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REVIEW ARTICLE

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL ESCAPISM: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, being widely implemented in key areas of public life, bring not only new opportunities but also numerous social risks. The sustainability of organizations, industries, and society depends on how these risks are considered in management strategies. The paper analyzes the impact of AI in terms of social escapism, a trend toward minimizing social contact and self-isolation from society.

Materials and Methods. A PRISMA-based systematic literature review included 40 primary sources selected from 1,319 publications in Russian and English identified in the ScienceDirect, GoogleScholar, OpenAlex, CyberLeninka, and Elibrary.ru databases (by August 9, 2025).

Results. The study identifies key cases in which AI causes the spread of social escapism: (a) when real-life communication is substituted by interactions with AI agents, fostering emotional attachment and reducing the need for interpersonal contact; (b) when the existing digital escapism is reinforced by personalization algorithms and hyper-realistic virtual spaces based on AI, which leads to digital «reclusion» and social isolation; and (c) when AI threatens traditional values of freedom and justice, as well as the value of the individual, beyond the social environment of AI.

Discussion. The three key cases are demonstrated by the three models of emerging social escapism: emotional-communicative, perceptual-ontological, and value-existential. These models explain various behavioral strategies of social self-exclusion which result from subjective acceptance or rejection of relevant technologies. The study outlines the ways for further conceptualization of AI-caused social escapism, including longitudinal, cross-cultural, and group studies, and the need to consider social risks and escapist tendencies, when implementing AI technologies.

KEYWORDS

Social escapism, social isolation, artificial intelligence, AI agents, substitution of social interactions, digital escapism, hyperreality.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares interest conflict lack.

USE OF AI TOOLS DECLARATION

The author declares that he has not used Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to write this article.

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ОБЗОРНАЯ СТАТЬЯ

РАЗВИТИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНОГО ЭСКАПИЗМА ПОД ВЛИЯНИЕМ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ ИСКУССТВЕННОГО ИНТЕЛЛЕКТА: СИСТЕМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ОБЗОР ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Введение. Технологии искусственного интеллекта (ИИ), широко внедряемые в ключевые сферы общественной жизни, несут не только новые возможности, но и множество социальных рисков. От того, насколько данные риски учитываются в рамках управленческих стратегий на микро- и макроуровнях, зависит устойчивость развития организаций, отраслей, общества в целом. В статье рассматриваются феномен социального эскапизма (активно развивающийся тренд, связанный с формированием и практической реализацией установок на минимизацию социальных контактов и самоизоляцию от общества) и технологии ИИ в качестве фактора, обусловливающего развитие данного тренда.

Материалы и методы. Систематический обзор литературы подготовлен на основе использования метода PRISMA. Из 1319 публикаций на русском и английском языках, обнаруженных в литературных базах ScienceDirect, GoogleScholar, OpenAlex, CyberLeninka и Elibrary.ru (дата последнего поиска – 9 августа 2025 г.), для обзора отобрано 40 первоисточников, раскрывающих различные аспекты социального эскапизма под влиянием технологий ИИ.

Результаты. Определены ключевые направления влияния ИИ на развитие социального эскапизма. Первое направление связано с субституированием социальных взаимодействий искусственными, в рамках которого ИИ-агенты становятся альтернативой реальному общению, формируя эмоциональную привязанность и снижая потребность в межличностных контактах. Второе направление заключается в усилении существующего цифрового эскапизма, в рамках которого алгоритмы персонализации и гиперреалистичное виртуальное пространство на основе использования технологий виртуального ИИ обусловливают цифровое «затворничество» и социальную самоизоляцию. Третье направление отражает тенденцию к уходу от «ИИ-зированной» социальной среды вследствие угрозы со стороны рассматриваемых технологий традиционным ценностям свободы и справедливости, а также ценности человека как такового.

Обсуждение. Автором вводятся три модели развития социального эскапизма (эмоционально-коммуникативная, перцептивно-онтологическая и ценностно-экзистенциальная), раскрывающие различные поведенческие стратегии социального самоисключения в условиях субъективного принятия или непринятия релевантных технологий. Обозначаются перспективы дальнейшей концептуализации рассматриваемого феномена, связанные с проведением лонгитюдных, кросс-культурных и групповых исследований. Делается вывод о необходимости учёта социальных рисков, включая эскапистские тенденции, при внедрении технологий ИИ.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

Социальный эскапизм, социальная изоляция, искусственный интеллект, ИИ-агенты, субституция социальных взаимодействий, цифровой эскапизм, гиперреальность.

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КОНФЛИКТ ИНТЕРЕСОВ

Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ СРЕДСТВ ИИ

Автор заявляет о том, что при написании данной статьи не применялись средства генеративного искусственного интеллекта.

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■ INTRODUCTION

In a context of economic instability, political upheavals and demographic challenges, a growing crisis of meaning and values, and the accelerating pace of technological innovation, the development of modern society is becoming increasingly turbulent. Successful social adaptation often requires mobility, flexibility in decision-making, the constant acquisition of new competencies, adherence to principles of information hygiene, etc., while temporary solitude for reflection, restoration of socio-psychological resources, and the resumption of active social participation is becoming a common practice [1]. However, under the influence of various factors (rejection of social values and norms, the availability of attractive living spaces outside of intense social interactions, etc.), active social participation may not resume, and temporary solitude may transform into persistent, everyday practices of avoiding the surrounding social reality.

