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**SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN THE VIEWS OF DIFFERENT
GENERATIONS**

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Abstract

Actual aspects of social inequality and social policy are considered when comparing the Russian experience and the experience of the European Union countries. The actual basis of the article is the materials of a sociological survey. The article takes into account that the problem of inequality has a broad and complex character, while there are common and different sides of inequality in different age-generational groups of the population. State social security policy is of great importance for the countries of the European Union and for Russia. Social policy of the state in the spirit of the constitutional provisions on the social state in Russia is important, especially in the aspect of solving social problems of different generations. The idea of "social justice" is the most relevant for all age-generational groups of Russians. Sociological materials suggest the need for society and the state to pay additional attention to the development of education, increase its accessibility to the masses and create conditions for connecting more significant masses of people to various forms of entrepreneurship as civilized ways and means for effective work and overcoming poverty. The social security system should be improved in accordance with the principles of targeting, flexibility, efficiency and taking into account the needs of different age and generational groups.

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1. Introduction

Russian society (as shown by sociological research) opposes the extremes of economic liberalism in the spirit of market pragmatism with the denial or belittling of social justice and underestimating the problems of social inequality and poverty. The extremes of market pragmatism (the glorification of economic success and wealth without taking into account the social consequences and problems associated with it) are a kind of "economic cretinism" - an exaggeration of economic efficiency without taking into account, for example, excessive, "crazy" social inequality. Economic cretinism can be considered as a kind of professional cretinism (or professional idiocy) (Pesockij, 2014). Despite the experience of three decades of market reforms, most Russians are very critical of the consequences of the state's market policy. At the same time, as sociological research shows, the liberal model of social policy is unacceptable for Russians (Anikin, Lezhnina, Mareeva, & Slobodenjuk, 2019).

In the European Union, research shows that people strongly support the welfare state, often despite criticism of its activities (Roosma, van Oorschot, & Gelissen, 2014). However, in Russian society, the model of the social state (welfare state) is not clearly perceived (Lebedeva & Orlova, 2018), although certain provisions on the social state are contained in the Constitution of the Russian Federation (in article 7). At the same time, it is useful to analyze many aspects of the social state, social policy problems and social inequality in relation to the Russian society in comparison with the experience of the European Union countries. It is natural that various aspects and results of the welfare state are actively investigated and discussed in the countries of the European Union. Among other things, there are such assessments of the consequences of the social state (welfare state) that "people become lazy", as well as that economic indicators are weakened, economic growth is slowed down (Roosma et al., 2014). Much attention is paid to the areas of welfare state reform in Western Europe (Garritzmann, Busemeyer, & Neimanns, 2018).

There are also some common or similar problems for Russia and for the countries of the European Union. For example, welfare States in Europe are experiencing great competitive pressures (economic, social, and political) related to globalization and problems for governments with regard to social security financing (Taylor-Gooby, Leruth, & Chung, 2017). Many problems for Russia are related not only to globalization, but also to the so-called "sanctions" by the United States and the European Union. We have to agree with the assessment of the situation: there is increasing tension related to the division between old and young, women and men, as well as between winners in a more competitive world and those who feel abandoned (Taylor-Gooby et al., 2017). Accordingly, the problem of social inequality in various countries and parts of the world is becoming more acute.

2. Problem Statement

First of all, there are certain risks of political instability associated with inequality (as well as inflation), as Farzanegan (2017) has estimated, for example, on data from more than 100 countries. The extremes of market pragmatism also contribute to a high (unjustifiably high) level of social inequality. In turn, the extremes of market pragmatism (in the absence of social responsibility of business and with insufficient and unsuccessful socio-economic regulation by the state) create a critical mass of conflict in society (this is the danger of "economic cretinism" in practice).

In particular, we draw attention to the fact that in Russia such an important socio-economic indicator as the Funds ratio, after growing from the level of 13.9 in 2001 to the level of 16.7 in 2007, has decreased only slightly to the level of 15.5 in 2018 (Table 01).

Table 01. Inequality of income distribution (Funds ratio) in the Russian Federation

Years	2001	...		2007	...	2013	...	2018
Funds ratio	13,9	...		16,7	...	16,3	...	15,5

Note: the Funds Ratio is the ratio between the average cash income levels of the 10% of the highest-income population and the 10% of the lowest-income population.

