

DIGITAL INEQUALITY: LEGAL ASPECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract. In the modern world, digitalization has become an integral part of social development. Technology is permeating all spheres of life – education, economics, healthcare, and public administration. The digital environment creates new opportunities for the realization of human rights, obtaining information, and participating in public processes. However, at the same time, the problem of digital inequality is increasing, which manifests itself in unequal access of citizens to digital resources, services and knowledge. This inequality is becoming one of the key threats to justice and equality in the digital age.

Digital inequality is expressed in differences between social groups, regions and countries in the level of access to the Internet, digital devices and their use skills. It has a multi-layered nature: technical, educational, and socio-economic. Some regions have high-quality digital infrastructure, broadband Internet and a high level of digital literacy, while others lack stable connectivity and access to modern technologies. In Kazakhstan, despite the active development of the digital economy and the introduction of national programs, significant differences remain between large cities and rural areas. In small settlements, there is often no stable Internet connection, and the digital literacy of the population remains low. This limits the opportunities for obtaining public services, participating in distance learning, accessing information, and finding employment in new digital professions. Despite the development of the Digital Kazakhstan program, some of the population still has difficulties accessing the Internet, especially in remote regions. As a result, a new form of social exclusion is emerging, when people are unable to fully exercise their rights and take advantage of the digital environment.

Key words: digital inequality, digitalization, legal regulation, digital rights, Internet access, social inequality.

Introduction

At the global level, digital inequality is also very pronounced. Developed countries have stronger infrastructure capabilities, as well as resources for learning and innovation, while developing countries lag behind, leading to a widening economic and technological gap [1, 72]. According to international organizations, millions of people around the world still do not have stable Internet access, which deprives them of the opportunity to participate in the modern economy, receive education and medical care. The legal consequences of digital inequality affect fundamental human rights [2]. Restricting access to digital technologies actually means restricting the right to information, to education, to participate in public life, and to receive public services. In addition, the lack of digital skills creates obstacles to equal access to work and professional development. In the digital age, the ability to use technology is becoming not only a personal advantage, but also a prerequisite for full-fledged participation in society. All this creates new challenges for legal regulation. States need to develop policies aimed at ensuring equal access to digital resources, developing infrastructure, improving digital literacy, and creating programs to support socially vulnerable groups. An important area is the introduction of educational initiatives aimed at teaching the elderly, rural residents and low-income citizens the basics of working with digital technologies.

One of the priorities for Kazakhstan is the development of affordable Internet and digital services in rural and remote areas, as well as the formation of an inclusive digital environment. At the international level, it is important to strengthen cooperation between countries, share experiences and resources to reduce the global digital divide. Overcoming digital inequality is possible only through a combination of government initiatives, educational programs and international cooperation. Equal access to digital opportunities should be considered as a key element of a modern society based on the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights.

Materials and methods of research

The main research methods included the analysis and comparison of scientific literature, the

study of legislative documents, as well as the method of generalizing the obtained information. In addition, a comparative legal method was applied to assess the peculiarities of regulating digital rights in international organizations. This made it possible to identify the main causes of digital inequality and determine its impact on society and the legal system.

Results and its discussion

The relevance of the topic of digital inequality in the modern world is due to the rapid development of technology and the transition of society to a new digital reality, where information, knowledge and access to resources are becoming key factors of social integration. Today, the digital environment is not just a tool, but a fundamental basis for the functioning of the state, economy, education and social communication. In these conditions, the uneven access of citizens to digital opportunities leads to the emergence of a new type of social division, which affects not only the economic, but also the legal sphere.

International organizations also emphasize that digital inequality hinders the achievement of sustainable development goals and the realization of human rights. The UN and UNESCO reports note that digital inclusion is the most important condition for building a just and sustainable society. This makes the study of digital inequality and its legal consequences an important scientific task of practical importance for improving legislation, developing government programs and forming effective mechanisms for protecting citizens' rights.

