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Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

EXPECTATIONS ABOUT FUTURE VALUES AND INTERNET USE IN RUSSIAN ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

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Abstract

There is a growing number of studies suggesting to discuss psychological development of adolescents and youth from the perspective of digital socialization. The aim of the study was to describe expectations about the most important values in the future in adolescents and youth and to reveal the relationship between them and user activity. 827 college and university students 15-25 years old from four Russian Federal Districts filled items measuring user activity (EU Kids methodology) and checklist including domain specific personal values. They were asked to choose up to three values that (1) seem to be important for them in the future and (2) seem to be important for their parents. The central values of the young generation, which they consider important for their future, are material wealth, family well-being, health, the opportunity for creativity and development. In people 18-25 years old, material wealth and the opportunity for creativity and development are more important than in adolescents 15-17 years old. Adolescents with higher user activity were more likely to choose the value of material wealth and less often – the value of family well-being, while youth with higher user activity were more likely to choose the values of freedom and technological progress.

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Keywords: Digital socialization, expectations about future, Internet use, Russian adolescents, youth.



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1. Introduction

Since the generation approach (Howe & Strauss, 1993) that described generations Y and Z as developing in the close contact with the Internet, there is a growing number of studies suggesting to discuss psychological development of children, adolescents and youth from the perspective of digital socialization (Smith et al., 2015, Soldatova et al., 2017, Stornaiuolo, 2017). According to them, user activity of children, adolescents and youth is affected by their developmentally meaningful tasks and further impact the process of development, their motivation, emotion, personal values.

More than 10 years ago researchers described less stronger family values and orientation to close relatives in children and adolescents especially those with higher user activity (How technologies..., 2009). Today from the perspective of digital socialization it could be hypothesized that user activity has no direct impact on personal values. Depending on age and personal maturity, online activity could be different that would differently affect personal beliefs about herself and the world (Borca et al., 2015, Manago, 2015).

2. Problem Statement

Studies of the personal values that adolescents and youth consider as important for them and their future (comparing to their parents' values) and their relationship to user activity could provide further understanding of digital socialization as different in different ages and as depending on the personal maturity and interests.

3. Research Questions

The aim of the study was to describe expectations about the most important values in the future in Russian adolescents and youth and to reveal the relationship between them and user activity.

4. Purpose of the Study

We hypothesized that:

1. There are differences between expectations about future values between Russian adolescents and youth.
2. Gender differences in expectations about future values are explained by gender roles socially accepted in the country.
3. Relationship between personal values and user activity would be different in adolescents and youth due to different stage of socialization that by the same level of user activity.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Sample

827 college and university students 15-25 years old from four Russian cities (Moscow, Igevsk, Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk) presenting four Federal Districts (Central, Volga, Siberian, Far Eastern) participated in the study. 491 were females (59.4%) and 336 were males (40.6%).

496 were adolescents 15-17 years old (college students) and 330 were youth 18-25 years old (college or university students).

5.2. Methods

User activity was measured in accordance with EU Kids methodology (Livingstone et al., 2011) as appraisals of the number of hours typically spent online (separately for weekdays and weekends).

Expectations about future values were assessed by checklist including 11 life-domain specific values (“Material wealth, lack of need”, “Family well-being”, “Opportunity for creativity and self-development”, “Health”, “Good ecology”, “Good and prestigious place to study and work”, “Freedom”, “Stability and order”, “Respect from others, public recognition”, “Success”, “Friendly society”, “Technological Progress”. The checklist was not based on basic need theory (Schwartz, 2012) because we were interested in personal values related to different life domains and activities.

All participants filled checklist twice. First, participants were asked: “Please imagine, how would you your future was, for example, in 20 years? Please select values in the list that would be important to you”. Participants were allowed to choose up to three the most important values from the list. Second, they were asked to select values that seem to be important for their parents – up to three values from the same list.

Data were processed in SPSS Statistics 23.0.