In scientific literature, the term «social escapism» is used to describe this phenomenon. It is interpreted as «a person's desire to isolate themselves from society, exclude social contacts, and isolate themselves from public life» [2], «a rejection of the existing social system, which is expressed in a persistent orientation toward leaving this system» [3], and «a strategy that places society «outside the brackets» of an individual's life» [4]. Researchers have identified a wide range of forms of social escapism (downshifting, kidult, social isolation, hikikomori, etc. [2; 3]); however, in most cases, similar negative social consequences are revealed, associated with the disintegration of the individual and society as a whole. Thus, A. Kibalnik and I. Fedosova consider the loss of basic communication skills and the possibility of self-realization in the real world [3] as consequences of social escapism, O. Davydov – the choice of radical forms of voluntary solitude [5], T. Gonoshilov and K. Perepelkina – the degradation of personality and the disruption of socialization processes [2].

Among the factors driving social escapism, the development of new technologies, primarily artificial intelligence (AI), stands out. These technologies are currently exerting a significant influence on a wide range of public spheres, transforming social structures and processes, «gradually displacing previously established social practices, including communicative ones» [2]. However, while certain aspects of social escapism, such as the development of social isolation, deterioration of communication skills, etc., as a result of interaction with AI technologies, have frequently come to the attention of researchers, we found no fundamental studies systematizing knowledge about the development of social escapism under the influence of AI.

The purpose of this review is to analyze existing scientific literature to systematize knowledge about the impact of artificial intelligence technologies on the development of social escapism.

■ MATERIALS AND METHODS

The systematic review was prepared using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method, which requires consistent implementation of a number of recommendations [6].

In the first stage, taking into account the previously presented topic, rationale for the review's relevance, and purpose, key objectives were formulated:

1) analyze how AI technologies contribute to the development of social escapism;

2) identify specific AI technologies that have the greatest impact on the development of social escapism;

3) identify the specific impact of AI technologies on the development of social escapism in various social groups;

4) examine the factors that contribute to the increased influence of AI on the development of social escapism.

At the second stage, the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of sources from the review are determined. The inclusion criteria include:

1) scientific papers considering various aspects of the development of social escapism under the influence of AI technologies;

2) a certain type of publication: scientific articles, reviews, books or book chapters;

3) publications in Russian and English with a restriction on the publication date of the study (from 2010[1] to 2025).

The exclusion criteria include:

1) studies focused on the technical aspects of the development and implementation of AI;

[1] Since the early 2010s, there has been a significant breakthrough in the development of AI technologies (the "deep learning era") and their most active penetration into various areas of public life.

2) scientific papers considering the social consequences of the implementation of new technologies in general without an emphasis on AI;

3) publications that analyze the impact of AI on other social processes or society as a whole (without an emphasis on social escapism);

4) studies considering various aspects of the development of social escapism without a detailed analysis of AI as an influencing factor;

5) scientific papers focused on the development of recommendations for minimizing the negative social consequences of the implementation of AI, which do not contain an analysis of the development of social escapism under the influence of these technologies;

6) duplicate publications;

7) publications without access to their full text.

In the third stage, literature databases are identified for searching for relevant publications. This review utilizes the international databases ScienceDirect, GoogleScholar, and OpenAlex, as well as the Russian electronic libraries CyberLeninka and Elibrary.ru. The search for publications was conducted up to August 9, 2025.

In the fourth stage, a publication search strategy is developed, taking into account the characteristics of the literature databases (search syntax and available advanced search filters). To ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant scientific papers, generalized search queries are primarily used, without specifying aspects of the impact of AI technologies on the development of social escapism (e.g., «escapism, artificial intelligence»). Search filters are set according to inclusion and exclusion criteria (e.g., «by publication type: articles, book chapters,» «years: 2010–2025»).

The fifth stage involves searching for relevant publications and eliminating duplicates from the total number of retrieved works. Eight search queries across all literature databases yielded a total of 1,319 sources. After eliminating 58 duplicates using Excel, the total number of works for further analysis was reduced to 1,261. The search queries and results are presented in detail in Table 1.

Table 1 – Search for relevant publications
Таблица 1 – Поиск релевантных публикаций

Database	Search queries	Filters	Results (number of publications)
ScienceDirect	(«social») AND («escapism» OR «withdrawal» OR «avoidance» OR «alienation» OR «isolation») AND («artificial intelligence» OR «machine learning» OR «neural network»)	1) search by titles, abstracts and keywords; 2) publication type: articles, book chapters; 3) years: 2010–2025; 4) access type: open	71
GoogleScholar	(«social») AND («escapism» OR «withdrawal» OR «avoidance» OR «alienation» OR «isolation» OR «loneliness») AND («artificial intelligence» OR «machine learning» OR «neural network»)	1) search: in the title of the article; 2) years: 2010–2025	17
OpenAlex	(«social») AND («escapism» OR «withdrawal» OR «avoidance» OR «alienation» OR «isolation» OR «loneliness») AND («artificial intelligence» OR «machine learning» OR «neural network»)	1) search: in title and abstract; 2) source type: article, review, book chapter; 3) years: 2010–2025; 4) access type: open	745
CyberLeninka	escapism, artificial intelligence	1) search by titles, annotations and keywords (each search query uses the operators “@ name”, “@ann”, “@keywords”); 2) years: 2010–2025	28
	alienation, artificial intelligence		212
	isolation, artificial intelligence		150
	loneliness, artificial intelligence		46
Elibrary.ru	(«social») AND («escapism» | «withdrawal» | «avoidance» | «alienation» | «isolation» | «loneliness») AND («artificial intelligence» | «AI» | «machine learning» | «neural network»)	1) search by titles, abstracts and keywords; 2) publication type: journal articles, books; 3) years: 2010–2025; 4) access: open	50
Total:			1319

At the sixth stage, titles and abstracts are screened and assessed for inclusion and exclusion criteria. Of the 1,261 publications submitted before screening, 588 were excluded from the review due to compliance with exclusion criterion № 1, 184 for exclusion criterion № 2, 181 for exclusion criterion № 3, 211 for exclusion criterion № 4, and 18 for exclusion criterion № 5. As a result of this stage, the total number of publications was reduced to 79.

