

**SCTMG 2021**  
**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of  
Modern Globalism»**

**STUDENTS PREDICT A POST-COVID FUTURE: ETHNO-  
GENDER RESULTS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH IN  
BASHKORTOSTAN**

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**Abstract**

Students of Bashkortostan universities stubbornly reflected on Covid threats and forced self-isolation. We conducted in-university monitoring sociological surveys (2019, 2020) to analyze the results and see the main trends. The life of the young Russians has been significantly transformed in the conditions of the Covid pandemic. It began to have new characteristic features, firstly, social and everyday closeness and, secondly, Internet communication dependence. Youth society is bipolar. In conditions of self-isolation most regional youth remained optimistic, but a layer of the minority appeared – these were pessimists. Young optimists quickly identified the social role and civic position in the public life of the region during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods. They plan to create a traditional family-career model. This generation is altruists, innovators and rationalists in any sphere of life. They understand international problems that they are interested in. In the global forecasts of the post-Covid future, they act as objectively and critically minded citizens. Young pessimists experienced Covid isolation with great difficulties. Some were in protracted intra-personal conflict, adapted to the distance learning system and to remote work for a longer time. They did not comply with security measures against Covid infection. These young people do not always like to observe social norms. These students are more selfish and hedonistic and prefer relaxing and comfortable life. They are least interested in global and international problems, since they are apolitical. They are looking for entertainment online. These young people do not perform social and civic roles as expected in society.

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*Keywords:* Youth of Bashkortostan, students, Covid 19-pandemics, self-isolation



## **1. Introduction**

The world Covid pandemic of 2019–2020 has provoked a crisis of national economies and a political collapse in the system of managing public risks, a stalemate in the spiritual and cultural sphere. The pandemic around the world has led to irreparable family losses and tragedies; it has caused a fatality for people with poor health because of coronavirus infection (Cherkasova, 2015).

Russia, as a business partner of the countries of the world community, entered into a confrontation with the biogenetic threat. Russia was the first to show concern for the health of the adult and young population of the country. Russia provided the world with an alternative, calling for vaccination. Life-saving vaccines have been developed with the help of the efforts of Russian scientists, despite sanctions barriers.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Scientific interest has increased in the social and civic positions held by Generation Z in the face of a global pandemic threat. This is a new generation – there is a future innovative potential of the country (Mikhailova & Cherkasova, 2015). An important task was to study the "mass reflection" of the regional youth society on pandemic threats. Another task is to identify the public opinion of young Russians on a wide range of problems: living in conditions of "self-isolation"; intrapersonal plans for the future; youth forecasts about future Russian international relations (Allen et al., 2020).

## **3. Research Questions**

The author made scientific assumptions-hypotheses: how the youth society is differentiated, experiencing Covid threats. For example, "optimists" and "pessimists" will appear during the period of self-isolation. The second one concerns the way young people will determine the social role and citizenship in the public life of the region during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods. The third is how young people will justify the prospects for the development of domestic and international processes, for example, positive plans or negative forecasts.

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

We should identify modern trends in the development of youth society and, on their basis, present a model of a post-Covid future. This will be possible on the basis of a sociological analysis of the obtained results, reflecting the competent opinion of students.

## **5. Research Methods**

We held representative sociological polls of annual intra high school monitoring (563 people) in 2019 and 2020. We wanted to receive unbiased answers to objectives, hypotheses and to prove the purpose. We interviewed an identical sample of respondents with various characteristics. They were students of the higher education institution aged from 19 to 30. Students studied in the framework of

internal, correspondence, commercial and budgetary forms of education. They majored in the socio-humanistic and technical fields of training. Young men and women of different nationalities lived in city and rural areas. This youth was dependent on parents or worked to be financially self-sufficient. Such choice of respondents allowed one to receive a social picture about the real life of student's youth.