6. Findings

6.1. Expectations about future values: age and gender differences

Material wealth and family well-being (Figure 01) were expected to be the most important in the future in more than half of participants. Among the leading expected values are also health and possibility for creativity and development.

Comparisons of adolescents and youth revealed that material wealth ($\chi^2 = 4.09$, $p < .05$, V Cramer = .07) and the possibility of creativity and development ($\chi^2 = 12.91$, $p < .01$, V Cramer = .13) are more important for youth than for adolescents. Adolescents more often than youth prefer success ($\chi^2 = 14.64$, $p < .01$, V Cramer = .13).

Respondents from both groups are equally often choosing family well-being, health, a good and prestigious place to study and work and are equally rare choosing a friendly society, technological progress, good ecology, stability and order, and respect from others.

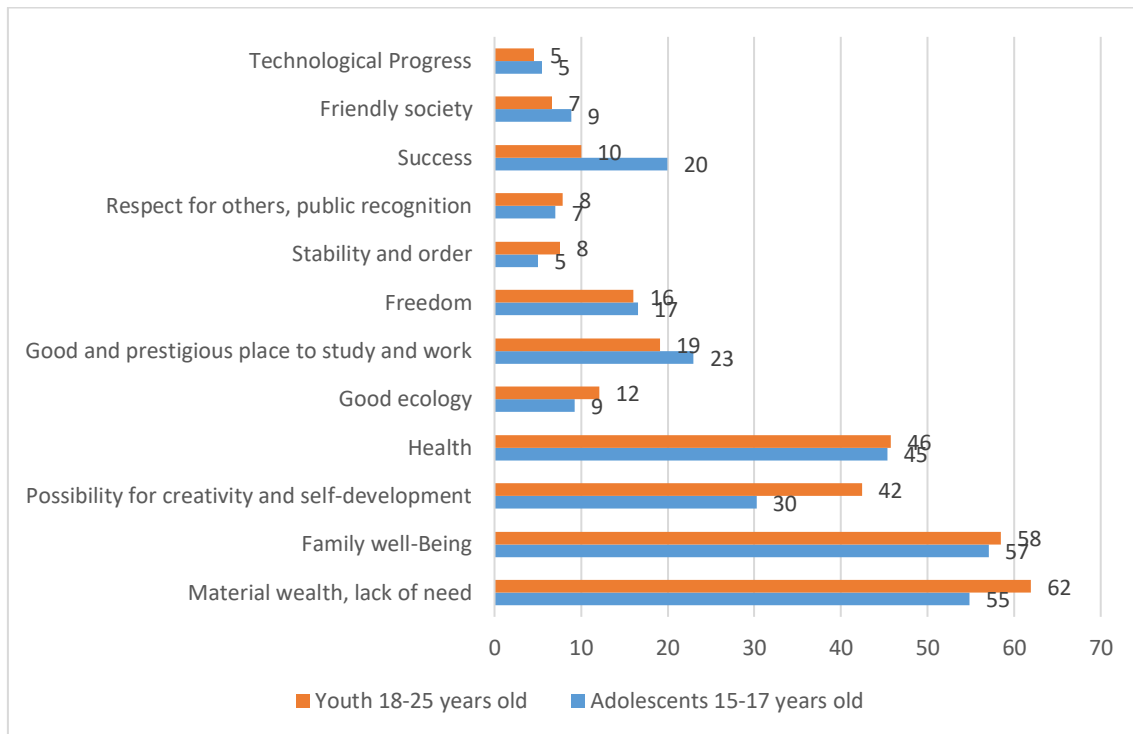


Figure 01. Expectations about values in the future in youth and adolescents (percent of participants who have chosen each values)

Females were more likely than males choosing family well-being (61% of girls and 53% of boys, $\chi^2 = 5.25$, $p < .05$, V Kramer = .07) and health (48% of girls and 43% of boys, $\chi^2 = 11.56$, $p < .01$, Cramer V = 0.11), while males were more likely than females choosing success (20% of boys and 13% of girls, $\chi^2 = 15.79$, $p < .01$, V Kramer = .12) and technological progress (9% of boys and 3% of girls, $\chi^2 = 22.24$, $p < .01$, V Kramer = .15).

