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Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

SOCIAL SUCCESS AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON

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Abstract

The article discusses the specificity of adolescents' perception of social success and presents its role in personal development. Being shaped from the early age period and throughout the whole life, social success affects the quality of life and peculiarities of a person's self-efficacy. It is proved that the increased interest in studying social success is facilitated by the growing attention to the problem of personal changes, an increase in the environmental "challenges" faced by human abilities, as well as the need for a quick response to changes in society. The authors pay special attention to the analysis of social success as one of the main indicators of person's self-fulfillment in conditions modern society, a category of personality psychology that broadens knowledge about the phenomenology of mental properties formation and development. The study involved 75 respondents (1st and 2nd year students with majors in psychological and pedagogical education). The purpose of the empirical study was to identify the basic features of social success image, as well as the study of young people's subjective assessment of socially successful individuals. To solve the tasks set, we used the "Successful person" methodology and the author's questionnaire "Psychological portrait of a successful person". The results of the study show that in adolescence, the image of social success is dominated by a humanistic orientation (benevolence, responsiveness, the ability to sacrifice). The authors proved the predominance of moral standards and rules, high intelligence, critical thinking and perseverance in the psychological portrait of a socially successful person.

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Keywords: Social attitude, social success, socialization, society, youth.



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1. Introduction

Contemporary social environment, characterized by the intensity of socio-economic and socio-cultural processes, has led to the dramatic changes in lifestyle and value orientations, making it difficult to manifest and acquire conceptually new values. Any attempt to get isolated from the new reality will inevitably lead to personal and social defeats. Therefore, the deeper a person assimilates universal values, the more he or she acquires own uniqueness, the brighter his or her individuality is, and the more successfully he or she is adapted to modernity. Culture possesses a set of specific practices which allow the individual to successfully socialize and adapt in conditions of uncertainty and variability (Oyserman, 2017). In turn, success is the most important value of modern culture, in particular - the culture of today's youngsters.

Social success is viewed as a particular form of self-fulfillment and as condition allowing the individual to experience subjective satisfaction with the process of living. If individuals feel successful, then their awareness of own abilities and capabilities to manage life activities and solve life difficulties increase. However, it should be noted that an individual willing to achieve success in life is forced to learn languages in order to be at the level of world achievements in different fields of activity, that is, to have a planetary identity (Mezhuev, 2009).

The issue of identifying the determinants of the greatest impact on the formation and development of social success is still debatable. Most often they include self-esteem (Boudreau & Boswell, 2001; Sutin et al., 2009), motivation (Nickerson et al., 2003; Quinton & Brunton, 2017), orientation to authority, discipline, perseverance (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), behavioral flexibility (ability and a willingness to respond differently to different situational demands) (Zaccaro et al., 1992), an innate desire for continuous self-fulfillment and self-actualization. However, the leading place in the classification of reasons that allow an individual to achieve social success is the level of claims (Absatova et al., 2015). Contradictions between the desire to be like everyone else and the need to stand out, be noticed and recognized are the main socio-psychological parameters of social success for a person. In addition, the ability to update own expectations in response to changing unforeseen circumstances stimulates the formation and development of social success.

When analyzing the image of social success, it is important to consider not only individual properties (qualities) of personality, easily updated and manifested spontaneously, but also potentially available properties (qualities), states and conditions, including the features of environment and other people that the individual can use (Tolochek, 2010).

In most traditions of psychological science outside of the post-Soviet territory, social success is investigated as the mechanism of shaping the attitude to success in large and small communities (McClelland, 2009), success-oriented behavior as a particular type of human activity, as well as the driver to reach success and avoid failure (Atkinson, 1981).

A competitive advantage in the face of uncertainty and variability is the ability to constantly develop innovative, creative solutions in a variety of situations. The "just-in-time" strategy is about here and now. It allows an individual to focus not so much on trying to predict events and take into account all possible scenarios, but on mastering a wide repertoire of skills and behaviors, developing the ability to quickly assess a situation, and trust own intuition (Weick 2011).