## 6. Findings

The life of the young Russians significantly transformed in conditions of the Covid pandemic. She began to have new characteristic signs, first, of social "closeness" and, second, of "Internet and communication dependence". The students estimated the current Covid stage in the personal system of attitude. The students showed the "juvenile optimism" natural to young age (Bates, 2019). The respondents unambiguously pointed out the following: "live well" – 44.1 %, "live perfectly" – 20.3 %. The modern life satisfies seven people from ten. At the same time, we must highlight that a third of the interviewed students are inclined to reinterpret the Covid period of self-isolation and all problems that they faced. These students perceive negatively the life in conditions of the Covid pandemic. It is possible that this category of "young pessimists" had the Covid infection. They were influenced by psychophysiological stresses, health complications, material expenses, restrictions on self-isolation (Blankenberger & Williams, 2020).

It is necessary to note that the Bashkortostan students with firmness endured "wavy" stages of the pandemic. They showed a civic stand, patience, endurance; they observed quarantine health requirements – restrictions. Seven of ten interviewed respondents defended the moral civic stand that is based on the statement that all have to strictly observe requirements for safety. All have to be masked, have gloves, sanitizers, keep a personal distance. Nevertheless, there is another pole of opinions. They contradict the common sense. About a third of the interviewed young men and women denied sanitary and epidemiologic requirements; they took a Covid recusancy position (Lopez-Littleton, 2016).

According to most students (70 %), the Russian state and government should "manage" Covid pandemic situations, both in the center and on the ground. They are the most important in the pandemic system. Half of the respondents assigned medical institutions the "second subject status" in the fight against the Covid disease of Russians – 49.2 %. Three respondents indicated the important role played by business employers (31.6 %). They should keep business and not fire employees during the period of the Covid isolation. A quarter of the surveyed respondents synchronously pointed to two alternatives. Firstly, these were "anti-Covid inspectors and anti-Covid security services". They had to monitor the situation and identify violators in places of mass stay of citizens and villagers – 24.9 %. Secondly, these were "research centers for the development of vaccines" – 23.2 %. They saved all mankind from various diseases.

The young people were sure that the Covid-19 pandemic had to be organized to intimidate all citizens. Respondents chose important alternatives. The results were presented in a decreasing sequence of answers.

- "social services and linear social workers will provide assistance at the place of residence" – 19.2 %;
- "citizens themselves must observe discipline, save money" – 18.6 %;

- "political parties and their youth organizations explain the difficult situation" – 15.8 %;
- "public organizations (trade unions, veterans' unions, pensioners' unions, consumer unions, etc.) support members – 15.3 %;
- "employment centres and labour exchanges employ the unemployed" – 14.7 per cent;
- "law enforcement and law enforcement agencies, judicial authorities ensure law and order" – 14.7 %;
- "private banking structures should implement preferential loan programs – 13.6 %;
- "student volunteers are required to wear grocery orders" – 12.4 %;
- "army units of biochemical protection fly abroad and help other states" – 10.7 %;
- "indifferent and initiative citizens, rural residents support neighbors" – 10.2 %;
- "citizens themselves, due to self-employment (individual activity, small business), support themselves earning income" – 9.6 %;
- "official media and journalists explain the situation" – 9.6 %;
- "sponsors, investors from the field of large business, from show business are obliged to invest in the construction of Covid structures and pharmaceutical industries" – 8.5 %.

There are very revealing points. One out of 10 respondents is convinced that the volunteering student should not be sidelined with the collective anti-crime measures taken in the region. Similarities are observed if we analyze respondents' responses by sex; we consider the gender interpretation of the results obtained. Young men and women agree on preferences. These respondents equally understood the role in the antique struggle of medical institutions (they were put in position No. III), and the role of "antique inspectors and antique security services" – (they were put in position No. V).

Thus, young respondents unequivocally understand that the Covid pandemic will be overcome only in the traditions of Russian collectivism, by the joint efforts of all social institutions and organized, consolidated citizens. Russian society promptly responded to the challenges of the new era, it began to solve current problems.