In the seventh stage, the full texts of the publications are analyzed to assess their compliance with the review's key objectives and inclusion and exclusion criteria. This analysis identified 11 papers that met exclusion criterion № 2, 25 papers that met exclusion criterion № 3, and three papers that met exclusion criterion № 4. The remaining 40 publications were analyzed for compliance with the research quality criteria[2]. Taking into account the positive results of the analysis (only 1 of the 7 criteria – research quality assessment by two or more reviewers – was found to be non-compliant), a final list of 40 papers for the literature review was compiled. The general sequence of the search and selection of publications, indicating their number and reasons for exclusion, is presented in Figure 1.

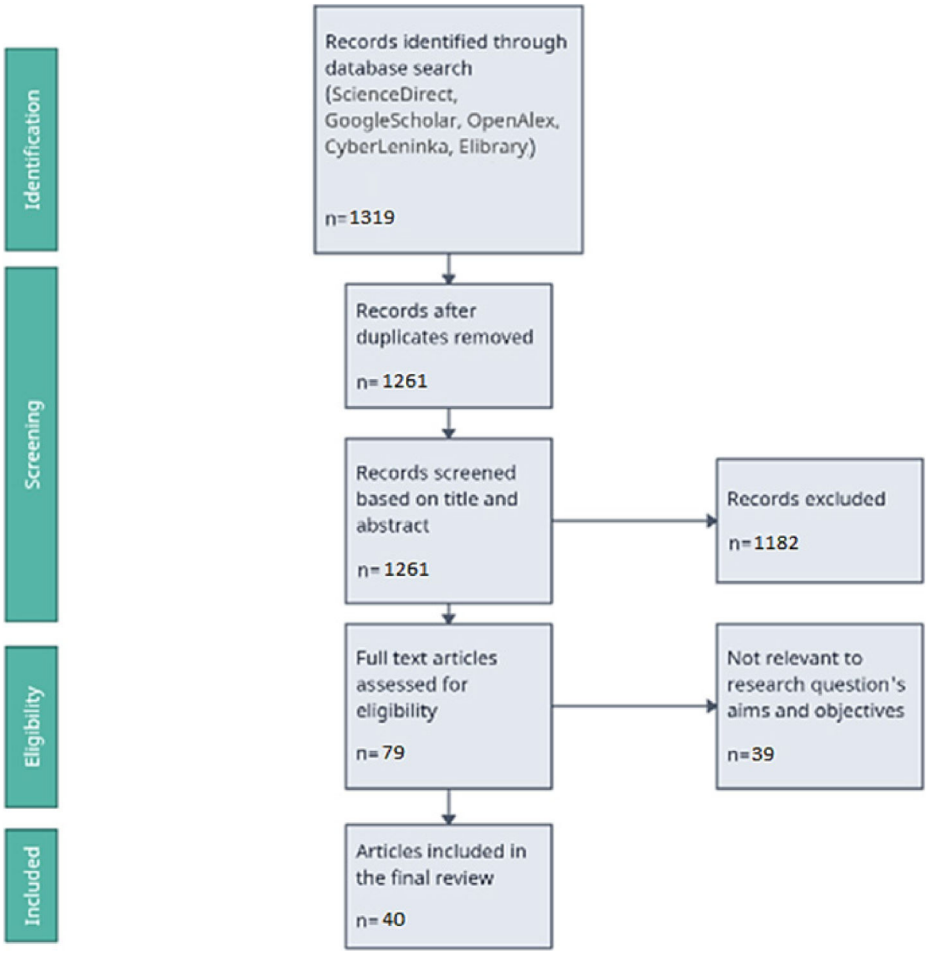

Figure 1 – Stages of searching and selecting publications (PRISMA flow diagram)
Рисунок 1 – Этапы поиска и отбора публикаций (PRISMA flow diagram)

■ RESEARCH RESULTS

As noted previously, we found no publications systematizing knowledge on the development of social escapism under the influence of AI. Researchers typically focus on examining individual aspects of the relevant process. An analysis of 40 primary sources selected for the review revealed three key areas of AI's influence on the development of social escapism.

The first direction is the substitution of real social interactions with communications involving virtual or robotic AI agents. The possibility of such a substitution is determined by the personalization and adaptability of the technologies offered to users. Thus, virtual voice assistants such as Alice, Cortana, XiaoAys, Siri, Alexa, etc., used to solve a wide range of tasks (from searching for information and entertainment to managing business communications), have access to user data, are capable of analyzing their mental and emotional characteristics, and providing appropriate personalized recommendations. As O. Skorodumova and I. Melikov note, these technologies are becoming «leading authorities, friends,

[2] Research Quality Assessment Tools. – URL: https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/study-quality-assessment-tools (Accessed: September 22, 2025).

and assistants,» fostering emotional and psychological dependence on AI and diminishing the importance of traditional social institutions in the process of socialization [7]. T. Xie, I. Pentina, and T. Hancock, studying interaction with chatbots, note consistent transformations in the perception of AI by users from a "service technology" to one "acquiring sensory capabilities," when "the focus shifts from a purely functional perspective of acceptance and satisfaction to a more relational and social one," which, when forming "long-term relationships," can lead to dependence on AI agents and their positioning as the main sources of satisfaction of social needs [8]. R. Yao, G. Qi, D. Sheng, H. Sun, and J. Zhang, analyzing the process of habituation and the formation of dependence on chatbots, consider a special state of "flow" ("a feeling of complete immersion, concentration, and pleasure from the activity") in users, which appears due to the ability of AI agents to solve assigned tasks, adapt to emotional states and communication styles. As the authors note, such a state of "flow" causes not only the receipt of positive emotions, but also an increase in the frequency and duration of interactions with chatbots, and in the long term – addiction (PACU – Problematic AI Chatbot Use) and a gradual withdrawal from social reality [9].

