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### Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

# EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONALITY AS A PROBLEM OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

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### *Abstract*

In modern world the employment of personality is transformed in the process of transition from the practices of industrial society to a post-industrial lifestyle, from a standardized employment model to an individualized employment model. In this article the employment of person is considered as a complex problem, a multidimensional understanding of which is formed as a result of interdisciplinary research. Transformations of employment are included in the economic, political, sociocultural and psychological contexts of modern life. The individualization of employment and self-employment should be considered in connection with the general transformations of the sphere of labor, education and leisure. It is also a methodological problem by virtue of the analysis of its many-sided aspects. For the relevant description of the transformation processes, new terms, analytical constructs, flexible and mixed methodological strategies are created. By solving this problem, we turned to research design based on interdisciplinarity and using mixed approaches and methods, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. Our study of informal employment focused primarily on students who chose private tutoring as supplementary employment. The additional employment of Russian students is analyzed taking note their motivation, the labor market, as well as sociocultural practices common in Russia. The materials, presented in the article, show that practices of self-employment and personal strategies of student additional employment contribute to more flexible and successful integration of young people in the transformation of the modern world, and also make their view of the future more positive.

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**Keywords:** Interdisciplinarity, personal employment, self-employment, freelance, additional employment of students, private tutoring.



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## **1. Introduction**

The changes taking place in the modern world affect various spheres of life: the features of the socialization of younger generations, the transformation of values, the transformation of the sphere of work and leisure, issues of choosing a profession and self-realization. Sociologists, economists and humanities note the heterogeneity of the sociocultural space and the diversity of life styles in the modern world, as well as the processes of changing values that occur with the change of generations (Inglehart, 2018; Kharchenko, 2013; Malone, 2004; Urry, 2007). Psychologists and educators focus on personal strategies in life-building, in the strategies of education and professional self-realization. However, the transformation of employment that occurs in the field of work, study and leisure is a problem of interdisciplinary research.

### **1.1. Obvious and non-obvious transformations in the field of labour, education and leisure**

The fields of study, work and leisure play an important role in the life of a modern person, especially young people. The changes taking place in these areas are divided into obvious and non-obvious. On the one hand, factors such as uncertainty, diversification, and volatility provoke anxiety and concerns in the future for youth. On the other hand, spontaneous creativity of coping takes place here. Young people build individual life strategies and take responsibility for their self-realization. For instance, in modern Russian society a significant part of the population is self-employed (Gimpelson & Kapeliushnikov, 2015), 50% of students combine study with work (Kanaeva & Lapshova, 2018), many of them work part-time as private tutoring. However, the problem for researchers here is that self-employment is in the shadow sphere of the economy and, therefore, is not transparent to directly statistical and sociological research methods.

### **1.2. Employment at the crossroads of interdisciplinary research**

Informal and precarious work has become a social norm these days. In contrast to the industrial era oriented towards standardization of production, in the modern world employment exists in various forms and practices. These diverse aspects of employment are considered in the disciplinary framework of research from different perspectives. An interdisciplinary problem-oriented approach allows us to more clearly identify transformations that are not visible or hidden in local studies (Guseltseva, 2019).

The concept of employment is used in a narrow and broad sense, in the latter it can cover mixed practices of work, education and leisure. Employment is that area of life that is the key to understanding modern transformations. In this field adaptation strategies are being created as well as new meanings and life practices. For an appropriate description of the transformation processes, new terms, analytical constructs, and finer methodological tools are needed.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Modern transformations of the sphere of labour, study and leisure create atypical forms of employment: informal employment, precarious work, non-standard employment relations, flexible employment, additional employment, multiple employment, part-time, fragmentary, seasonal, episodic employment, etc. Freelancers and precariat are of particular interest to researchers (Kharchenko, 2013; Kuchenkova, 2019; Standing, 2011; Toshchenko, 2018).

## **2.1. Diversity of employment forms and the problem of terminology**

Informal employment as activities on the labour market is characterized by the absence of labour contracts between the employee and the employer, the lack of social protection, and the avoidance of taxes and social contributions (Gimpelson & Kapeliushnikov, 2015).

A precariat is a combination of "precariousness" and "proletariat". Precariat as a special social class was described by Standing (2011). The precariat is employees involved in unstable and insecure labor relations (Toshchenko, 2018).

Freelance is a lifestyle that blurs the line between work and leisure. This lifestyle is sought by professionals and people with an internal locus of control who prefer to control and structure their life strategies themselves. Freelancers are better adapted not only to a changing labor market, but to changes in general. Unlike other types of non-standard employment, freelancing is a profession of young and educated urban residents. A significant part of freelancers are students (Kharchenko, 2013).

We assume that significant features of precariousness, freelancing, self-employment, additional employment are connected in the phenomenon of student employment. However, due to the mixed forms of employment and the shadow aspects of the economy and the education system, this area is not widely available for quantitative research methods.