Digital inequality has ceased to be an internal problem of individual States and has become a global challenge requiring coordinated efforts by the international community [3]. In this context, organizations such as the United Nations (UN), UNESCO, and the World Bank play an important role. The annual reports of the UN Secretary-General emphasize that the lack of Internet access deprives millions of people of the opportunity to participate in the modern economy, receive education and enjoy basic human rights. To address this issue, the United Nations has initiated the UN Digital Cooperation Roadmap, which proposes to develop global standards for digital justice, strengthen international cooperation in the field of cybersecurity, and create more accessible digital infrastructure for developing countries. Special attention is paid to the protection of digital rights — the right to access information, privacy, and online security.

UNESCO, in turn, considers digital inequality as a threat to intellectual and cultural democracy. The organization develops programs aimed at developing digital literacy, media security, and the ethical use of technology. For example, the UNESCO Digital Literacy for All project helps countries implement educational courses on cybersecurity, personal data protection, and critical thinking when working with information. In addition, UNESCO actively promotes the concept of «digital human rights», including the right to participate in a digital society and equal access to Internet resources. The organization emphasizes that access to the Internet should be considered as a basic human right, since without it it is impossible to realize other basic rights — education, work, information and freedom of expression.

The World Bank is also actively involved in digital development projects in developing countries. It finances the creation of Internet infrastructure, support for start-ups, digitalization of public administration and the development of online services. The World Bank estimates that every 10% increase in Internet penetration in a country increases its GDP by an average of 1.2–1.5%. This proves that reducing the digital divide has a direct impact on the economic and legal development of society.

International organizations are not only studying the problem of digital inequality, but also forming a global legal framework that ensures equal digital access for all. They contribute to the development of international standards, the exchange of experience and the financing of digital initiatives, which makes their activities a key factor in ensuring digital justice and human rights in the 21st century.

Improving the mechanisms for overcoming digital inequality requires an integrated approach, including social, legal, educational and technological measures. The main task of the state is to create conditions under which every citizen can use digital opportunities, regardless of place of residence, age, income level or education.

One of the key areas is the development of digital infrastructure in the regions [4, 72]. Access to high-speed Internet and modern communication technologies should be provided not only in large cities, but also in rural settlements, remote areas, as well as among socially vulnerable categories of citizens. Investments in infrastructure create the basis for digital equality and create conditions for the realization of citizens' rights.

The second direction is to increase the level of digital literacy of the population. It is necessary to introduce educational programs to teach the use of digital technologies, electronic services and cybersecurity tools. Such programs should be available at different levels: in schools, universities, employment centers, and public organizations. Special attention should be paid to the education of the elderly and rural residents, who often remain outside the digital environment.

The third element is legal regulation. It requires the development and implementation of regulations that consolidate the principles of digital equality and guarantee equal access to digital services. It is important to include in legislation provisions on state support for socially vulnerable groups, providing benefits for Internet connection, and providing free educational resources. In addition, it is necessary to develop legal mechanisms to protect citizens' digital rights, including issues of confidentiality, data security and fair access to information.

The next direction can be considered intersectoral interaction between the state, business and civil society. The private sector can contribute to the development of digital infrastructure, the creation of educational platforms, and the introduction of social initiatives. Public organizations and volunteer movements are able to support citizens in learning digital skills, promoting inclusion and social adaptation. It is equally important to stimulate scientific research in the field of digital inequality, to form an analytical base and to monitor digital accessibility. Based on such data, it is possible to build a more effective government policy, take into account the real needs of the population and respond to emerging challenges in a timely manner. Thus, ways to improve the solution to the problem of digital inequality include modernization of infrastructure, improvement of digital literacy, improvement of legislation, expansion of social support and development of partnership between the state, business and society. Only a systematic approach will reduce the digital divide and ensure the realization of human rights and freedoms in the digital age.

Digital inequality is becoming not only a social problem today, but also a new form of legal inequality. The difference between an Internet connection and access to digital education leads to the emergence of an «information elite» and groups «left in the digital shadow» in society. In such a situation, digital human rights — basic rights such as receiving information, expressing opinions, and accessing government services online - may turn out to be virtually unrealized. For example, a citizen who cannot connect to the e-government system cannot file his application or complaint in a timely manner, which limits his constitutional right to a fair trial and legal protection. Therefore, digital inequality is not just a technical difference, it becomes a factor that directly affects the legal status of a citizen. In these conditions, the underdevelopment of digital infrastructure and low digital literacy undermine mutual trust between people and the state.