The student society "faced a number of new problematic situations" in the context of the Covid pandemic. First of all, this is a transition from the forms of "open" leisure and entertainment to a home "closed" vacation – 41.8 %. For the mobile socio-demographic group of the population, this was a force majeure situation. Another important problem has been identified. This is a period of aggravation of social conflicts. They provoked negative consequences. Firstly, interpersonal conflict has increased in the family and among friends. Secondly, psychological tensions have increased in individuals who have been involved in self-isolation and distance learning or "remote" work for a long time. Four out of 10 respondents pointed to an equally important problem. This was "fear for one's life and life of loved ones, phobias about the future" – 39.5 % of the respondents. The Covid pandemic and its negative consequences affected youth society. Some categories of youth have a sense of uncertainty, concern about the fatalities of the neglected disease. The phenomenon – "one to four" was revealed by the results of the study. That is, one out of ten respondents suffered from the Covid infection, and four out of ten respondents gained psychological fear. The understanding of the eternal dilemma – "about the meaning of life and about the proximity of death" – was aggravated in the minds of these young individuals. There are always ways out of the deadlock. On the one hand, this youth can turn to professionals, psychologists,

doctors, social workers and social teachers; these consultants will help eliminate these phobias for especially needy youth. On the other hand, these psycho-panic sentiments of some young people can be overcome through mass voluntary vaccination, due to the information received in the media about the trends of a decrease in the number of cases of people and an increase in the number of cured people.

Social changes were introduced into the lives of young Russians by the notorious Covid pandemic. All of them "mirrored" in the results of the study. About a third of the respondents noted in the responses a variety of alternatives due to the long "closed" home existence. Some respondents began to work at home – in the "remote" mode – 37.9 %. The need for healthy lifestyle and sports leisure increased among young people due to a sedentary lifestyle and constant snacks – 32.2 %. Psychological tension and stress were manifested in the respondents because of the same lifestyle and narrow circle of communication – 29.9 %. Internet addiction increased among the students – 28.2 %. A quarter of the respondents indicated a decrease in material income of their family – 24.3 %. Every fifth respondent began to search for new incomes through the "state program to support the self-employment of young people of the Russian Federation" – 20.3 %. Expenses for mobile communications and computer repair increased significantly among respondents – 16.4 %. Dismissal and loss of earnings, job search took place for workers without a contract – 15.3 %. Thus, the pandemic reduced the material standard of living of the Russians, as stated by young respondents.

Every tenth participant in the study chose a wide variety of options reflecting his personal problems – experiences at the Covid pandemic stage. The life of the youth society did not become static, it was filled with other needs, challenges, contents and actions. Some respondents were interested in political information, in particular, "the external international situation (sanctions, protests, "color revolutions" among our neighboring countries and the threat of world war)" – 14.7 %. Others "survived the disease (Covid infection), received free treatment and medicines, underwent post-attrition rehabilitation – 13 %". "Other respondents had to move to a country house, to a cottage" – 13 %. Some respondents "worsened chronic diseases on nervous grounds and from nervous overwork" – 12.4 %. A part of them had "increased domestic conflicts" – 10.7 % and, similarly, "quarrels with friends, acquaintances, friends" – 10.2 %. Needy respondents "received social benefits and material assistance (for pensioners, children, disabled people)" – 10.2 %.

Our attempt to characterize the period of self-isolation was successful, the similarity of viewpoints was revealed at the gender level. Thus, the opinion of young men and women absolutely coincided with two options for answers: "Internet dependence has increased" and "there has been a dismissal with loss of earnings and search for work".

Thus, in the near future, the regional student youth sees a "plan-guideline" model of the closed traditional family coexistence – cooperation with the active business activity of all self-realizing entities.

Thus, the pandemic had a significant impact on the lifestyle of the Russian youth. And only 4.5 % of the respondents said that nothing has changed in their modern life.