In addition to generalized modeling of the process of substituting social interactions with artificial ones, researchers examine the specifics of this process in relation to individual social groups. Thus, the consistent «blurring of ontological and psychological boundaries between people and machines» (essentially, the anthropomorphization of robotic and virtual AI agents – subjectively imparting human properties to them) can have the greatest impact on young children, primarily due to the insufficient development of critical thinking. As M. Gultekin notes, based on a secondary analysis of the results of numerous studies, «The deceptive social appearance of robots leads to attachment to robots, which, in turn, leads to a loss of contact with a person ... children begin to replace people with robots in social relationships» [10]. A. Malyshkin, analyzing the interaction of children with robot nannies, considers the lack of «love, care and affection necessary for a child's full development», which leads to a breakdown in the child's emotional connection with parents and problems in further socialization [11]. In addition to the risks of increased social isolation, increased interactions with AI agents at an early age (for example, from 2017 to 2020, the number of children under 8 in the US with an intelligent digital assistant at home increased from 17% to 41%) may also lead to significant transformations in self-identification: "adopting non-human behavior patterns" and even perceiving themselves as "digital or robotic entities" [10], which together can form strong escapist attitudes in children.

Considerable attention is being paid by researchers to various aspects of social escapism in the implementation of virtual AI in the educational sphere. Despite the fact that school and university students are less inclined to anthropomorphize AI compared to younger children [10], the tendency to substitute social interactions with artificial ones is quite pronounced among representatives of this group. As noted by H. Chen and Z. Liu, the use of generative AI (ChatGPT) in solving various educational problems leads to a weakening of the emotional connection and interpersonal communication with other «traditional» participants in the educational process – teachers and classmates [12]. The results of an international study in 2024 (23 thousand respondents from 109 countries) indicate that more than half of students (56%) are satisfied with the level of assistance from ChatGPT, and 25% already prefer artificial interactions to social ones in the context of learning, noting the ease of use and the provision of more understandable information compared to that coming from teachers [13]. Beyond student satisfaction with the results of interactions with AI agents, the potential for social escapism is reinforced by the overall transformation of educational trajectories toward individualization. As V. Duran, E. Ersanli, and H. Celik note, AI is capable of replacing not only individual acts of communication with other participants in the educational process but also changing the very culture of collaborative learning, based on dialogue and collaboration («group work and the exchange of ideas will disappear,» «we will have children tied to screens,» «everything comes from the machine... we no longer need people») [14].

Despite the fact that a personalized educational environment with the active use of AI and a tendency to reduce interpersonal communication creates only the illusion of real social interactions (closeness to AI "reflects an anthropomorphized interpretation rather than the true depth of relationships" [15]), this does not necessarily determine the desire of students to compensate for the declining social interactions and acquire alternative social experience for a number of reasons. Thus, the intensification of the use of AI to the detriment of communication with teachers, classmates, etc. negatively affects the development of social skills and emotional intelligence [12; 14; 16; 17], leads to the internalization of a communication model that hinders interpersonal communication (this model is characterized by straightforwardness, the inability to grasp nuances, ignoring the emotional state of the interlocutor, etc.) [15], technostress ("anxiety and discomfort that people experience when interacting with new technologies" [16]), which reduces individual resources for "energy-intensive" interpersonal interactions, and other negative socio-psychological consequences for students. In such conditions, predispositions to avoidant behavior are often formed and the feeling of loneliness increases [18; 19; 20], which, in turn, only strengthens the role of artificial communication as

an accessible and less "resource-intensive" substitute for social interactions: as B. Klimova and M. Pikhart note, "AI can increase loneliness when students perceive it as the main source of support" [16]. Overall, the widespread use of AI in education can be seen as a factor not only in the institutional development of social isolation, but also in the consistent formation of students' own escapist attitudes.

The active implementation of AI technologies in modern organizations also impacts members of another major social group – workers. Researchers view algorithms as agents of intra-organizational communication, displacing interpersonal interactions. As K. Vredenburgh notes, AI performing management functions «reduces the need for employees to work together as a team or for a manager to convey instructions and feedback... They [employees] can complete a task without even talking to a manager or colleague» [21]. L. Hofeditz, M. Mirbabaie, and M. Ortmann, analyzing the transformation of communications under the influence of AI, point to a decrease in the quantity and quality of informal interactions between employees («small talk»), which are essential for the development of corporate culture, a sense of community, and an atmosphere of trust [22]. Artificial restrictions on social contacts are compounded by the risk of reduced motivation for professional self-realization, which collectively leads to a general decline in social activity: as T. Sidorina, O. Glebov, and I. Sidelnikov note, "The prospect of passive withdrawal, when a person increasingly prefers to withdraw from the active position of a direct participant in life, transferring basic work and functions to a smart machine, is becoming increasingly relevant" [23]. Despite the fact that the replacement of human interactions with human-machine ones in the work sphere is often viewed by researchers as "forced social isolation" rather than as a consequence of the escapist attitudes of work collective members, such a replacement, it seems, may well lead to the development of social escapism due to the deterioration of interpersonal communication skills, the formation of socially avoidant behavior, attachment to AI agents, etc.