Source: author based on (Rosstat, 2019).

The high level of the Fund ratio is a clear indication of the high level of social inequality, and at the same time social injustice in the socio-economic sphere. Of course, the problem of social inequality can not be reduced only to a high level of the coefficient of funds. In fact, the problem of inequality is broader and more complex. At the same time, there are common and different sides of inequality in different age-generational groups of the population. For example, material (financial and economic) problems, especially job security and income, are similar for representatives of different generations. But the problems of health and treatment, leisure and communication (and loneliness), security of their own homes and others are relevant to varying degrees. In this regard, there is a large field of activity for various social services, as well as for volunteer and charitable organizations (Lebedeva & Orlova, 2019a).

Due to the high level of socio-economic inequality, the state social security policy is becoming increasingly important. This problem concerns the countries of the European Union (Kootstra & Roosma, 2018) and Russia. Social policy of the state in the spirit of ideas of social justice and constitutional provisions on the social state in Russia is important, especially in the aspect of solving social problems of different generations (Lebedeva & Orlova, 2018).

3. Research Questions

The extremely high level of social inequality (and social injustice) in modern Russian conditions is also associated with certain risks of political instability (Bal'bec, 2018). This makes a request for an appropriate social policy of the state, including requiring adequate social programs (Vodjanenko, 2017). The idea of "social justice", as shown by various sociological studies, is the most relevant for all age-generational groups of Russians. At the same time, excessive social inequality is recognized in the public consciousness as something that clearly contradicts social justice, especially the presence of mass poverty (Lebedeva & Orlova, 2019b). What, in the opinion of representatives of different generations, are the main reasons for the presence of the poor and rich in Russian society, depending on the poor and rich themselves?

4. Purpose of the Study

How are the ideas of social justice, the problem of social inequality, and the prospects for the establishment and development of a social state (the welfare state) connected in the views of Russians? The

relationship between justice and merit is Central to social justice theories; however, there are different views on the relationship between justice and merit: from recognizing the direct relationship between merit and fairness of distribution to denying the relationship between merit and fairness of distribution (Vostroknutov, Tobler, & Rustichini, 2011). Some researchers pay attention to the psychophysiological basis of people's ideas about justice. For example, research shows that "people distinguish between just and unjust inequality" (Cappelen et al., 2014, p. 15368). Research also shows that people distinguish whether inequality is the result of luck or skill (Vostroknutov et al., 2011). Research also shows some differences in the perception of certain aspects of inequality in different countries.

5. Research Methods

To analyze the issues of the topic, we use the materials of the sociological survey "Fathers and children: conflict and cooperation, continuity of generations 2018" (on the rights of the manuscript), organized and conducted under the leadership of Lebedeva. The questionnaire was conducted in the Samara region. 438 respondents aged 18 years and older, representing different age-generational groups were surveyed; 46.1% of respondents were male, 53.9% were female. As part of the sociological study, the target age-generational groups of respondents were identified, which were determined taking into account the socio-historical conditions in which a particular group entered its adult life (approximately 16-18 years). Parameters of the selected four groups:

The 1st group (aged 18-29 years, 112 respondents) passed its formation as a young adult in the last approximately eleven years before the survey (from 2007-2008 to 2018) – this is today's youth;

The 2nd group (aged 30-44 years, 105 respondents) the period of formation as young adults took place during the period of social transformation of Russian society (from 1991-1992 approximately to 2007) - this is the youth of the first post-Soviet period;

The 3rd group (aged 45-49 years, 97 respondents) entered adult life during the period of "perestroika" (from 1985 to 1991) - this is the youth of the last Soviet five years;

The 4th group (aged 50 years and older, 124 respondents) entered adult life in the period before "perestroika" (before 1985) - this is the youth of the usual Soviet time.

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Samara region are average in relation to all-Russian, so they can be considered as typical for the Russian population as a whole.

6. Findings

First, we will analyze the answers about the main reasons for the presence of the poor and rich in Russian society, depending on the poor and rich themselves, in General, across the entire sample of respondents (Table 02). Then we will analyze the responses of different age-generational groups (Tables 03 and 04).

