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### Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF A TYPICAL PAUPER'S AND A LOW STATUS REPRESENTATIVE'S IMAGES

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### *Abstract*

The article analyses the economic status through the image of a typical poor person in order to identify common manifestations with the phenomenon of social status, as well as to determine its features and clarify the structure of its components. This study is part of a large project to study the structure of social status components. In the first series of research, which is described in this article, the image of the typical poor man was identified and analysed; in further series, it is planned to analyse the image of the typical rich man. The main method of data collection in this work was essays (n=130), in which respondents had to describe the image of a typical poor person. The material was processed using content analysis and thematic modelling. In the structure of the image, five main categories were identified, which combine all the subcategories identified in the essay: "objective indicators", "lifestyle features", "appearance and non-verbal behaviour", "people's experiences" and "personal traits". In addition, five typical images of a poor person were identified. Due to the large number of intersections with the image of a typical representative of low status, it can be assumed that economic and social status have a common nature and material well-being can be a determining element for assessing the position of a person in society.

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**Keywords:** Economic status, inequality, poverty, social perception, social status.



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## 1. Introduction

The scientific literature of various disciplines provides similar characteristics of a person and his lifestyle, which affect his position in society. It is emphasized that this phenomenon contains both objective and subjective components. This diversity leads to the fact that even within one discipline, for example, sociology, there is no common understanding of the criteria that determine the assessment of social status.

Representatives of various branches of science have made repeated attempts to identify the basic criteria that could serve as the most complete, therefore, the only model of social status. Such theoretical and empirical constructs are the most frequent object of criticism in this field of research. On the one hand, this is due to the vagueness and lack of a common understanding of the phenomenon of social status itself. On the other hand, the construction of such a classification of objects should begin with defining the goals of classification, for example, building a model of society based on certain objective indicators, or building a hierarchy of a particular group based on subjective assessments and public opinion.

## 2. Problem Statement

A number of concepts note that money and its various aspects are a determining component of social status and, accordingly, the position in society primarily depends on the material well-being of a person (Diligensky, 1996; Giddens, 1999; Kravchenko, 2002).

Thus, in an effort to generalize all the components and build a single system of criteria that most accurately reflect the basis for building a model of society, Nayebi and Abdollahyan (2006) divided all indicators into two groups - material and symbolic. Material goods, first of all, include monetary income, jewellery, property, a car, and more. Symbolic benefits include respect, prestige, honour, medals that reflect merit and public attitudes, and more.

Here it is important to note that there is a tendency to separate the concepts of wealth and income. Wealth is defined as accumulated property that belongs to an individual and can be realized in monetary terms (Giddens, 1999). Income, in turn, is considered in terms of incoming funds at the disposal of the individual, including as a payment for labour, as well as profits from investment. Income, in the case of its accumulation, can pass into wealth, subject to the acquisition of movable and immovable property. The uneven distribution of income, and therefore of wealth, is at the root of inequality in society. From the point of view of Sorokin (1992), due to the uneven distribution of resources and income, there has not been a single society in the entire history of mankind where the equality of its members was observed. In this case, it does not matter the ideology in which either the idea of universal equality or the idea of a classless society can be translated. This is due to the fact that, in any society, resources are distributed unevenly, and, consequently, the higher the income, the more an individual has access to various benefits, for example, to higher education, and the more a person can influence society, having a certain power.

At the same time, there may be situations in which having a high income does not lead a person to gain respect in society (Giddens, 1999). This phenomenon was clearly manifested in France at the end of the XVIII century, in great Britain at the beginning of the XX century, when individuals with titles and being aristocrats did not recognize rich Industrialists as equals in society. As another example, we can

consider the professional group "doctors", who are respected in society, but do not always receive a high income.

Further, it is important to note that the American psychologist Bogenhold (2001) points out that the problem of social stratification has undergone significant changes over the past two decades. Thus, the old criteria for building a model of society no longer play a significant role in the life of society, and the attitude and assessment of the importance of almost all criteria of social status: education, income, profession, and others (Rossiter, 2012). Education, as an example, is becoming accessible to all social strata. Income directly determines the social status of only the extreme groups-the highest high and lowest low statuses. On the other hand, another change affects two criteria at once: income and profession. So, there is a whole range of professions that do not bring constant earnings: for example, project work or freelancing. The social status of representatives of such professions is almost impossible to determine using the criteria listed above.

A number of our studies have found that economic factors play an important role in social perceptions of social status, as well as in the assessment of this indicator in strangers (Folomeeva & Fedotova, 2014, 2016).