## **2.2. Student employment: mixed forms, individual strategies, and the problem of research**

Supplementary employment of students in the UK was investigated by Robotham (2012, 2013). He concluded that part-time employment was a majority experience for full-time undergraduates. Moreover, some students devoted even more time to their supplementary employment than studying. Both in the UK and in other countries is increasing the number of full-time students engaging in part-time employment and other forms of personal employment (Malone, 2004).

A common form of student employment is private tutoring. Bray (2007) studied private tutoring as a form of supplementary education. He conducted a large-scale international study of this problem in 14 regions of the world (Bray, 2006). It is important to note that private tutoring is part of the shadow or latent system of education and the economy. Despite the fact that in recent decades it has become increasingly widespread and significant in all regions of the world, it is difficult to obtain reliable data on shadow education, since private tutoring is mostly informal. For a comparative analysis of the situation with additional student employment in Russia, we considered it necessary to pay attention to the self-organizing, socio-psychological and local contexts of this problem. We assume that this phenomenon becomes especially actual and significant in a transitional situation both in the educational system and in the sociocultural transformations.

The problem for research is hidden, emerging, spontaneous, attention avoiding forms of employment in the modern world. There are an unobservability of these fields of current transformations, on the one hand, and irrelevance of the collected statistical and sociological data, on the other hand. It seems that qualitative analysis (Kvale, 1996) is more suitable for studying non-standard forms of employment.

We assume that this problem is solved by integrating data from various interdisciplinary studies and using a mixed methodology.

### **3. Research Questions**

It can be assumed that the transformations of employment will be associated with the advent of new values and the spontaneous creation of new practices in the fields of work, education and leisure.

#### **3.1. Self-employment as an internal locus of control over the transformations of modernity**

It seems that self-employment and the creation of new practices in the mixed sphere of labor, education and leisure are productive individual coping strategies in a situation of transformations of the present and the crisis of the education system.

#### **3.2. Methodological strategy for the study of hidden and shadow phenomena**

It seems that the use of interdisciplinary analysis and mixed methods is a relevant methodological approach for identifying the phenomena of shadow education and self-employment.

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

This proposal was verified in the process of theoretical analysis of the various forms of employment and empirical research of private tutoring as supplementary employment for Russian students.

- Analyze the diversity of forms of employment.
- Determine the methodological strategies for the study of employment as an interdisciplinary problem.
- Consider private tutoring as a special case of supplementary student employment.

### **5. Research Methods**

In the process of research interdisciplinary analysis and comparative-analytical method were used, as well as the method of qualitative analysis.

- Theoretical analysis and systematization of data from the field of sociology, political studies, cultural studies and psychology.
- Secondary analysis, electronic databases and official statistics.
- Semi-structured interview.

11 semi-structured interviews with key informants were conducted personally (face-to-face, using a voice recorder) by N.S. Guseltsev in 2016-2017. The average interview duration was 40 minutes. The shortest interview lasted 19 minutes, and the longest took 74 minutes. Interviews were conducted with the consent of the respondents, in comfortable conditions, mainly in cafes or in libraries.

All the informants gave their consent to participate in the study.

### **6. Findings**

Theoretical analysis of sources from cross disciplinary fields showed that creative and rational components play an increasingly important role in the employment structure (Kharchenko, 2013; Malone, 2004). These are not so much specific professional skills as social and communicative competencies,

information technologies. A growing number of people find themselves not engaged in production (where labour becomes automated and robotic), but in the service sector, where people provide services to other people, create unique works, and fulfill personal orders. It seems that new terms also appear to describe the current transformations of the sphere of labour and leisure, such as freelance, precariat, self-employment, non-standard employment, flexible employment, etc.

### **6.1. New terms for understanding new phenomena**

In Inglehart's (2018) writings on cultural evolution, the transformation from industrial to post-industrial society is presented as a transition from survival values to self-expression values. In our opinion, this methodological optics may be applicable to the analysis of the phenomena of precarious work.-The definition of precariat by Standing (2011) is focused on negative properties and risks.-This interpretation is made through safety values, not development values. The precariat as a social class does not have contracts, social or legal guarantees.

However, what is initially perceived cautiously and as a deviation from the norm, after some time itself becomes the norm. In the interpretation of Toshchenko (2018), the positive qualities of the precariat appear, it is a willingness to fight for their rights. It is these qualities that become noticeable, come to the fore in the paper of Khoroshilov and Hilger (2019). Also, the precariat can be considered as a social group that is most prepared for life in a global, mobile, uncertain and changing world, in a risk society.

The precariat is a rapidly growing class, with indefinite and flexible forms of employment, which independently builds its ties with society and the state (Toshchenko, 2018). For the precariat as a class, the constancy of instability, the constancy of ongoing changes in the world, becomes a social norm. From a psychological point of view, the readiness of this class to take responsibility for their work and leisure, for building deliberate and personal (individualized, unique) life strategies is important.