Conclusion

Digital inequality violates the principle of social justice, as people with digital capabilities have free access to information and adapt quickly to changes in society, while citizens with digital disabilities lag behind economic and legal life [5]. This leads to the classification of society and increased social polarization. The lack of legal knowledge and culture in the digital environment hinders the protection of citizens' personal data, the conclusion of online contracts, and the prevention of legal threats on the Internet. Many people do not know that their digital footprint and personal data are protected by law, or they cannot exercise these rights. In these conditions, the effectiveness of legislative mechanisms in the field of cybersecurity and personal information protection is decreasing. In addition, digital inequality is also evident in the labor market [6]. Citizens who own digital technologies get new opportunities, such as remote work, earning money on the Internet, and engaging in e-commerce. And citizens who do not possess these skills will be pushed out of the labor market, face economic inequality and social vulnerability. This phenomenon creates new challenges in the field of labor law and social protection. Digital inequality is a complex, multifaceted problem

that directly affects not only a person's economic and social life, but also his legal personality, that is, his ability to use and protect rights. Therefore, in order to overcome digital inequality, along with the political will of the state, legal reforms, the development of digital culture and an increase in the legal activity of citizens are necessary.

Digital inequality is one of the key problems of the modern information society. Differences in access to technology, the level of digital literacy and the possibilities of using Internet resources directly affect the realization of fundamental human rights - the right to education, work, information and participation in society.

From a legal point of view, digital inequality requires a systematic approach at both the national and international levels. Legislation should not only ensure equal access to digital infrastructure, but also provide mechanisms to protect vulnerable groups from discrimination in the digital environment. This includes regulating algorithms, ensuring transparency in digital platforms, and developing digital inclusion programs.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that overcoming digital inequality is not only a matter of technology, but also a task of legal regulation, social justice and sustainable development. Only with a comprehensive solution to this problem can we talk about the full realization of human rights in the digital age [7].

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ЦИФРОВОЕ НЕРАВЕНСТВО: ПРАВОВЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ

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Аннотация. В современном мире цифровизация стала неотъемлемой частью общественного развития. Технологии проникают во все сферы жизни – образование, экономику, здравоохранение, государственное управление. Цифровая среда формирует новые возможности для реализации прав человека, получения информации, участия в общественных процессах. Однако вместе с тем усиливается проблема цифрового неравенства, которая проявляется в неравном доступе граждан к цифровым ресурсам, услугам и знаниям. Это неравенство становится одной из ключевых угроз справедливости и равенства в цифровую эпоху.

Цифровое неравенство выражается в различии между социальными группами, регионами и странами в уровне доступа к интернету, цифровым устройствам и навыкам их использования. Оно имеет многослойную природу: техническое, образовательное и социально-экономическое. В одних регионах наблюдается высокое качество цифровой инфраструктуры, широкополосный интернет и высокий уровень цифровой грамотности, в то время как в других отсутствует стабильное подключение и доступ к современным технологиям. В Казахстане, несмотря на активное развитие цифровой экономики и внедрение национальных программ, сохраняются значительные различия между крупными городами и сельскими территориями. В малых населенных пунктах нередко отсутствует устойчивое интернет-соединение, а цифровая грамотность населения остается низкой. Это ограничивает возможности получения государственных услуг, участия в дистанционном обучении, доступа к информации и трудоустройства в новых цифровых профессиях. Несмотря на развитие программы «Цифрлық Қазақстан», часть населения по-прежнему испытывает трудности с доступом к интернету, особенно в отдаленных регионах. В результате возникает новая форма социальной изоляции, когда люди не могут в полной мере реализовать свои права и воспользоваться преимуществами цифровой среды.

Актуальность темы: цифровое неравенство в современном мире обусловлена стремительным развитием технологий и переходом общества к новой цифровой реальности, где информация, знания и доступ к ресурсам становятся ключевыми факторами социальной интеграции.