6.1. Analysis of data for the entire sample of respondents

Table 02. Distribution of answers to the questions about the reasons for the presence of the poor and rich in our country (no more than two answers), the percentage of respondents (N=438)

"Why do you think there are many poor people in our country?"			"Why are there rich people in our country?"		
Possible answers	%	Rating	Possible answers	%	Rating
They are lazy	44,1	1	They know how to work	52,7	1
Inadaptability	43,6	2	They can steal	40,2	2
Poor education	42,9	3	Good education	36,1	3
Old ideology	18,9	4	All means are good for them	29,5	4
Too honest	17,6	5	They have adapted	26,0	5
They can't steal	16,7	6	They're lucky	15,1	6
They're unlucky	13,9	7	New ideology	8,7	7
Other	5,7	8	Other	1,6	8

Source: author.

There are three answers (points) about the reasons for the large number of poor people in our country: "They are lazy", "Unfitness" and "Poor education". At the same time, the share of votes for these variants of answers across the entire sample is almost at the same level – in the range from 44.1% to 42.9% (so the difference between them can be considered insignificant, symbolic - within the "statistical error"). The shares of other responses are significantly lower than the shares of the three responses.

To the question about the reasons for the presence of rich people in the country in the unconditional 1st place, the respectful answer is "They know how to work" (more than half of the respondents voted for this point, in General, across the entire sample). This view is quite symmetrical with regard to "They are lazy" in relation to the causes of a large number of the poor. But in 2nd place to the question "Why are there rich people in our country?" the answer is "They can steal" (40.2% of the respondents for this option), at that time, as to the question "Why do you think there are many poor people in our country?" in 2nd place, the answer is "Incapability" (43.6% of respondents for this option). In 3rd place were symmetrical (opposite) responses - "poor education" (42.9%) for the poor and "good education" (36.1%) for the rich.

These data also show that the public consciousness of Russians is clearly dominated by views in the spirit of "everything is in the hands of the man himself", and the fatalistic view in the spirit of "they are not lucky" in the last places. Thus, among the main reasons for the presence of the poor in the first place is their laziness and lack of adaptation, which are joined by such reasons as poor education and old ideology. And among the main reasons for having the rich in the first place is not only their ability to work and a good education, but also the fact that they were able to adapt. It can be assumed that the statement "They have adapted" is connected, first of all, with opportunities to engage in business (which is quite modern and respectful). But this, however, is joined by such definitions as "Know how to steal" and "All means are good for them" (which is clearly negative in moral and psychological terms).

6.2. Analysis of data by generational groups

Table 03. Distribution of answers to the question: "Why do you think there are many poor people in our country? (no more than two answers)" - by age groups, the percentage of respondents

Answers	Age groups (full years)							
	18-29		30-44		45-49		50 and older	
	n=112		n=105		n=97		n=124	
	%	Rating	%	Rating	%	Rating	%	Rating
They are lazy	49,1	1	41,0	1	41,2	2	36,3	2
Inadaptability	43,8	2	36,2	3	27,8	3	46,8	1
Poor education	30,4	3	39,0	2	48,5	1	28,2	3
Old ideology	22,3	4	13,3	5-6	18,6	4	17,7	5
Too honest	15,2	5	13,3	5-6	12,4	6	15,3	6
They can't steal	8,0	6	10,5	7	16,5	5	20,2	4
They're unlucky	17,0	7	19,0	4	6,2	7	12,9	7
Other	0,9	8	5,7	8	5,2	8	5,6	8

Source: author.

If the younger age groups (18-19 and 30-44 years) on the 1st place put the answer "They are lazy" as the reason for the presence of a large number of poor people in the country, the older groups (45-49 years and 50 and older) put on the 1st place "Poor education" and "Inadaptability". However, in all age groups, as well as in the whole sample, among the reasons for the large number of poor people in our country, the first three places have the same reasons: "They are lazy", "Inadaptability" and "Poor education".