Another relevant area of research is the impact of robotic AI agents on the elderly. As M. Gultekin notes, along with young children, "the elderly are the most vulnerable social group and most often suffer from anthropomorphism..., experience a strong need for social contact, and social robots can create the false impression that they are able to satisfy this need" [10]. In addition to creating the illusion of social interactions and forming strong attachments (for example, in Japan, there are widespread cases of mourning and holding "funerals" for malfunctioning robot dogs [10]), these technologies also lead to a consistent displacement of human contact, increasing tension in the relationships between the elderly and their caregivers [24; 25]. A. Malyshkin comes to similar conclusions, considering the implementation of AI agents as a factor in the development of alienation between people and an increase in loneliness [11]. Such escapist tendencies may receive additional impetus in the context of structural transformations in the labour market and the widespread use of robots in the care and social services sector as a "cheap and effective alternative" to social workers [24].

While the rise of AI-driven social escapism in education, labor, and elder care is more likely a dysfunction of these technologies, a number of virtual and robotic AIs are being created specifically to substitute for social relationships. For example, the Replika chatbot, which has an audience of over 30 million people (as of 2024[3]), was originally developed by E. Kuyda as an alternative to communicating with her deceased friend. Today, it represents a personalized virtual AI with the ability to customize an avatar, communicate (including via video calls) on virtually any topic, and act as a personal psychologist, coach, romantic partner, and so on. As M. Savic notes, Replika is addictive: when in 2023, from a program that provides "a safe space to explore your emotions without fear of judgment", removed the functionality for communicating on erotic topics, this not only caused widespread discontent among the audience, but also mental health problems among some users, who experienced «a deep sense of loss, akin to grieving for a loved one» [26]. In turn, addiction to the simplicity, comfort, constant availability, and individual approach to communication from the chatbot leads to the fact that «interaction with people can become more difficult and less satisfying», and users «prefer artificial interaction to social interaction» [26]. M. Skjuve, A. Folstad, K. Fostervold, and P. Brandtzaeg, based on a qualitative longitudinal study, examine in detail the process of human-chatbot relationship formation (HCR), noting the nonlinearity and heterogeneity of this process – from the relatively rapid formation of a deep attachment to a prolonged "period of orientation and exploration with a low level of affective involvement". Despite the emergence of problems leading to a breakdown in the relationship with Replika in approximately half of the subjects (disappearance of the novelty effect, failure to achieve the original goal of interaction, conflicts related to intimate issues), for a significant proportion, the positive ratio of "rewards [empathy, responsiveness, safe environment, etc.] and the costs of self-disclosure" determined the development of a "strong relationship" with the chatbot [27].

Another illustrative example of the substitution of social relations, considered by researchers, is the active implementation of robotic AI agents for personal relationships and performing the functions of sexual partners. As F. Andreallo and C. Chesher note, despite

[3] Replika CEO Eugenia Kuyda says it's okay if we end up marrying AI chatbots / The Verge. – URL: https://www.theverge.com/24216748/replika-ceo-eugenia-kuyda-ai-companion-chatbots-dating-friendship-decoder-podcast-interview (Accessed: 22.09.2025)

the fact that robots cannot be "absolute equivalents of people", do not have their own feelings and emotions, as well as "freedom of choice necessary for love relationships", their appearance and behavioral patterns are capable of forming an attractive image of AI agents [28]. In combination with individual user attitudes towards "being at the center of the universe" within the framework of personal relationships ("the robot is always focused on the person") and satisfying needs without reciprocity, a predisposition to safe, controlled, predictable relationships, this attractive image can become a factor in activating social escapism: the replacement of social partners with artificial ones, habituation to them and subsequent addiction lead to a deterioration in social skills, a decrease in empathy, general dehumanization (positioning other individuals only as objects by analogy with robots) and social isolation [28; 29; 30].

Another relevant area of AI's influence is the increase in digital escapism, already observed (before the widespread adoption of modern AI technologies) – a retreat into virtual online space at the expense of direct social interactions and social activity in general. Forms of digital escapism include prolonged (excessive) use of social media, online gaming, internet surfing (continuously visiting various internet resources without any specific purpose), and so on. According to a 2021 Dazed study, 17% of Generation Z representatives «preferred their online life to their physical life,» and among those spending more than 8 hours a week playing online games, this figure rose to 52%[4].

In this case, one of the key factors driving social escapism is the «filter bubbles» created by embedded AI, such as those found in social networks or search engines. These technologies personalize the content users view based on an analysis of their previous digital practices (search queries, post ratings, comments, etc.). Algorithms select posts, photos, videos, and advertising based on individual preferences, while filtering out alternative information. As E. Rodilosso notes, users «find themselves locked in an epistemic microuniverse where they see only information that confirms their existing beliefs», which, in turn, leads to the polarization and radicalization of their opinions, intolerance of other views and positions, and a consistent narrowing of their circle of social interactions [31].

It is important to note that «filter bubbles» serve not only an informational function but also exert an emotional impact. By selecting content based on both its relevance to user interests and its ability to evoke strong emotional reactions (on the one hand, pleasant content that creates a sense of security and comfort, on the other, provoking indignation, fear, etc.), AI creates an «unstable structure of feelings» in digital escapists. As E. Yakovleva notes, such an emotional impact on «electronic nomads» («spending a huge amount of time online»), for example, is a tool for manipulating consumer behavior by algorithm owners (the so-called «monetization of emotions»); «the focus on emotions is justified by the fact that the nomad lacks them, and the acquisition [of a particular product] turns out to be a means of escape from loneliness, personal crisis, spiritual emptiness, an opportunity to become happy, harmonious, and prosperous» [32]. Moreover, the illusion of «salvation from loneliness» actually causes its further intensification, only «twisting the spiral» of social escapism [33; 34].