Сделан вывод: Цифровое неравенство в современном обществе становится одной из ключевых социальных и правовых проблем. Изучение правовых последствий цифрового неравенства позволяет определить пути создания более справедливого и безопасного цифрового общества.

Ключевые слова: цифровое неравенство, цифровизация, правовое регулирование, цифровые права, интернет-доступ, социальное неравенства.

ЦИФРЛЫҚ ТЕҢСІЗДІК: ҚҰҚЫҚТЫҚ АСПЕКТІЛЕРІ МЕН САЛДАРЛАРЫ

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Андатпа. Қазіргі әлемде цифрландыру қоғамдық дамудың ажырамас бөлігіне айналды. Технология өмірдің барлық салаларына – білім, экономика, денсаулық сақтау, мемлекеттік басқаруға енеді. Цифрлық орта адам құқықтарын іске асыру, ақпарат алу, қоғамдық процестерге қатысу үшін жаңа мүмкіндіктер қалыптастырады. Алайда, сонымен бірге азаматтардың цифрлық ресурстарға, қызметтерге және білімге тең емес қол жетімділігінде көрінетін цифрлық теңсіздік мәселесі күшейе түсуде. Бұл теңсіздік цифрлық дәуірдегі әділеттілік пен теңдікке төнетін негізгі қауіптердің біріне айналуға.

Сандық теңсіздік әлеуметтік топтар, аймақтар мен елдер арасындағы Интернетке қол жетімділік деңгейіндегі, сандық құрылғылардағы және оларды пайдалану дағдыларындағы айырмашылықта көрінеді. Оның көп қабатты табиғаты бар: техникалық, білім беру және әлеуметтік-экономикалық. Кейбір аймақтарда цифрлық инфрақұрылымның жоғары сапасы, кең жолақты интернет және цифрлық сауаттылықтың жоғары деңгейі байқалады, ал басқаларында тұрақты байланыс пен заманауи технологияларға қол жетімділік жоқ. Қазақстанда цифрлық экономиканың белсенді дамуына және ұлттық бағдарламалардың енгізілуіне қарамастан, ірі қалалар мен ауылдық аумақтар арасында айтарлықтай айырмашылықтар сақталуда. Шағын елді мекендерде тұрақты интернет байланысы жоқ, ал халықтың цифрлық сауаттылығы төмен болып қалады. Бұл мемлекеттік қызметтерді

алу, Қашықтықтан оқытуға қатысу, ақпаратқа қол жеткізу және жаңа цифрлық кәсіптерге жұмысқа орналасу мүмкіндіктерін шектейді. «Цифрлық Қазақстан» бағдарламасының дамуына қарамастан, халықтың бір бөлігі, әсіресе шалғай өңірлерде Интернетке қол жеткізуде қиындықтарға тап болып отыр. Нәтижесінде әлеуметтік оқшауланудың жаңа түрі пайда болады, онда адамдар өз құқықтарын толық жүзеге асыра алмайды және цифрлық ортаның артықшылықтарын пайдалана алмайды.

Қазіргі әлемдегі цифрлық теңсіздік тақырыбының өзектілігі технологиялардың қарқынды дамуымен және қоғамның жаңа цифрлық шындыққа көшуімен байланысты, мұнда ақпарат, Білім және ресурстарға қол жетімділік әлеуметтік интеграцияның негізгі факторларына айналады. Зерттеу нәтижесінде цифрлық теңсіздік пен құқықтық салдарлар анықталды

Мақаланың қорытындысы: қазіргі қоғамда цифрлық теңсіздік негізгі әлеуметтік және құқықтық мәселелердің біріне айналады. Цифрлық теңсіздіктің құқықтық салдарын зерттеу ол қауіпсіз цифрлық қоғам құру жолдарын анықтауға мүмкіндік береді.

Түйін сөздер: цифрлық теңсіздік, цифрландыру, құқықтық реттеу, цифрлық құқықтар, интернет-қолжетімділік, әлеуметтік теңсіздіктер.