As for the item "Old ideology", the most critical position was taken by group 1 (18-29 years old) - the youngest group and group 3 (45-49 years old) – the youth of the perestroika period (the youth of the last five Soviet years), which put this answer in 4th place. In its essence, the reason for the "Old ideology" (meaning, in particular, the tendency to state paternalism) is close to the reason for "nonadaptation" ("Inadaptability") to market relations. As to the cause of "They can't steal" (as the reasons for the presence of a large number of the poor), the most critical position is taken by the senior groups (aged 45 to 49 and 50 or older – the youth of the Soviet era), who placed this reason at the 4-th and 5-th place. The reason for the fatalistic nature of "They are not lucky" only the 2nd group (30-44 years) put on a relatively high place (4th), and the other groups - on the 7th place. Apparently, the respondents of the 2nd group had more impressions of the elements of market relations of the transition period (the memory of the "dashing 90's") in their memory than in other groups.

Table 04. Distribution of answers to the question: "Why are there rich people in our country? (no more than two answers)" - by age groups, the percentage of respondents

Answers	Age groups (full years)							
	18-29		30-44		45-49		50 and older	
	n=112		n=105		n=97		n=124	
	%	Rating	%	Rating	%	Rating	%	Rating
They know how to work	52,7	1	55,2	1	53,6	1	44,4	2
They can steal	22,3	5	25,7	4	23,7	3	55,6	1
Good education	38,4	2	41,9	2	41,2	2	25,0	3

All means are good for them	25,9	4	26,7	3	19,6	5	22,6	4
They have adapted	29,5	3	19,0	5	22,7	4	19,4	5
They're lucky	20,5	6	11,4	6	13,4	6	14,5	6
New ideology	15,2	7	7,6	7	3,1	7	6,5	7
Other	1,8	8	2,9	8	1,0	8	0,8	8

Source: author.

On the question of the existence of rich people in our country, there was less agreement between the age groups on the 1st-5th versions of the answers than on the question of the existence of a large number of poor people. However, the opinions on the 6th-8th points completely coincided. The first three age groups (18-29 years, 30-44 and 45-49 years) almost equally put on the 1st place the item "They know how to work" (from 52.7% to 55.2% of respondents for this answer). However, the oldest age group (50 years and older), put this item only on the 2nd place (44.4%), and on the 1st place put the item "Know how to steal" (55.6%). The first three age groups put this item ("They can steal") in 3rd-5th place (from 22.3% to 25.7% of the vote).

The point "Good education" as the reason for the presence of rich people in our country came to high places (2nd – 3rd). However, in the first three age groups (18-29 years, 30-44 and 45-49 years), about 40% of respondents voted for this item, and in the oldest group (50 years and older) - only 25.0%. Places from 3rd to 5th were taken by the answers "All means are good for them" (from 19.6% to 26.7%) and "They have adapted" (from 19.0% to 29.5%). At the same time, the youngest group (18-29 years old) gave these items the most votes (from 25.9% to 29.5%), and the older groups (45-49 years and 50 years and older) - the least number of votes (from 19.4% to 22.7%). Thus, the results of the survey clearly show the contradictory moments in the public consciousness of Russians.

7. Conclusion

Due to the high level of socio-economic inequality, the state policy of social security is becoming increasingly important. Social policy of the state in the spirit of ideas about social justice and constitutional provisions on the social state in Russia is important, especially in the aspect of solving social problems of different generations. The idea of "social justice", as shown by various sociological studies, is the most relevant for all age-generational groups of Russians. Research also shows some differences in the perception of certain aspects of inequality in different countries.

Thus, according to Russian respondents, among the main reasons for the presence of the poor in the first place is their laziness and lack of adaptation, which are joined by such reasons as poor education and old ideology. And among the main reasons for having the rich in the first place is not only their ability to work and a good education, but also the fact that they were able to adapt. It can be assumed that the statement "They have adapted" is connected, first of all, with opportunities to engage in business (which is quite modern and respectful). But this, however, is joined by such definitions as "Know how to steal" and "All means are good for them" (which is clearly negative in moral and psychological terms).

Sociological materials suggest the need for society and the state to pay additional attention to the development of education, increase its accessibility to the masses and create conditions for connecting more significant masses of people to various forms of entrepreneurship as civilized ways and means for effective

work and overcoming poverty. At the same time, it is necessary to improve the regulatory management and legal mechanisms at all levels of society and the state, effectively preventing the notorious theft and other illegal means of acquiring wealth. The social security system should be improved in accordance with the principles of targeting, flexibility, efficiency and taking into account the needs of different age and generational groups.

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