In addition, the main themes in the essays were found, which described typical images of a person with high and low status (Folomeeva & Fedotova, 2018). The topics were identified using the Dirichlet latent placement algorithm on the material of 70 essays; 5 main topics were identified for each of the images. In each image, one of the themes had a direct relationship to income: the theme "Education, stable prosperity, confidence, time — money" in the image of the high-status and the theme "Alcohol, lack of money, work" in the image of the low-status. During the content analysis of the essay, it was found that material well-being was noted in 53% of the essays, as a characteristic of a typical representative of a high status, and in 20% - for a low status.

### **3. Research Questions**

This research does not have hypothesis and its main goal is to identify and compare common features in the images of a representative of low status and a typical poor person. However, we assume that both images contain striking similarities, which will allow us to argue that the nature of economic and social status has common grounds.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Our main purpose is to identify typical images of a person with high financial status (rich) and low income (poor) for:

- 4.1.** Identification of common manifestations with the phenomenon of social status.
- 4.2.** Defining its features and clarifying the structure of its components.

## 5. Research Methods

### 5.1. Data collection method

For data collection technique was used for the survey in the form of an essay. The respondents were asked to provide free-form descriptions of the typical poor, but the volume was not limited.

### 5.2. Sample

This study involved 130 respondents aged 17 to 21, ( $m = 18.1$ ;  $sd = 1.3$ ).

### 5.3. Data analysis was performed using two methods:

- Thematic modelling (Dirichlet latent placement algorithm) (Korshunov & Gomzin, 2012). For processing, a tool was prepared for returning text components to their original form based on Python 3.0 (the pymorphy2 Morphological analyser library). Further, the texts were processed using the Dirichlet latent placement algorithm using the "Scikit-learn" library. For more accurate analysis, high-frequency words (pronouns, prepositions, introductory words, etc.) were excluded from the texts. As a result of the analysis, 5 topics were identified with 10 elements for each topic.
- Content analysis. The texts were allocated semantic units according to the previously developed categorical grid. However, it is important to note that the texts that contain elements were counted, not the categories themselves.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Thematic modelling.

Processing the essay using the developed software allowed us to identify 5 common topics:

- Works hard, usually looking for a reason to buy.
- Rich – another, always able to spend, a large number of desires.
- Lifestyle, lack of finances, inclined to spend.
- I'm afraid the time constantly strive for money.
- Live, wife, attitude, fortune.

First of all, we should note such behavioural traits as: "working hard", "spending tendency", "able to spend", "striving for money", "afraid", which describe, among other things, the motivational aspect of the image of a typical poor person. This can also include "a large number of desires".

Of particular interest are the categories "time" and "wife". If we turn to the essays themselves, the "wife" is mentioned in them as strengthening the negative image of a poor man: "He leads a parasitic lifestyle, draining the life force from his wife", "he Has a large family, and he beats his children when he gets drunk. The only protection for them is the wife of our hero" and others.

Time, in turn, is mentioned in several contexts: first, from the point of view of respondents, the poor do not allocate their time correctly ("do not plan the budget and time", "Poor people do not value time not only their own, but also other people's, often waste it", "Poor people do not know how to plan time, constantly postpone everything for later", and others). Second, it is a description and amplification of the duration of some action ("Money to provide for her [family-approx. the author] is not enough all the time",

"or is saved for significant expenses that need to be saved for a long time", "who talks about money all the time and complains all the time about life", and others).

## 6.2. Content analysis of the essay

During the processing of the essay, 96 categories were identified that occur in more than three essays, of which 34 categories occur in more than 10% of the essays.

The most frequent categories are "no ambition, no stream" (54.6%), "low financial literacy (incorrect distribution of their money) (40%), "blames external circumstances" (36.1%), "lack of money" (28.4%), "wear simple clothes, buy low – quality things" (26.9%), "conspicuous consumption (buys expensive things on credit to look secured) (24.6%), "saves" (23.8%), "afraid to risk losing everything" (21.5%), "availability of loans and debts" (20.7%), and style of thinking (19.2%).

By analogy with the image of a person with a low status, the image of the poor identifies the same 5 categories into which all characteristics can be grouped: "objective indicators", "lifestyle features", "appearance and non-verbal behaviour", "people's experiences" and "personal traits" (Folomeeva & Fedotova, 2019).

Objective indicators include: "lack of money" (28.4%), "availability of loans and debts" (20.7%), "poor work (cleaner, salesman)" (10%), "uneducated" (11.5%), and others. Lifestyle features include the following categories: "having bad habits" (15.3%), "not following health" (13.8%), "improper nutrition (fast food)" (10.7%), "following all promotions and discounts" (13.8%), and more. The category "appearance and nonverbal behaviour" includes: "wear simple clothes, buy low-quality things" (26.9%), "stooped, drooping, running eyes" (4.6%), "unkempt" (3%) and others. The category of "experiences" includes: "waiting for a miracle and help" (13%), "bad attitude to the rich" (11.5%), "money is an end in itself" (13.8%), "do not believe that money brings happiness" (13%), "complains about life, waiting for pity" (15.3%), and others. Finally, the category of "personality traits" includes: "no ambition, no desire to get out" (54.6%), "envious" (16.1%), "narrow thinking" (13.8%), "angry, irritable, aggressive" (13%), "lazy" (13%), "low self-esteem" (9.2%) and others.