6.2. Expectations about values for themselves and for parents: comparison of opinions of adolescents and youth

Both adolescents and youth more frequently have chosen the possibility of creativity and development as a value for themselves in the future than as a value for their parents (35% and 11%, respectively, by the criterion of signs $Z = 8.04$ in adolescents and $Z = 9.48$ in youth, $p < .01$). The same result (Table 01) was revealed for freedom (16% and 5%, respectively, by the criterion of signs $Z = 5.93$ in adolescents and $Z = 5.23$ in young people, $p < .01$) and technological progress (although adolescents generally rarely choose the latter, $Z = 2.43$, $p < .05$).

On the contrary, both adolescents and youth more likely report that family well-being (69% and 58%, respectively, according to the criterion of signs $Z = 3.87$ in adolescents and $Z = 3.64$ in youth, $p < .01$), health (70% and 46%, respectively, according to the criterion of signs $Z = 8.20$ in adolescents and $Z = 7.23$ in youth, $p < .01$), and stability and order (16% and 6%, respectively, according to the criterion of signs $Z = 4.28$ in adolescents and $Z = 4.98$ in youth, $p < .01$) would be more valuable for their parents than for themselves.

In both age groups, young people equally often report material wealth as a value for themselves and as a value for their parents.

Table 01. Expectations about values in the future for themselves and for parents in adolescents and youth

Expectations about values in the future	Adolescents' appraisals of themselves	Adolescents' appraisals of their parents	Youth's appraisals of themselves	Youth's appraisals of their parents
Material wealth, lack of need	54.84%	50.40%	61.93%	61.21%
Family well-Being	57.06%	67.94%	58.48%	71.21%
Opportunity for creativity and self-development	30.24%	11.49%	42.42%	10.00%
Health	45.36%	68.35%	45.76%	71.52%
Good ecology	9.27%	11.29%	12.12%	8.79%
Good and prestigious place to study and work	22.98%	18.95%	19.09%	17.58%
Freedom	16.53%	5.85%	16.06%	4.55%
Stability and order	5.04%	12.90%	7.58%	20.61%
Respect from others, public recognition	7.06%	7.26%	7.88%	6.36%
Success	19.96%	13.71%	10.00%	8.79%
Friendly society	8.87%	6.65%	6.67%	4.55%
Technological Progress	5.44%	2.42%	4.55%	1.82%

Similarly to their self-esteems, when evaluating their parents, youth more often choose material wealth as an expected value than adolescents ($\chi^2 = 9.34$, $p < .01$, Kramer $V = .11$). In the other words, they appraise their parents' expected values of wealth close to their own expected values. On the contrary, both adolescents and youth rarely choose the value of creativity and development as an expected value for their parents.

Young people more often than adolescents believe that stability and order are important to their parents ($\chi^2 = 8.76$, $p < .01$, Cramer $V = .10$), and less often believe that success is important to them ($\chi^2 = 4.63$, $p < .05$, V Cramer = .08). Family well-being and health are considered as important for their parents by many adolescents and young people, regardless of age group. Good ecology, a prestigious job, freedom, respect for others, a friendly society and technological progress are equally rarely appraised by young people as important for their parents.

6.3. Relationship between expectations about values and user activity in adolescents and youth

According to the results of statistical analysis, the more time teenagers spend online (this is true for both weekdays and weekends), the more often they choose wealth as a value (according to the Mann-Whitney criterion, $Z = -3.49$, $p < .01$) and the less often they choose family well-being ($Z = -3.29$, $p < .01$), while there is no such a relationship in youth ($Z = -.57$, $p > .20$ and $Z = -1.29$, $p > .20$, respectively).