The issue of estimating social success deserves close attention. The components of social success cannot be reduced to a general integrated assessment, adequately applied to different people. Therefore, in relation to specific people, one cannot expect their equal success in different spheres of life (Tolochek, 2015).

Thus, an important point in studying personal development in a situation of uncertainty and variability will be the analysis of social success as one of the fundamental social needs of a person.

2. Problem Statement

Socio-cultural changes in modern society imply the need for youth to be active, creative, possessing high professional and personal culture, focused on socially significant success and positive self-fulfillment in all spheres of social activity, capable of adapting to the outside world and creatively transforming it.

Adolescence is considered to be the most intense and controversial period of socialization; therefore, popularity in this age period should become a marker of social adaptation (Parker & Asher, 1987). To a greater extent, this is facilitated by the positive and open attitude of an individual in relation to the society (Allen & Land, 1999). However, later and less significant cases of success are experienced by the individual not so sharply and painfully. Neither do the others react so sharply at them. In this respect, the symptoms of ordinary success are kind of muffled, and it becomes easier to cope with the new social situations, personal changes, and novelties.

It is revealed that the youth's views on social success have a nuclear structure (Shamionov & Tugusheva, 2009), which consists of such qualities as the ability to communicate, knowledge of etiquette, self-confidence, the significance and value of trust, professional excellence as the highest manifestation of one's success, the ability to experience self-fulfillment and self-manifestation, the ability to sympathize and being full of strength and energy.

It should be noted that in this age period, the ability to evaluate and plan the effectiveness of own future activities, relying more on the assessment of events and the ability to align own desires with capabilities, is just being shaped and developed. Young people are characterized by dependence of their social success image on means of achieving it and on characteristics of self-determination (Shamionov & Tugusheva, 2009).

Thus, the current socio-cultural environment, the situation of uncertainty and variability of society stimulate the individual to be flexible and socially successful. Therefore, studying the image of social success perceived by young people will not only allow us deeper understand the mechanisms of socialization but also determine the specifics of positioning oneself in objective and subjective personal spaces.

3. Research Questions

- 3.1. What qualities do young people associate with a successful person?
- 3.2. Does the image of a successful person depend on the respondent's studying profile (major)?
- 3.3. What professional areas, in young people's opinion, do successful people belong to?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was the youthful image of a successful person.

5. Research Methods

The research paradigm has determined the choice of research methods. The psychodiagnostic method, mathematical and statistical analysis method were applied.

5.1. Participants

The study was carried out at Murmansk Arctic State University (MASU). The participants numbered 75 respondents: “Pedagogical education: History. Social science” (15 students), “Pedagogical education: English language and German language” (15 students), “Pedagogical education: Russian language and literature” (14 students), “Pedagogical education: Primary education” (12 students), “Psychological-pedagogical education: Educational psychology” (19 students).

5.2. Methods

The image of social success were studied using the “Successful Man” method, which allows us to differentiate the substantial characteristics of success by such indicators as activity, humanistic orientation, material orientation and group affiliation. The author developed questionnaire “Psychological portrait of a successful person” that implies answering questions regarding the subjective respondents’ assessment of successful people and their character-related features. The general idea, uniting the images of social success, consists of understanding the versatility of the category of success, which determines the attitude of a person to society and attitude of the society to the person.

6. Findings

Table 01 presents the results of identifying the social success by youth.

Table 01. Perception of social success by youth (%)

Groups of respondents	Indicators of social success image			
	Activity aspect	Humanistic orientation	Material orientation	Group affiliation
History. Social science	46,6	60	53,3	46,6
English language and German language	73,3	73,3	53,3	60
Russian language and literature	42,8	50	35,7	7,1
Primary education	58,3	66,6	33,3	25
Educational psychology	42,1	100	21	36,8

Analysis of the results shows that in adolescence, the images of social success are dominated by a humanistic orientation, which indicates the importance of the idea of mutual assistance, human values, the need to provide benefits to society and other people. The description of a successful person is dominated by definitions “sociable”, “communicative”, “eager to help people”, etc. Students of “History. Social

science” profile are also characterized by having material orientation in describing successful people (money, rich parents, own accommodation, own vehicle). As for the students from “English language and German language”, “Russian language and literature”, “Primary education” and “Educational psychology” majors, the second most popular features of a successful person mentioned by them determine the activity aspect: when describing the successful people, the most frequently used words are “purposeful”, “laborious”, “active”, “confident”, “courageous”, “professional”, “well-educated”.