The self-employed differ from the precariat in that they took their employment (spheres of labor, education and leisure, lifestyle in general) under their own control. Precarity means an emphasis on uncontrollable circumstances. Self-employment involves an internal locus of control, building your own professional and existential projects. We consider self-employment as one of the strategies for coping with transformations of the global world.

Freelance is a precarious work phenomenon that focuses more on development values than safety values. We observed that new realities associated with changes in the modern world require the creation of new terminology in order to detect inconspicuous. For instance, the term "freelance" appeared precisely with the growth of self-employment practices, although free professions have been in the history of mankind before.

### **6.2. Creativity of new practices, values and lifestyles in the field of additional employment**

The competitive advantage in the labour market for youth today is provided not so much by the education system as by supplementary employment practices. The functions of education have involuntarily changed: it socializes youth for the present world, but is less able to prepare it for life in the future, for new professions and a transforming labour market. However, it is in the field of employment that a search for new forms of life, work, leisure, the production of new meanings and values takes place.

Students spontaneously and latently acquire in the practices of labour and leisure activities those competencies that the education system does not give them. These practices are formed in connection with such factors of post-industrial culture as globalization, social networks, the Internet, diversification of the socio-cultural space (Guseltseva, 2019).

The education system as a social institution is characterized by conservatism, and therefore in the modern rapidly changing world it does not have time to respond to the challenges of change and uncertainty. By the time a graduate acquires a specialty, the world will change many times, and, therefore, there are no guarantees that the acquired specialty will be in demand on the labor market. Information and communication technologies have spurred the diversification of employment. In the world covered by the Internet, new professions and jobs are emerging faster than educational standards are being developed for them. However, it is in the field of precarious work that young people build individual strategies and spontaneously master new competencies. We conclude that latent and spontaneous formation of new values and professional practices of youth in a changing world is not well understood.

### **6.3. Private tutoring is a special (mixed, flexible) form of student supplementary employment**

We studied the specifics of the activities of students' private tutors in the context of various forms of employment: analyzed the structure of the electronic market for tutoring services; revealed the features of the promotion of services in this market; individual strategies, motivations, values, and students' ideas about the features of their supplementary employment in the field of private tutoring were revealed through qualitative interview analysis. Private tutoring is not only informal and non-standard employments. This phenomenon is represented by a wide range of concepts from precariousness to freelance. Private tutoring students flexibly adapt to the modern mobility of society. Students' private tutoring can also be characterized as self-employment.

Through quality interviews, we examined the motivation for supplementary employment and students' expectations of the future. Two groups were distinguished among the respondents: those who started private tutoring independently and purposefully, and those who began to practice private tutoring by chance. The priority motivation for student supplementary employment (this correlates with data from other authors (Kanaeva & Lapshova, 2018; Kuchenkova, 2019; Robotham, 2012, 2013) is the satisfaction of material needs, as well as the possibility of paying for education. Here, private tutoring, because of its flexibility, is best suited for combining work with study.

Despite the prevailing material factor, the motivation of self-employed students is quite complex, often contradictory, and requires further more in-depth research.

Important factors that support motivation and contribute to a confident look into the future are students' perceptions of success and the possibility of professional self-realization. We found that respondents identified quite different qualities as criteria of success: communication skills, ability to explain material in an accessible way, patience, creativity, responsibility, resilience. Almost half of the respondents noted that they do not intend to continue to work in the specialty for which they are studying.

#### 6.4. Methodological strategies for studying employment as a complex and transforming phenomenon

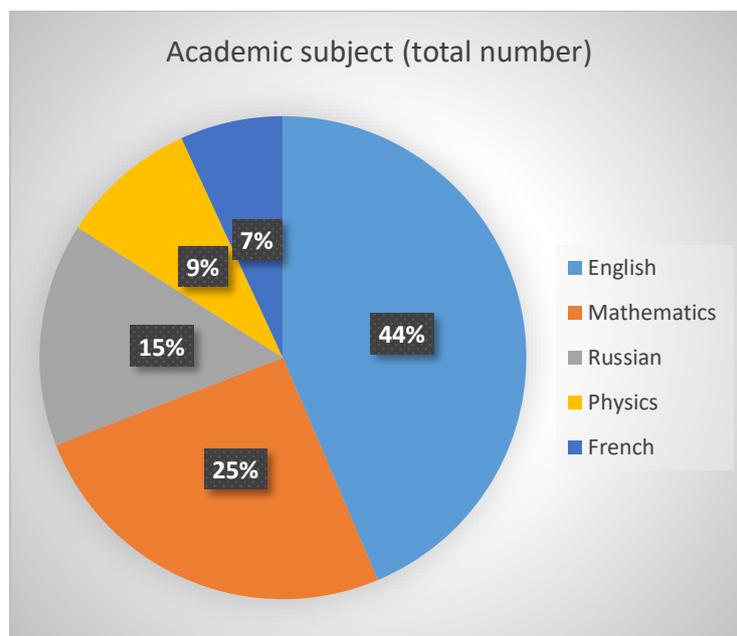
It should be noted that forms of employment can be combined with each other, forming various mixed, hybrid compounds. This fact creates certain difficulties, for example, for a statistical analysis of private tutoring activities. However, the information age, the spread of the Internet contributed to both a change in employment practices and the study of this labor market. Today, there are electronic databases that allow you to reach many private tutors as a hidden phenomenon before.