In total, the category "personality traits" includes the largest number of subcategories and covers the largest number of essays. Accordingly, we can conclude that poverty is perceived primarily as a consequence of individual personality traits.

In General, the essay can identify five different types of poor people, some essays mentioned several images at once:

The first is a person with no fixed place of residence, no job, and no income (mentioned in 4% of the essay).

The second is a person who is not in demand for a profession, but he is neat and respectable (mentioned in 7% of the essay).

The third is a person who became poor due to circumstances-crisis, age, disability (mentioned in 7% of the essay).

The fourth – aggressive, lazy, with bad habits, who does not want to change anything (mentioned in 57% of the essay).

The fifth is economical, complaining about life, blaming external circumstances, not ready to take responsibility and risk (mentioned in 61% of the essay).

Accordingly, the two most common images (the fourth and fifth), which have common features-unwillingness to get out of the situation, confirm our assumption that there are ideas about the dependence of the material state on the personal traits of a person.

### **6.3. Comparative analysis of the image of the poor and the image of a low-status person**

In our study, we identified topics that are characteristic of the image of a person with a low status (Folomeeva & Fedotova, 2018):

- Army, education.
- Slouching, minor mischief.
- Alcohol, lack of money, work.
- Look neat.
- Low status is the opposite of high status.

In contrast to the themes for the image of the poor, the low-status image is characterized by the presence of several criteria that characterize such a person – "education", "lack of money, work". As well as indications of features of appearance – "stoop", "look neat". At the same time, there are almost no verbs and references to the motivational sphere, which are clearly manifested in the themes of the image of the typical poor.

The two images share a common theme – "low status is the opposite of high" and "rich is different". This pattern can be interpreted from the point of view that both phenomena reflect the extreme group on the binary scale.

Further, a comparative analysis of the two images, as previously noted, revealed a common structure that includes five large categories. At the same time, for the image of a low – status person, the most common category is "objective signs": "uneducated" (26%), "low-income or poor" (20%), "has a low-skilled job" (10%). As you can see, these categories correspond to those that were highlighted in the image of the poor. Also, common features can be identified in the category "personal traits". In the image of a low-status person there are categories of "weak-willed", "lazy", "envious" and "aggressive", in turn, in the features of the lifestyle, by analogy with the poor, alcoholism is noted. In appearance, the two images are characterized by the presence of low-quality things.

However, nonverbal behaviour in the low-status representative and the typical poor is described by different characteristics. So, in the image of low-status - it is "poorly delivered speech and the presence of a Mat" (12%) and "takes up little space" (10%).

Accordingly, we can conclude that the images have a similar structure and common elements. This fact may indicate that for young people, the concept of poverty is identified with a low social status, and therefore, the category of money can be a determining factor for the structure of society. However, to more accurately determine the correspondence of economic and social status, it is necessary to analyse the image of the rich and, by analogy, compare it with the image of a high-status person.

## 7. Conclusion

- The study identified and analysed the image of a typical poor person, determined its structure and elements that have common features with the image of a typical representative of low status.
- In the structure of the image, there are five main categories, which combine all the subcategories identified in the essay: "objective indicators", "lifestyle features", "appearance and non-verbal behaviour", "people's experiences" and "personal traits". As objective indicators, the lack of money, the availability of loans, poor work (cleaner, seller) is noted. The lifestyle is characterized by the presence of harmful habits, improper nutrition (fast food), and others. In appearance, bad clothing and stooping are noted. Among the experiences, first of all, is the expectation of a miracle and help, a bad attitude to the rich" and the perception of money as an end in itself. Finally, the poor person's personality is not characterized by ambition, laziness, envy, and narrow thinking.
- Five typical images of a poor person were identified. The most frequently mentioned are "economical, complaining about life, blaming external circumstances, not ready to take responsibility and take risks" and "aggressive, lazy, with bad habits, who does not want to change anything". Two images occur with the same frequency – "a person who has become poor due to circumstances-crisis, age, disability" and "a person who is not in demand for a profession, while he is neat and respectable". The least common image of a marginal representative of the poor is "a person without a certain place of residence, without a job or income".
- Due to the large number of intersections with the image of a typical representative of low status, it can be assumed that economic and social status have a common nature and material well-being can be a determining element for assessing the position of a person in society.

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