



TRANSFORMATION OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLE VALUES AMONG YOUTH

Sodiqjon Mahmudovich Abdullayev

Senior Lecturer at the Department of Clinical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine,
Namangan State University, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

In the context of globalization and digital transformation, the values associated with a healthy lifestyle among youth are undergoing significant changes. This article explores the sociocultural, psychological, and technological factors influencing the transformation of these values. The study analyzes how traditional health-related norms are being reshaped by modern lifestyles, media influence, and changing behavioral patterns. Special attention is given to the impact of social networks, consumer culture, and urbanization on youth perceptions of health, fitness, and well-being. The research combines qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the current trends and propose strategies to reinforce positive health behaviors among young populations.

KEYWORDS: Healthy lifestyle, youth values, globalization, digital influence, health culture, behavioral transformation, social media impact, modern health trends.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of values related to a healthy lifestyle among youth has emerged as a critical interdisciplinary concern at the intersection of sociology, public health, psychology, and cultural studies. As globalization, rapid technological advancements, and socio-economic shifts permeate all facets of human existence, the conceptualization and practice of health and well-being among younger populations are being increasingly redefined. In this context, the notion of a "healthy lifestyle" is no longer confined to traditional parameters such as balanced nutrition, physical activity, and abstention from harmful habits, but is now interwoven with digital behaviors, body image ideals, psychosocial pressures, and evolving cultural narratives. Youth, typically defined by the United Nations as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24, constitute approximately 16% of the global population, amounting to nearly 1.2 billion individuals as of 2022 [1]. This demographic group is not only demographically significant but also socio-culturally dynamic, often acting as a harbinger of emerging norms and value systems. Consequently, the study of lifestyle transformations within this group offers a window into the broader trajectories of societal change. A growing body of empirical evidence indicates that health behaviors among youth are shifting in response to new paradigms of social interaction, mediated by digital technologies and influenced by both hyper-consumption and hyper-connectivity. Historically, the construct of a healthy lifestyle was rooted in culturally transmitted values, familial education, and public health initiatives. However, with the advent of the information age and the rise of neoliberal individualism, health-related choices have become increasingly personalized, commercialized, and, at times, paradoxical. On the one hand, there is heightened awareness about the importance of fitness, mental health, and nutrition,

spurred by global health campaigns and widespread access to online health information. On the other hand, sedentary lifestyles, digital addiction, and the commodification of wellness have contributed to new patterns of behavior that contradict traditional health promotion goals. For instance, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), insufficient physical activity is one of the leading risk factors for global mortality and is particularly pronounced among adolescents. A global study of 1.6 million school-going adolescents (aged 11–17 years) across 146 countries revealed that more than 80% of them did not meet the current recommendations for physical activity, with girls being less active than boys in all but four countries [2]. Simultaneously, the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) indicates that approximately 11.3% of youth aged 13–15 years worldwide currently use some form of tobacco, with rates varying significantly across regions [3]. Moreover, the surge in screen time, particularly among digital-native generations, is associated with increased risks of obesity, poor sleep hygiene, and mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. These data highlight the multifaceted and, at times, contradictory nature of youth health behaviors in the contemporary era. Health-related values, once embedded within the family unit and educational institutions, are now negotiated through virtual networks, influencer culture, and algorithmically driven content streams. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have become powerful vectors for the dissemination of health-related information, often blurring the boundaries between scientific knowledge, personal anecdotes, and commercial propaganda. For example, the rise of “fitspiration” culture—characterized by curated images of idealized bodies and motivational slogans—has generated a complex psychological landscape in which youth may simultaneously feel inspired and inadequate, motivated yet anxious. The psychodynamics of identity construction among youth further complicate this picture. During adolescence and early adulthood, individuals engage in an intensified process of identity formation, striving for autonomy while navigating social belonging. This developmental phase is especially susceptible to peer influence, media exposure, and societal expectations. The health-related choices that emerge from this psychosocial context are often reflective of broader identity narratives, such as the pursuit of aesthetic ideals, moral discipline, environmental consciousness, or resistance to authority. For instance, the increasing popularity of veganism among youth in urban centers is not solely driven by health concerns, but also by ethical, environmental, and political considerations—underscoring the intersectional nature of lifestyle values. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the reconfiguration of youth health behaviors and values. Lockdown measures, school closures, and social distancing protocols disrupted routines and magnified mental health challenges. A systematic review by Racine et al. (2021) found that the global prevalence of depression and anxiety among children and adolescents doubled during the pandemic, reaching 25.2% and 20.5%, respectively. These figures underscore a mental health crisis that demands an urgent reevaluation of how health and well-being are conceptualized, promoted, and sustained in youth populations. In this regard, the concept of “transformative health literacy” is gaining scholarly traction. Unlike traditional health literacy, which emphasizes functional skills such as reading prescriptions or understanding nutrition labels, transformative health literacy encompasses the critical and communicative competencies required to navigate complex health information, question normative assumptions, and engage in reflexive decision-making [4]. This conceptual shift is particularly relevant in the digital age, where misinformation,