Young people ($Z = -3.13$, $p < .01$) but not adolescents ($Z = -.45$, $p > .20$) who spend more time online more often choose the value of freedom. In addition, more time spent on the Internet and earlier start of its use is related to the more frequent choice of the value of technological progress (although, as already mentioned, this was a rare choice, $Z = -2.17$ and $Z = -2.43$, $p < .05$, respectively). This result was not found in adolescents ($Z = -1.26$ and $Z = -0.17$, $p > .05$, respectively).

The choice of values of development and creativity, health, good environment, a good and prestigious place of work or study, stability and order, respect and recognition, success, a friendly society was not associated with user activity in either adolescents or young people.

Age when children first started to use the Internet was not related to the choice of values.

Adolescents' appraisals of their parents' values were not related to their own user activity, as well as the age at which they started using the Internet.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the central values of the young generation, which they consider important for their future, are material wealth, family well-being, health, the opportunity for creativity and development. In people 18-25 years old, material wealth and the opportunity for creativity and development are more important than in adolescents 15-17 years old. The importance of material wealth in youth is reasonable in the context of the transition to adulthood, when young men and women are more often faced with the need for own earnings. The importance of creativity and development is most likely determined not by youthful age, but by the characteristics of the generation itself. Young people today are those for whom life should be developing, interesting and creative. For the next generation - those who are adolescents today, this could be no longer the case. Among them, more and more teenagers prefer success in life, and we can assume that this success does not have to be developing and creative.

Boys and girls see their future a little differently and value different things in it but these differences are fully consistent with the differences between gender roles accepted in the society. Modern girls are more focused on family and health. Modern young men are more oriented towards success and towards technological progress. Apparently, technological progress for many young people today is part of success as its condition and necessary component.

Adolescents and young people believe that they value material wealth, a good and prestigious place to work and study just like their parents. However, they suppose that they value family well-being and health less than their parents while value freedom, the opportunity for creativity and development, and technological progress more than their parents. Thus, it would be a mistake to consider modern adolescents and youth as oriented towards self-development and freedom *instead of* material values. On the contrary, they perceive themselves as material-oriented as their parents, but more oriented toward freedom, creativity and progress than their parents.

There are age differences in the way how young people perceive the values of their parents: young people, for whom material wealth is more relevant and success is less relevant than for adolescents, notice the value of material wealth and do not notice the value of success in their parents. There is hardly any difference in the parents themselves: rather, adolescents and young people are more likely to pay attention to those values of their parents that are important to themselves. If they find these values in parents, they feel similarity; if not, they perceive themselves as different from parents.

The only exception was the value of stability and order, which adolescents and young people rarely choose for themselves, but young people more often suspect it in their parents than adolescents in their parents.

User activity both in adolescents and young people was associated with their value preferences, however, the relationships in both age groups are different. Adolescents with higher user activity were more likely to choose the value of material wealth and less often – the value of family well-being, while youth with higher user activity were more likely to choose the values of freedom and technological progress. There could be different possible explanations for this result. On the one hand, it is possible that user activity itself at different stages of digital socialization has different meanings. In other words, Internet “teaches” people different things, depending on how personally mature these people are and on their online activities. Broadening the awareness, and experience of interacting with other people in adolescents can be supplemented by an understanding of the importance of material wealth and a “weakening” of ties with traditional family values (which was previously described, see How technologies..., 2009). But for young people who are already at a different stage of socialization (including digital socialization), this is no longer the case, and their activity on the Internet “teaches” them the importance of feeling free and creative.

On the other hand, it is possible that in older adolescents, the importance of material well-being and the lack of orientation on family well-being is associated both with an interest in searching online opportunities and options for earning and going abroad, and with a lesser involvement in family life. Young people who choose the value of freedom and technological progress could be more involved in global social processes, which requires more user activity.

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