Besides «filter bubbles», the impetus for digital escapism is being driven by the proliferation of virtual influencers – «agents augmented with digital avatars that look like humans» and «exist entirely online». Similar to bloggers, they have their own audience on social media and are often used for marketing promotions [35]. AI technologies generate the appearance of these agents, synthesize their voice and behavior, and manage the overall content of relevant pages and feedback from internet users. The most popular virtual influencers (Lu do Magalu, Barbie, Lil Miquela, and others) already have millions of followers, and the overall market is projected to grow by 30–40% annually over the next five years[5].

The impact of virtual influencers on the development of escapism goes beyond the quantitative increase in content consumed by «digital nomads.» Along with advantages such as the ability to be active around the clock (avoiding human fatigue) and scalability (the ability to change the language of communication and adapt to cultural specifics to engage audiences across borders), these AI agents are capable of implementing narratives that blur the boundaries between reality and virtuality. For example, one of the most popular influencers, Lil Miquela (over 3.4 million followers on TikTok[6]), introduces herself as a robotic girl «with a mysterious story of personal development» and certain individual characteristics (nationality, age, zodiac sign, etc.), who is professionally involved in music and modeling (video clips with her participation are posted on domestic and international online platforms), gives interviews to popular media (Vogue, The Guardian, U magazine), collaborates with famous brands (Prada, Calvin Klein, BMW, Samsung), etc. This narrative, blurring the boundaries of reality and virtuality, is verbally

[4] Trend Report "A Future World" / Dazed. – URL: https://www.dazeddigital.com/science-tech/article/53653/1/dazed-studio-trend-report-2031-a-future-world (Accessed: September 22, 2025).

[5] Why a virtual influencer is better than a live blogger. How brands can work with digital influencers, how effective they are compared to human influencers, and what awaits the influencer marketing market by 2048 / ADPASS. – URL: https://adpass.ru/virtualnym-inflyuenseram-predrekayut-svetloe-budushchee/ (Accessed: September 22, 2025).

[6] Lil Miquela's TikTok page. – URL: https://www.tiktok.com/@lilmiquela (Accessed: September 22, 2025).

confirmed by Lil Miquela herself: «I may be a robot, but the world I live in is very human»[7].

Researchers studying the social impact of virtual influencers consider the combination of the «illusion of humanity» (anthropomorphism) and the «hyperreality» of the surrounding digital world as a factor in creating an attractive space for escapists. As L. Freund notes, «followers' interactions with these virtual influencers can feel just as real, if not more so, than interactions with human influencers. This is a clear example of reality inversion, where a digital simulacrum becomes more 'real' than actual reality, and where we can see the existence of a 'longing for transcendence'« [36]. S. Jin, analyzing the characteristics of virtual influencers and the users most susceptible to their influence, points to two key factors in the development of strong emotional attachment to these "digital entities": on the one hand, the "human-likeness" of AI agents in terms of their appearance and behavioral cues, and on the other, the loneliness of users: even in a situation "when the perceived humanity of virtual influencers was low, lonelier people demonstrated greater empathy" [35]. Overall, the results of the study among American social media users indicate high awareness (80.6% of respondents) and more in-depth knowledge (76.5%) of the digital practices of AI-based virtual influencers, as well as a relatively high level of actual adoption of these innovations (69.3% of respondents note a significant impact of AI agents on their individual decisions, and 57.4% – active involvement in the virtual space of influencers) [35].

It should be noted that, in addition to the AI-based technologies that are quite widespread today, researchers are considering the prospects and possible social consequences of the mass implementation of such innovations as personalized digital avatars. These are dynamic and interactive digital representations of users, capable of realistically reproducing their appearance and kinesic non-verbal cues (based on AI technologies of generative neural networks, voice synthesis, motion capture, etc.). Potentially, personalized avatars can not only be widely used in online games, social networks, virtual meetings, etc., but also become the basis for the implementation of the project of the global digital space of the Metaverse – essentially, an alternative to the real social space with formats of interactions «human – human», «human – AI agent», «AI agent – AI agent», mediated by digital avatars [37; 38]. As L. Freund notes, such innovations contribute to increased user engagement by enhancing the effect of presence ("digital avatars serve as our proxies in the digital world, embodying our identity... they are our digital self"), and "hyperrealistic" virtual space as a whole "offers a break from the ordinary, allowing people to immerse themselves in fantastical worlds, experience exciting adventures, and establish connections with digital avatars, ... promises a form of transcendence – a departure from the limitations and imperfections of the physical world" [36]. Moreover, the most pronounced escapist tendencies, according to the findings of the study, will manifest themselves among those who "struggle with social anxiety, emotional intimacy, or feelings of inferiority in the real world" [36].

An alternative way in which relevant technologies influence social escapism is through flight from sociality, where AI plays a dominant role. Unlike the previously discussed approaches (substitution of social interactions and increased digital escapism), in this case, the opposite vector of technology's influence is observed – an «escape from», rather than a «escape to» AI. Within the framework of the scientific papers reviewed, this type of influence is revealed primarily through an analysis of the existing and predicted negative consequences of AI implementation, manifested in social alienation, maladaptation to new technological realities, and even a general loss of human agency in its classical sense.

One of the key factors in the rejection of the «AI-ization» of society, identified by researchers, is the specifics of algorithmic control over individual and group behavior. This is primarily due to the widespread use of strict control and unfair management decisions by AI. In terms of implementing the control function, AI systems gain access to extensive databases, which, on the one hand, causes "fear of surveillance or loss of control over personal information" [16] and "a feeling of lack of freedom in one's own choice" [32], and on the other hand, enables AI to "recognize and neutralize any deviations from the general line" when implementing management functions (for example, within the framework of managing the educational process [7]). As V. Tatarov notes, "The feedback loop through which AI algorithms escape human control allows them to control the social world interacting with them: input data received from the world implement the control function in relation to this world" [39]. With regard to unfair management decisions, studies examine "the reproduction and scaling of discriminatory practices in employment", as well as "ineffective and erroneous personnel decisions in the context of total algorithmization of HR processes" as conditions for the growth of social alienation among the economically active population [40].