In any historical times, regardless of such force majeure situations, young people are characterized by "looking to the future." On the one hand, one plans to organize one's own personal internal space in the future. On the other hand, students think about the forecasts for the global future, about external

macro-scale and international processes of social development. These two key areas "personal micro-planning" and "macro-forecasts" in the opinions of students were reflected in the research results.

I. Let us consider the first direction. The highest priority personal plans for the future include rational expectations of young people. Every second respondent stated his readiness "to create a family with a loved one and raise children" – 50 %; "to receive a diploma and find a highly paid job in the Republic of Belarus" – 46.3 %; "to engage in one's business and financial well-being" – 45.1 %; "to financially help parents" – 42.6 %. Modern students plan to create a traditional family-career model with material and financial independence! The emphasis on financial independence impresses modern youth. Therefore, a quarter of respondents plan to "solve housing issues and equip residential life" – 28.4 %; "travel around the world" – 25.9 %; "improve one's state of health or appearance" – 23.5 %.

In addition, we obtained results reflecting the specific life situations and plans of young people. These students very selectively chose plans or prospects for the future. Every fifth thinks about "moving to live in another region of Russia" – 18.5 %. Others decide how to "combine work and further study (second higher education or advanced training courses)" – 17.9 %. Every tenth tends to show "interest in science, creativity, inventive activity" – 8.6 %. Some respondents do not exclude the "possibility of emigrating abroad" – 8.6 %; "make a career in government agencies" – 8 %.

Thus, in the near future, the regional student youth envisages a "plan-guideline" model of the closed traditional family coexistence – cooperation with the active business activity of all self-realizing entities.

The specificity of our multinational region is reflected in the ethno-gender focus of the group study. We identified ethno-gender features of students when they are involved in their personal and personal planning of the future. (In parentheses, the indicator of the most important and priority positions are given).

Russian young men and Russian women want to "create a family with a loved one and raise children". They consider this to be the most important life setting for themselves (1).

"Getting a diploma and finding a highly paid job in the Republic of Belarus" is task No. 1 for Tatar young women and women from multinational groups.

"One's own business and material well-being" are noted by Tatar young men and men from the multinational group (1), by Bashkir young women and those from multinational groups (2).

Bashkir women (1); Tatar and Bashkir young men (2); Russian young men and women, as well as women from multinational groups (3); Tatar women (4) noted the option to "financially help parents".

"Solve housing issues and equip apartment life" are the problems that are of interest to Bashkir young men (1), Bashkir women (2), women from multinational groups (3).

"I plan to travel around the world" is a perspective of interest to Bashkir young women (2), women from multinational groups (3).

"I will take care of the state of my health, appearance" is chosen by young men from the multinational group (2) and Bashkir women (3).

"I move to live in another region of Russia" is pointed by Bashkir young men (2), Tatar young men (3), Russian young men (5).

"I will combine work and further study (second higher education or advanced training courses)" is of great concern for Bashkir men (2) and young women from the multinational group (3).

"I am interested in science, creativity, inventive activity" is noted by Russian men (7) and Russian women (8).

The students plan to combine both traditional family, intergenerational life attitudes, and attitudes-innovations. These innovations are characteristic of the younger generation "Z". They include self-employment; business priorities, foreign recreation, care for one's appearance and healthy lifestyle.

II. We consider the second direction. Students predict macro-processes of the post-Covid future since 2021 onwards. Four out of ten respondents said that they would be "afraid of the spread of the new pandemics and fear for the health and life of loved ones" – 44.6 %. They "will remain in the habit of observing security measures everywhere and in everything" – 40.1 %. The Covid pandemic of 2019–2020 left negative associations in the memory of the younger generation. It should be emphasized that young women primarily have phobias for the lives of their relatives, and young men have fear for their state of health.

A third of the surveyed students have an optimistic attitude, believing that everything will be all right in the life of countries and peoples of the world – 32.2 %. The Covid pandemic will disappear forever.