Analyzing the electronic databases, we found that the largest number of private tutors (including students) is engaged in teaching a foreign language (Table 01).

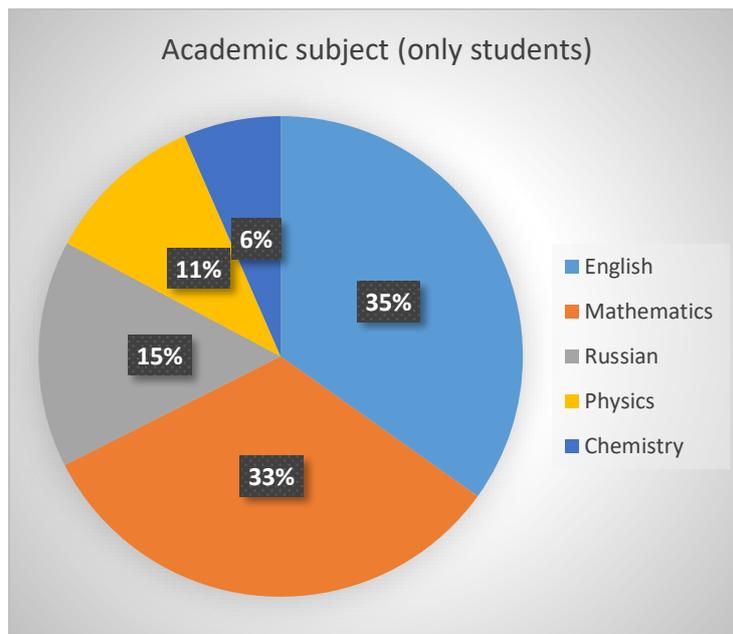
**Table 01.** The number of profiles of private tutors from the services on the electronic base of the Association of Tutors in Moscow

| Academic subject | Number of private tutors profiles | Number of student profiles (private tutors) |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| English          | 16824                             | 3078  |
| Mathematics      | 9827                              | 2880  |
| Russian          | 5767                              | 1348  |
| Physics          | 3506                              | 943   |
| French           | 2642                              | 246   |
| German           | 2550                              | 305   |
| Chemistry        | 2290                              | 574   |

The leading position in this cluster is English: both for the total number of private tutors (Figure 01) and for students (Figure 02).



**Figure 01.** From an electronic database of the Association of Tutors in Moscow (2017 data)



**Figure 02.** From an electronic database of the Association of Tutors in Moscow (2017 data)

Nevertheless, due to the sociocultural characteristics of Russia, the self-employed seek to escape from the control of the state. Means of promoting tutoring services in the shadow market are searching for clients through friends, acquaintances, and colleagues.

## 7. Conclusion

Employment is a problem that affects the areas of work, study, leisure of students, but usually these areas are studied separately. Only in a problem-oriented study can employment be considered comprehensively, and this is what our multidisciplinary analysis served.

### 7.1. Self-employment is a sphere of creativity of new values and practices

Practices of self-employment and personal strategies of student supplementary employment contribute to more flexible and successful integration of young people in the transformation of the modern world, and also make their view of the future more positive. Most of our respondents plan to continue their private tutoring in the near future. Some students intend to continue private tutoring as a hobby, for self-expression and to enjoy creative and productive activities. It can be said that self-employed students are characterized by an internal locus of control, motivation for professional development, they independently and responsibly build personal strategies in the fields of education, work and leisure.

Students are interested in having non-permanent employment, which allows them to combine study with work. Students' private tutoring contains mixed elements of freelance, precariousness, flexibility (flexible employment). It is less obvious that it is a sphere of creativity of new values and practices. Interdisciplinary and mixed research strategies are important for discovering the latter.

## 7.2. The gap between the education system and transforming modernity

We emphasize that it is private tutoring that provides those economic and cultural needs that are not met by a conservative and lagging education system (for example, Russian typical education does not give students English proficiency, while this is a sought-after skill for young people). In turn, on the part of the demands of the economy and social sciences, private tutoring as supplementary employment is an area in which new values and cultural practices are born.

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