At the next stage of the study using the author’s questionnaire, the preferences of students in choosing successful personalities were identified. Students were asked to name three successful personalities and to characterize them. It should be noted that not every respondent was able to come up with three persons (alternatives). We have identified several professional areas to which successful individuals belong. The total number of alternatives named – 204: “History. Social science” – 41, “English language and German language” – 42, “Russian language and literature” – 38, “Primary education” – 36, “Educational psychology” – 47 (Table 02).

Table 02. Perception of social success by youth (%)

Groups of respondents	Businessmen	Politicians	Musicians, show-men	Film directors, actors	Bloggers	Writers	Journalists	Literature characters	Academia	Sport	Visual artists	Astronauts	Immediate environment
History. Social science	4,8	17	19,5	9,7	9,7	9,7	4,8	4,8	2,4	0	0	2,4	14,4
English language and German language	26,2	9,5	14,3	14,3	7,1	4,7	0	0	0	0	7,1	0	9,6
Russian language and literature	15,7	10	18,4	23,6	0	7,9	5,3	5,3	0	2,6	5,3	0	5,2
Primary education	22,2	8,3	16,6	25	16,6	0	0	0	2,7	2,7	0	0	5,4
Educational psychology	4,2	8,4	12,7	6,4	8,4	4,2	2,1	0	2,1	4,2	0	0	47,3

The results show that the respondents indicated both well-known personalities and people from their immediate environment (relatives, teachers, school directors) as successful individuals. Most often, students mentioned the representatives of the music and show industry as successful personalities, Olga Buzova being most popular (mentioned 6 times).

Representatives of the film production industry made up the second group according to the degree of students’ preference (actors and directors).

The third place is occupied by business representatives and the richest people. Steve Jobs, as one of the most famous businessmen, became the most popular person in this sample (mentioned 9 times).

Politicians ranked fourth. The name of Vladimir Putin appeared most often among other politicians (6 times).

It is worth being noted that students from different training programs have different preferences when choosing a successful person. The group “History. Social science” noted most alternatives (19,5%) among the representatives of music and show industry, “English language and German language”

mentioned businessmen most (26,2%), “Russian language and literature” and “Primary education” preferred film production (23,6% и 25% respectively). Students with major in Educational psychology mentioned people from their immediate environment as successful individuals more often than the others did (φ emp. = 2,2; $0,05 < p \leq 0,1$).

Next, we consider the gender preferences of young people, when choosing successful personalities (Table 03).

Table 03. Successful personalities gender preferences of young people (%)

Groups of respondents	Males	Females	
History. Social science	65,8	34,2	φ emp. = 1,95; $0,05 \leq p \leq 0,1$
English language and German language	76,2	23,8	φ emp. = 3,04; $p \leq 0,01$
Russian language and literature	71	29	φ emp. = 2,4; $p \leq 0,05$
Primary education	63,8	36,2	φ emp. = 1,6; $0,05 \leq p \leq 0,1$
Educational psychology	55,3	44,7	φ emp. = 0,7; $p > 0,1$

The study results suggest that all students, except for the Psychology major ones, perceive males as successful persons more frequently. According to the students’ opinion, to achieve social success, one needs such qualities as being active, purposeful, laborious and polite, which is seen by respondents as being manifested to a greater extent in males.