The rest of the respondents supported a diametrically opposite opinion. They associate the post-Covid future with conflicting interstate confrontations. One in five respondents is convinced that "the hidden arms race (in the biogenetic, chemical, bacteriological spheres) will continue" – 20.3 %. Some respondents are convinced that the virtual information "struggle for the brains of youth" will increase – 15.3 %; "new global risks and threats will reappear" – 15.3 %; "some countries will begin to close borders or restrict the entry of foreigners" – 14.7 %; "tourist flows between countries will significantly decrease" – 13.6 %. "Russia will shape its security in all areas (military, electronic technology, food, environmental)" – 11.9 %; "sanctions and interstate conflict (East, West, USA, Russia)" – 9 % will increase. "Some countries will unite in blocs – alliances in confrontation with new challenges and threats to the world" – 6.2 %; "religious extremism will expand terrorism" – 1.7 %.

And only 8.5 % of the respondents found it difficult to answer. They chose a neutral apolitical side and do not want to predict international relations.

Therefore, university students are confident that the post-Covid macroscale life of society will be filled with international events with real conflict risks and threats.

Analysis of gender-sensitive predictive responses revealed a complete similarity of positions. Moreover, men and women agree on such answers as everything will be all right in the life of all countries of the world (No. III is the same position on the scale); "the arms race will continue (biogenetic, chemical, bacteriological)" (No. IV); the virtual information "struggle for the brains of young people" will intensify – (No. V); "some countries will begin to close borders or restrict the entry of foreigners" – (No. VI).

The predominant majority of the thinking and reflecting student youth of the support university of Bashkortostan in forecasts for the future tend to intuitively anticipate the aggravation and expansion of the range of those macro problems that at the present stage already cause public concern about the

international situation. The post-bloody world expects a period of dynamic international relations and risks, sufficiently resonant and not indifferent to youth society.

P.S. The student society of Bashkortostan survived Covid threats. The majority in conditions of self-isolation remained "optimistic," and the minority – "pessimists". Young optimists actively and quickly determine the social role and civic position in the public life of the region during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods. They are law-abiding citizens, successfully study at the university. They follow safety rules against Covid infection. They master distance learning and adapt to work at a remote location. They plan to create a traditional family-career model. These youths think and take material care of their parents. Among these youths, there are many volunteers and responsive people. Optimists solved family problems and intra-personal conflicts using a style of cooperation. This generation is ready to innovate in study, in work. They understand international problems that they are interested in.

Pessimists survived Covid isolation with great difficulties. Some were in protracted intra-personal conflict. They needed the help of psychologists. These people are more likely to have conflicts in the family. It is no secret that conflicts in families became widespread in 2020, they were determined (caused) by "restricted life conditions, virtual communication, lack of money, unemployment, oppressive fear for the lives of loved ones and for life". Young pessimists adapted to the distance learning system and to "remote" work longer. Some did not study well or lost their jobs. They did not comply with security measures against the Covid infection. These young people do not like to observe social norms. Someone caught the Covid infection. These students think only of themselves, want to rest more, learn less, but live financially rich. Among them are those who plan to leave Bashkortostan and Russia. These students are least interested in global and international problems, since they are apolitical. They're looking for entertainment online. These young people do not perform social and civic roles as expected in society.

## 7. Conclusion

The Family Institute continues to be a basic setting for young people who have traditionally been guided by a family model based on basic values such as love, childbirth, parental assistance and a healthy spouse's lifestyle. The social model of prosperous intergenerational coexistence, according to respondents, is possible in a family microgroup with an active personal position of the respondents themselves in the educational, labor and leisure spheres.

For the freedom-loving generation of "Z," the experienced Covid-quarantine period will be included in their personal biography and in the history of the country as a kind of strip of mobilization tests, as an external "social macro-experiment" of civilian exposure and readiness for self-discipline in society, responsible study and work, personal responsibility for themselves and loved ones.

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