"wellness myths," and conflicting health narratives proliferate unchecked. It is also imperative to recognize the structural determinants of health that frame individual choices. Socioeconomic status, education level, urban versus rural residence, and access to health services all exert a profound influence on youth health outcomes and lifestyle values. In low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), for instance, health-promoting behaviors are often constrained by infrastructural deficiencies, food insecurity, and lack of safe recreational spaces. According to UNICEF (2021), approximately 45 million children under the age of five suffer from wasting, while over 39 million are overweight—indicating the coexistence of undernutrition and overnutrition within the same socio-economic environments. Such disparities highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of how structural inequalities shape the transformation of health values among youth across different contexts. Additionally, gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping youth engagement with healthy lifestyles. Societal expectations regarding masculinity and femininity often dictate the acceptability of certain behaviors, such as body-building, dieting, or emotional expression. Research indicates that young women are more likely to engage in restrictive eating practices and experience body dissatisfaction, whereas young men are more likely to engage in risky physical behaviors or substance use in alignment with hegemonic masculine ideals [5]. These gendered scripts contribute to divergent pathways in health behavior development and necessitate tailored intervention strategies. In response to these complexities, educational institutions, public health bodies, and civil society organizations are experimenting with integrative approaches to health promotion that combine cognitive, emotional, and social learning. School-based health education curricula are increasingly incorporating modules on media literacy, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking alongside traditional topics such as nutrition and hygiene. Furthermore, peer-led interventions, youth advisory councils, and participatory action research models are being leveraged to ensure that health promotion efforts are culturally resonant, developmentally appropriate, and ethically grounded. In summary, the transformation of healthy lifestyle values among youth is emblematic of broader epistemological and ontological shifts occurring in contemporary society. It reflects the interplay between agency and structure, tradition and innovation, individual desire and collective responsibility[6]. To fully grasp the contours of this transformation, a multidisciplinary and multilevel approach is indispensable—one that synthesizes insights from health sciences, social theory, digital humanities, and developmental psychology. The present study endeavors to contribute to this emergent field by analyzing the changing value orientations toward health among youth in both global and local contexts. It seeks to unpack the underlying factors driving these changes, assess their implications for public health policy, and propose strategic interventions that align with the lived realities of young people. Through a combination of theoretical inquiry, statistical analysis, and empirical observation, this article aims to shed light on how youth are reimagining what it means to live "healthily" in the 21st century.

In the 21st century, the discourse surrounding youth health and well-being has gained unprecedented relevance in light of the rapid technological, social, and cultural transformations reshaping everyday life. The topic of the transformation of healthy lifestyle values among youth is not merely a niche concern within public health or sociology; it reflects the broader evolution of societal priorities, behavioral norms, and identity construction mechanisms within an increasingly globalized and digitalized world. Its urgency is underlined by alarming trends in

