on their computers.
17	Follow the "one topic – one email thread" rule.
18	Keep emails as concise as possible.
19	Reply to emails only to the main recipient, rather than to everyone copied in the email.
20	Include a subject line in your emails.
21	Avoid sending files that require special programs to open.

22	Avoid sending large files unless necessary, and provide explanations or specific sections if applicable.
23	Maintain confidentiality and refrain from disclosing entrusted information to others, except as required by law.
24	Do not post materials of friends and classmates without their consent.
25	Respect copyright when using content from the internet.
26	Scan sent materials for viruses.
27	Verify the accuracy of information found on the internet.
28	Set boundaries for online interactions in terms of time.
29	Manage and resolve conflict situations.
30	Define objectives for online meetings/events.
31	Use visual aids during presentations.
32	Allow all participants to express their views.
33	Clarify and demonstrate interest.
34	Respect the dignity of each participant.
35	Maintain appropriate distance between students and teachers.

Results

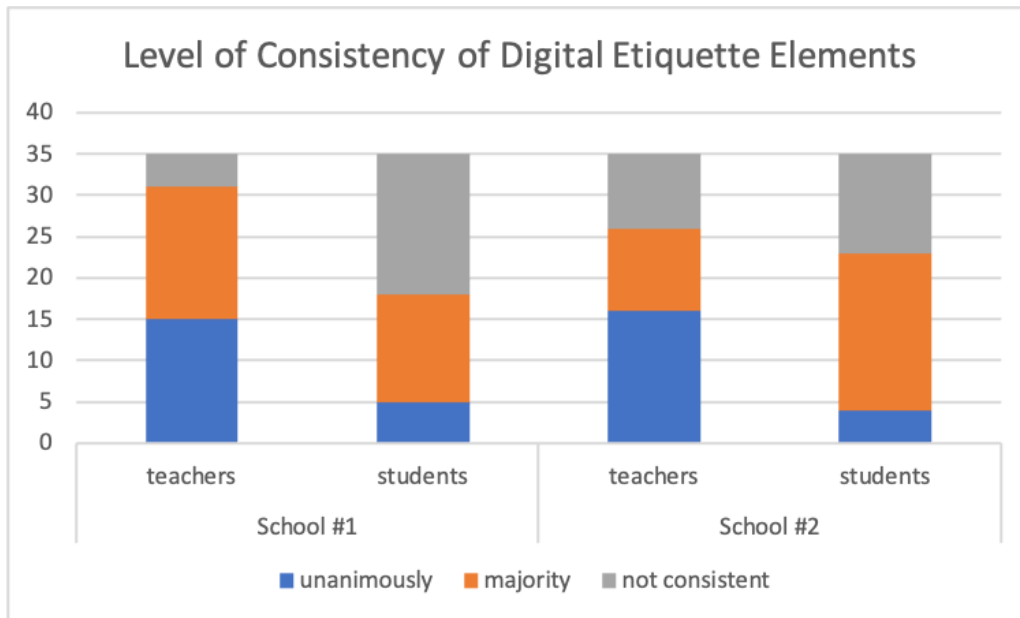
The materials from the pilot focus group were presented for consensus in educational institutions. Since ethical capital is specific to each school's development program and "hidden curriculum" [12, 16], it can vary significantly across educational organizations. Therefore, we selected two institutions in St. Petersburg (referred to as School #1 and School #2). These schools are located in different areas of the city (residential and historical). School #1 is a general education school with minimal use of digital tools in the learning process, while School #2 is a general education school with an emphasis on certain subjects, where a digital educational platform has been developed, and interactions in the digital environment between students and teachers are characterized by us as intensive.

During the empirical stage of the research, four focus groups were conducted (two with teachers, $n = 24$, and two with students from grades 8-9, $n = 24$) in each educational organization. Each group was presented with a set of cards containing fixed elements of digital etiquette (35). The groups were required to assemble a consensus-based "ethical portfolio" from the provided set, i.e., to choose the elements that the focus group participants deemed necessary to use in their school.

Subsequently, the participants commented on their choices and their personal attitudes toward the phenomenon of digital etiquette. Both target groups (teachers and students) highlighted the need for establishing a system of rules for interactions in the digital environment, particularly online. Teachers often emphasized the importance of specific

elements (e.g., "checking sent materials for viruses") but marked them as "unnecessary" because "no one does it that way." Similarly, students relied more on the real context rather than normative or ideal contexts. As a result, we obtained two different ethical portfolios: one for teachers and one for students. The summarized quantitative results of the focus groups are presented in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1. Summarized results of the focus groups on the consensus of digital etiquette components



Analysis of the overall results from the target groups (teachers and students from both institutions) showed that teachers reach consensus more frequently than students, although less than half (43%) of the positions were unanimously accepted. Students do not reach consensus even on a third of the points (14%).

Participants in educational relationships do not express doubt that technology is an irreversible phenomenon in their lives. However, there is a lack of rules in school digital interactions. The school is in the process of forming hidden norms of digital interactions and communicative practices. Within the research framework, a lack of consensus on digital etiquette components was identified in the investigated schools. We can conclude that in the process of transforming familiar processes and formats of educational relationships, there is still no conventional agreement on the essence of digital etiquette. At this stage of development of the digital educational environment, we note that the ethical capital of educational organizations is not actualized for use in the digital economy and is not utilized as a managerial resource by organizational leaders in shaping organizational resilience.

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