In addition to strict control and unfair management decisions, the specific features of algorithms that contribute to the general rejection of the «AI-ization» of society include practices of manipulative influence. Thus, S. Volodenkov and S. Fedorchenko, noting the difficulties in distinguishing between artificial and human agents communicating in virtual space, consider the accumulation of a «critical mass of artificial

[7] «I May Be a Robot, But the World I Live In Is Very Human»: Interview with Lil Miquela // U Magazine. – URL: https://umagazine.ru/moda/trends/mozhet-byt-ya-i-robot-no-mir-v-kotorom-ya-zhivu-ochen-dazhe-chelovecheskiy-intervyu-s-lil-miquela/ (Accessed: 22.09.2025).

personalities» as a factor in the transformation of values and attitudes, as well as social upheaval: «behind such manipulations may be not only a local political regime, but also a transnational digital corporation or another political regime interested in weakening its economic or geopolitical adversary» [37]. L. Freund analyzes «deepfake» technologies («synthetic media created by artificial intelligence») and concludes that they have significant potential «for disinformation or manipulation» [36]. Ya. Sedinin and V. Syrov consider individual aspects of human corporeality (appearance, voice, etc.) as tools of manipulative influence using AI, while these aspects of corporeality «cease to fully belong to the person, becoming an object of market exchange» [41]. E. Yakovleva, as we mentioned earlier, points to the hidden control of the consumer behavior of «electronic nomads» by embedded AI algorithms based on databases, digital traces, and emotional intelligence technologies [32].

While some researchers position the aforementioned features of algorithmic management as contradicting traditional values of freedom and justice, others view the implementation of AI technologies as a threat to the value of humans as such. This is primarily reflected in the devaluation of human activity in general ("What performs traditionally human functions better and more productively – natural or artificial intelligence?" [42]) and its key form – labor activity. Research results show that such a decrease in competitiveness in the labor market relative to AI agents leads to a wide range of negative consequences – from a slight deterioration in well-being and an increase in stress levels to social exclusion and even a loss of the meaning of life [23; 39; 40; 43]. Tendencies toward replacing humans in the sphere of culture and art are also quite pronounced [44], already to a certain extent creating barriers to self-realization in creativity as a potential alternative to traditional labor activity. Further technological development and the rapid expansion of their capabilities in general may lead to the positioning of humans primarily as a resource for the development of AI. As G. Shipley and D. Williams note, in a society dominated by AI, "data has the highest value, and people have value only as sources of data, and then only until they are reduced to data as much as possible, after which, like a digitized paper book, they become an unnecessary burden" [45].

In any case, the threat to traditional values of freedom and justice posed by the implementation of AI technologies, along with the prospect of a transformation of human status (from the highest value and driver of socioeconomic development to a resource for technological advancement and an economic burden), are clearly factors driving the rejection of «AI-ization» by a certain segment of society. However, the consequences of such rejection in the form of specific behavioral strategies are not analyzed within the studies selected for this review. For which segment of society will «total algorithmization» be unacceptable, which behavioral strategy (gradual adaptation, active resistance, or escape, i.e., escapism) will prevail, and what forms social escapism will manifest in this case – these and other relevant questions require further research.

■ DISCUSSION

Let's address the objectives of this review. First, an analysis of the selected primary sources allowed us to determine how AI technologies influence the development of social escapism. General models of the process under consideration, taking into account the multi-vector nature of AI influence, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 – Models of social escapism influenced by AI technologies
Таблица 2 – Модели социального эскапизма под влиянием технологий ИИ

Model components	Models of social escapism		
	Emotional-communicative	Perceptual-ontological	Value-existential
The direction of AI influence	Substitution of social interactions by artificial ones	Rise of digital escapism	Escape from the «AI-ization» of society
AI technologies making a key impact	Virtual and robotic AI	Embedded and virtual AI	Virtual, robotic and embedded AI
Vector of social escapism	«Towards AI»		«From AI»
Phases of social escapism	1. Attraction based on AI personalization and adaptability 2. Emotional involvement and anthropomorphization of AI 3. Formation of attachment to AI and tendencies toward social isolation 4. Substitution of social interactions and reproduction of loneliness	1. Engagement in a personalized, informationally and emotionally rich digital environment 2. Perceptual-ontological shift (blurring the boundaries of reality) 3. Virtual «reclusion» and social isolation	1. Awareness of the existential threat posed by AI 2. Value conflict (technological development of society versus traditional values) 3. Avoidance of an «AI-ized» social environment 4. Search for an alternative («non-AI-ized») living space

The first model of social escapism under the influence of relevant technologies – the emotional-communicative model – explains the mechanism and social consequences of direct interaction between social agents and virtual and robotic AI agents, reflecting the key phases of the sequential substitution of social interactions with artificial ones. Emotional engagement in artificial communication is facilitated, on the one hand, by the widespread implementation of personalized, adaptive, and conflict-free AI agents into most key areas of public life, and on the other, by the minimization of users' social contacts, given their heightened need for communication and predisposition to anthropomorphize AI. With social skills steadily deteriorating and attachment to artificial partners growing, the final phase of social escapism is presented as self-perpetuating loneliness, when communication with AI for the illusory satisfaction of social needs becomes, essentially, the only alternative. As research results show, among social groups, young children and the elderly are most susceptible to such influence; however, preconditions for the development of social escapism are also recorded among the most active part of society – students and workers.