In the second part of the questionnaire, students were asked to give psychological characteristics to successful individuals. In total, 285 definitions were given, which could be attributed to various constitutional factors proposed by Raymond Cattell in a multivariate study of personality. As a result of the analysis, the proposed characteristics were distributed by factors (A, B, C, E, F, G, H, L, M, N, Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4) (Table 04).

Table 04. Psychological traits of successful people as imagined by youth

Factor	Number of traits	Description
G + “Rule-Consciousness”	62	Strong character, disciplined, purposeful
B + “Reasoning”	45	Higher general mental capacity, readiness, brilliance
C + “Emotional Stability”	39	Power, emotionally stable, stability of interests
A+ “Warmth”	38	Easygoing, open, trustfulness
E + “Dominance”	32	Self-confident, stubborn, competitive
F + “Liveliness”	20	Lively, spontaneous, impulsive
H + “Social Boldness”	11	Socially bold, venturesome, active
Q 4 “Tension”	10	Tense, high-energy, driven

The data presented in the table shows that successful person is an individual who has high normativeness, responsibility, and determination. He or she has a high level of general intellectual abilities, developed abstract thinking, is able to quickly make decisions in critical situations. Emotional stability and

realistic assessment of various situations allow him or her to manage the situation and avoid difficulties. At the same time, on the one hand, a successful person is ready for cooperation, and is attentive to the others. On the other hand, to achieve the set goals, the person must be independent, bossy, able to dominate the group. Less often, according to the questioned youth group, a successful person is frank, sincere in relationships, appreciates the importance of social contacts and believes in luck. In addition, social courage, risk appetite, sociability, and high motivation are not always conducive to success in various spheres of life. It is less than 10 times that the characteristics of a successful person found in the factors L-, M+/-, N+, Q1+, Q2+, Q3+ were mentioned.

At the final stage of the study, the preferences and characteristics of a successful personality as seen by students of different training profiles were analyzed (Table 05).

Table 05. Perception of social success by youth (%)

Groups of respondents	Indicators of social success image							
	A+	B+	C+	E+	F+	G+	H+	Q4+
History. Social science	8,8	17,5	17,5	7	5,3	30	5,3	3,5
English language and German language	8,1	24,5	10,2	14,2	14,2	8,2	4	2
Russian language and literature	9,4	13,2	13,2	15	11,3	20,7	1,8	1,8
Primary education	24,5	15	5,6	5,6	1,8	24,5	7,5	7,5
Educational psychology	15	10,9	19,1	10	13,6	23,3	1,4	2,8

The results indicate that students of different majors have different psychological portraits of a successful personality. The dominant features of a successful personality for students of “History. Social science”, “Russian language and literature”, “Educational psychology” programs are a high level of moral control, purposefulness, emotional discipline, responsibility and a sense of duty. For students of the group “English language and German language”, the characteristic features of a successful personality are brilliance, the ability to quickly adapt intellectually, readiness. Students of the “Primary education” group believe that a successful person should equally have sociability, willingness to cooperate, as well as poise, determination, and perseverance in achieving goals.

7. Conclusion

Success in life is the conscious goal of any person, but an individual understanding of success does not matter when it does not meet the demands of society. It is possible to determine how a person is socially successful only by analyzing his or her interaction with society.

The study shows that the image of a successful person, as seen by youth, is dominated by humanistic orientation, which correlates with the areas of training chosen by students.

According to the students of different training profiles, professional affiliation of an individual is not the dominant factor in determining social success. However, success is always associated with popularity and fame. At the same time, quite a small percentage of respondents consider people from their immediate circle as successful. When describing a successful personality, young people emphasize that

they must necessarily have high intelligence, the strength of Self and openness. Therefore, the typical psychological portrait of a successful person for youth is a male person from the music or show industry with a strong character, responsible, smart, hardworking, purposeful, sociable, cheerful, kind, confident and believing in good luck.

The study showed the versatility of investigating the phenomenon of social success, as well as allowed to expand our knowledge about value orientations in adolescence. Future research may be aimed at studying the dynamics of definition and attitudes towards social success, as well as the individual's awareness of his or her self-efficacy.

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