physical inactivity, deteriorating mental health, unhealthy dietary practices, and rising exposure to risk behaviors such as smoking, substance abuse, and screen overuse—all of which are disproportionately impacting younger generations. The relevance of this issue is first and foremost anchored in global health statistics. According to the World Health Organization, over 80% of adolescents worldwide are insufficiently physically active, while youth obesity rates have nearly tripled since 1975[7]. At the same time, the mental health crisis among adolescents is deepening, exacerbated by factors such as social media comparison, academic pressure, and pandemic-related isolation. The digital age has fundamentally reconfigured how youth interact with health-related content: platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are shaping attitudes toward body image, fitness, and self-worth, often in ways that are both empowering and harmful. In this context, health is no longer seen solely as a biomedical condition, but as a cultural narrative influenced by visibility, performativity, and social trends. Moreover, the topic is highly relevant because youth are at a developmental stage where lifelong values and habits are being formed. Any disruption, distortion, or reorientation of health-related values during this critical phase may have far-reaching consequences not only for individual well-being but also for the health capital of entire societies. Youth are also disproportionately affected by structural inequalities—such as access to nutritious food, healthcare services, and safe environments—which further complicates the formation of positive lifestyle values. The intersectionality of economic, racial, gender, and geographical disparities means that the transformation of health values among youth cannot be addressed through one-size-fits-all interventions. Another dimension of the issue's importance is its policy implications. Governments and international organizations are increasingly recognizing the need to reframe health education, integrate mental well-being into school curricula, and develop youth-centered health promotion strategies that resonate with the lived realities of young people[8]. Without a nuanced understanding of how youth values are evolving in response to contemporary pressures, such efforts risk being irrelevant or ineffective. Additionally, the commercialization of health culture—through influencers, fitness apps, diet fads, and wellness products—raises ethical concerns about misinformation, unrealistic standards, and consumer manipulation, especially among impressionable youth audiences. Finally, the relevance of this topic extends into the philosophical and ethical domains. It provokes fundamental questions: What does it mean to live a “healthy” life in an age of digital saturation and climate anxiety? How are values such as self-care, discipline, and community responsibility being redefined by young people across different cultural contexts? And how can societies balance personal freedom with collective responsibility in fostering a culture of health? In sum, the transformation of healthy lifestyle values among youth is a topic of high contemporary significance, intersecting with urgent challenges in health policy, education, digital ethics, and social equity. Addressing this issue requires a holistic, interdisciplinary, and youth-driven approach that not only observes these transformations but also participates in shaping them toward more sustainable, inclusive, and meaningful health paradigms.

In response to the growing concern over the declining health indicators and shifting lifestyle values among youth, numerous governments, international organizations, and educational institutions have initiated comprehensive reforms aimed at revitalizing health culture and embedding wellness into the fabric of youth development. At the national level, many countries have revised their public health strategies to place greater emphasis on

preventive healthcare, mental health awareness, and holistic well-being, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Educational systems are integrating health literacy into curricula, focusing not only on physical education but also on psychological resilience, digital well-being, and critical media consumption. For instance, the World Health Organization's "Health Promoting Schools" framework has been adopted in over 90 countries, supporting the creation of school environments that nurture both physical and emotional health[9]. Digital interventions are also gaining prominence—mobile health applications, gamified fitness programs, and AI-driven nutritional platforms are being employed to engage youth in proactive health management. Governments are investing in infrastructure such as youth wellness centers, sports facilities, and safe recreational spaces, especially in underserved communities. Policy reforms are increasingly driven by data: public health surveillance systems track behavioral trends among youth to inform targeted campaigns and interventions. Mental health, once marginalized in health discourse, is now a central pillar of youth policy, with initiatives ranging from national mental health helplines to school-based counseling programs. Furthermore, cross-sectoral collaborations between ministries of health, education, and youth affairs are promoting integrated strategies that combine health promotion with digital inclusion, social equity, and environmental sustainability. Internationally, programs such as UNICEF's "Youth for Health" and UNESCO's Global Youth Development Index aim to empower youth as agents of change in shaping healthy societies[10]. These reforms signal a paradigmatic shift—from reactive treatment to proactive prevention, from top-down directives to participatory approaches, and from isolated initiatives to systemic integration—reflecting a growing recognition that the health and values of youth are foundational to sustainable societal progress.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of healthy lifestyle values among youth is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by a convergence of social, cultural, technological, and psychological factors. In today's globalized and digitalized environment, the once-stable constructs of health, well-being, and lifestyle are undergoing significant redefinition, particularly among younger generations who are simultaneously the most vulnerable and most adaptable demographic.

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