The second model – the perceptual-ontological – reflects the intensification of hyperrealistic immersion in digital space under the influence of AI technologies. Similar to the initial attraction phase in the first model discussed, in this case, active engagement with digital space is observed; however, the personalized, emotionally rich digital environment is primarily provided by embedded AI («filter bubbles»). While in the first model, the communication partner is consistently «replaced,» in the second, the real social space is replaced by a hyperrealistic virtual one. Today, AI-based technologies are already significantly blurring the boundaries between reality and virtuality (an example is virtual influencers), and in the future, projects like the Metaverse have the potential to virtually eliminate even social interactions mediated by digital avatars from users' lives, replacing them with interactions with AI agents. The primary sources selected for this review did not reveal any studies examining the impact of AI on the development of digital escapism among members of specific social groups. We believe these trends will be most pronounced among young people, but this hypothesis requires further testing.

The third model – the value-existential one – depicts a gradual withdrawal from a social environment in which AI plays a key role. A threat to traditional values of freedom and justice, and even to the very status of the human being as the highest value, can lead not only to active resistance to technological innovations or gradual adaptation to them, but also to the choice of one form of social escapism or another. It is worth noting that researchers focus on the initial phases of this model (awareness of the existential threat from AI and value conflict) and the existence of a research gap regarding the choice of a specific form of escapism (downshifting, social isolation, etc.) by agents who do not accept the «AI-ization» of society. Overall, this model characterizes not so much an existing mass social phenomenon as an emerging trend in the context of the active implementation of AI in virtually all spheres of public life.

As follows from the presented models, both variants of «radicalization» of social agents' attitudes toward actively implemented AI technologies (on the one hand, positive perception, anthropomorphization, and the prospect of substituting social interactions with artificial ones, on the other, rejection of an «AI-ized» social environment and the prospect of avoiding it) are fundamental prerequisites for the development of social escapism. Minimizing escapist risks and more sustainable development of the social system as a whole, on the contrary, will be facilitated by a rational attitude toward AI without mythologizing its essence (myths about AI consciousness, AI intuition, etc.), as well as by considering not only the opportunities but also the social risks of implementing these technologies, primarily from the state.

To summarize the analysis, we will outline the main limitations of this review and prospects for further research. The first limitation is related to the fact that the phenomenon of social escapism under the influence of AI technologies is relatively new: researchers mainly focus on individual aspects of this topic, and a lack of relevant longitudinal studies is also noted. Taken together, this significantly complicates the formation of a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under consideration over time. A second limitation lies in the difficulty of establishing a causal relationship between AI use and the development of escapism in the initial stages: whether AI use causes social isolation, alienation, etc., or, conversely, whether a predisposition to loneliness determines the turn to these technologies, remains unclear in most of the analyzed scientific papers. Based on this, it is difficult, for example, to draw conclusions about the ratio of social agents for whom AI is a key catalyst for the formation of escapist attitudes or merely a means of their practical implementation. A third limitation concerns the choice of literature databases for searching for relevant publications and the language of the primary sources (Russian and English). Most of the analyzed works are based on research data obtained in Russia and Western countries; Specific cultural aspects of AI perception, social norms, and escapism practices in other countries (primarily, the experience of China, one of the world leaders in the development and implementation of AI), may not be adequately represented within the framework of the review.

The range of avenues for further research on this topic is quite broad. First and foremost, longitudinal studies are of scientific interest to establish links between the use of AI technologies and the dynamics of escapist attitudes, social skills, levels of loneliness,

etc. Secondly, cross-cultural and comparative studies are relevant to identifying the specific development of escapism under the influence of AI in various social, economic, and cultural contexts. Thirdly, research among specific social groups (youth, workers, etc.) will allow for the formulation of management recommendations for the rational use of AI in education, labor, creativity, etc. Fourthly, further research on «AI escapism» (the value-existential model) will be useful for understanding the potential behavioral responses of broad social strata to the global risks posed by new technologies. This list of research directions will expand as the relevant processes develop in practice and are appropriately conceptualized in sociological science.

■ CONCLUSION

A systematic literature review has laid the foundations for the concept of AI-influenced social escapism. Research results demonstrate that these technologies are not only a factor in the transformation of social practices but also in the formation of attitudes toward avoiding real social interactions. Based on the identified multi-vector influence of AI, three basic models of social escapism development were presented, encompassing various attitudes toward relevant technologies and experiences with them – from positive perceptions and subsequent engagement at the expense of social activity to negative perceptions and prospects for avoiding «AI-ized» sociality:

1) an emotional-communicative model, which reveals the consistent substitution of social interactions by artificial communications with chatbots, AI-powered robots, etc.;

2) a perceptual-ontological model, reflecting the consistent immersion in a personalized, hyper-realistic digital space with extensive use of AI («filter bubbles,» virtual influencers, digital avatars, etc.) as an alternative to real social space;

3) a value-existential model, revealing the consistent formation and practical implementation of attitudes toward avoiding a social environment dominated by algorithmic control and behavioral manipulation, unfair management decisions based on the use of AI, and the questioning of human value as such due to the dissemination of relevant technologies.

Given the relatively recent implementation of AI into a wide variety of areas of public life, social escapism under the influence of these technologies is only an emerging trend. However, the projected rate of AI proliferation is so high (the global market size is expected to increase 20-fold between 2020 and 2030[8]) that escapist tendencies could become widespread. The range of potential consequences of such trends is extremely broad – from the atomization of society to the uncontrollable transformation of social structure and social space. Therefore, considering social risks, including the risks of social escapism, is a prerequisite for the development and implementation of AI technologies.

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