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**VIRTUAL AND REAL INTERACTION IN YOUNG PEOPLE AND
SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING**

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Abstract

The article presents comparative analysis of the indicators of real and virtual interaction with Others, as well as analysis and interpretation of the interconnection between various forms of social activity and components of subjective well-being in young people. The authors of the study propose the model of correspondence between real and virtual environments in the process of social activity's manifestation. The study discovers and interprets the interconnection between various forms of young people's social activity and various components of subjective well-being. 764 respondents participated in the study, the mean age was 19.7 years (64.5% were females). In the course of the study we used the scales for measuring the level of various forms of social activity, the unique scales for assessing the respondents' interaction with others in the real and virtual environment. As a result of the study we singled out the following components of interaction and the environments of their priority manifestation. The organizational component is primarily implemented in a virtual environment. The analytical and evaluative component is mainly implemented in the real environment; the operational-activity component of interaction can be implemented both in the real and virtual environments. Social activity of an individual does not always lead to an increase in subjective well-being. It depends on the specific form, purpose and content of social activity. The regulator of interconnection between social activity and subjective well-being is correspondence between the expected result and the process of social activity manifestation, as well as the subject's real life circumstances.

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Keywords: Interaction, social activity, interconnection, subjective well-being, young people



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1. Introduction

Young people form the population segment with the largest potential in terms of participation in social life and its development. Changes in their immediate environment and in the society as a whole depend on the forms and directions of young people's activity. Socio-psychological study of young people's activity allows one to single out the most significant areas of its manifestation, possibilities of initiation and regulation of social activity, determines the role of young people's activity in achieving their subjective well-being.

2. Problem Statement

Psychologists turned to studying personal social activity not so long ago. Due to their investigations personal social activity forms were defined (Shamionov, 2020), the psychological mechanism of activity's transfer from virtual reality and to reality proper was unveiled (Zagranichny, 2019), socio-demographic and psychological factors regulating personal social activity in modern conditions were outlined (Shamionov et al., 2020). At the same time, personal social activity is a characteristic of a modern person, which serves as the reflection of his/her subjective position, participation in progressive social development, capabilities in terms of self-development and transformation of the surrounding reality.

Therefore, it is necessary to continue studying various aspects of young people's social activity. It is particularly important to investigate how social activity is distributed between virtual and real environments, and how it is correlated with life satisfaction.

3. Research Questions

Social activity of an individual and group is currently viewed as an initiative-creative attitude to various spheres of activity and to oneself as an object of social being, rather than participation in social life only (Shamionov, 2018). If we turn to empirical works of the recent years within the framework of the subject under study, we can single out a tendency to study the phenomenon of interest in terms of two aspects: the real and virtual ones. Scientists investigate such issues as mechanisms of activity transfer from the real environment to the virtual one and vice versa (Kolovorotny, 2003; Pilishvili, 2015; Zagranichny, 2019), interaction in the Internet environment within the framework of leisure activity (Belinskaya & Frantova, 2017), various aspects of young people's deviant activity in real and virtual environments (Álvarez-García et al., 2016; Lazhinceva & Bochaver, 2015; Mishna et al., 2018; Soldatova, 2019; Soldatova et al., 2020). Contemporary scientists emphasize the close interconnection between traditional forms of socialization with digital ones, which conditions an individual's activity in the mixed format of online/offline reality (Shamionov et al., 2020).

Researchers are interested in the issue of interconnection between social activity and subjective well-being, which serves as its regulator. The studies, that have been viewed, point out that the two socio-psychological phenomena are positively correlated, but the strength and significance of this interconnection depend on the individual type of activity (Leversen et al., 2012; Shamionov, 2020; Steptoe & Fancourt,

2019). Within the framework of this investigation on the subject we believe that it is necessary to take into consideration the context of interaction (real, virtual) and the number of episodes of these interactions.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to compare the indicators of real and virtual interaction with Others in the youth environment and describe the obtained result, as well as to single out and interpret the interconnection between various forms of social activity and components of subjective well-being.

5. Research Methods

764 respondents took part in the study, their mean age was 19.7 years (64.5% were females), 85% of the respondents were not married. 6.1% of the respondents resided in the countryside, 19.3% resided in small towns, 68.4% - in big cities (regional centres), and 6.2% of the respondents resided in the metropolitan city. 77.7% of the respondents had complete secondary (school) education, 7.6% had secondary vocational education, 14.7% had higher education. Social activity in the virtual environment was rather frequently carried out by 34.3% of the respondents. It was permanently carried out by 15.4% of the respondents. And sometimes it was carried out by 31.2% of the respondents and seldom carried out by 19.1% of the respondents.

The psycho-diagnostic toolset included the following material: scales aimed at measuring various types of social activity (Shamionov et al., 2020). These scales demonstrate an adequate reliability level: α Cranbach = 0.68-0.74; x^2 Friedman = 1306.3, $p < 0.001$ (Shamionov et al., 2020). The team of scientists developed 6 scales, which assess the process of interaction between the respondents and others in the real and virtual environments. Reliability marker: α Cranbach = 0.82. The respondents were asked to evaluate and present (in the numerical format) the average number of activity episodes in real and virtual environments per day. Within the framework of the study of subjective well-being, they used E. Diener's satisfaction with life scale in the adaptation of Osin and Leontiev (2008).

6. Findings

Let's analyse the results obtained within the context of correlation between virtual and real interaction between young people and others. Table 1 presents primary statistics. (See in Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and results of comparative analysis for indicators of real and virtual social activity in young people

Indicator	Mean value	Standard deviation	Asymmetry	Kurtosis	Student-t
Preference for demonstrating activity in the real environment	3.27	1.06	-0.45	-0.24	2.46. $p=$
Preference for demonstrating activity in the virtual environment	3.35	1.08	-0.39	-0.39	0.01
Frequency of organizing interaction in the real environment	3.29	1.17	-0.25	-0.71	
Frequency of organizing interaction in the virtual environment	3.48	1.14	-0.37	-0.56	2.5. $p= 0.01$

Frequency of actions in the real environment	3.92	1.06	-0.74	-0.11	
Frequency of actions in the virtual environment	3.85	1.04	-0.53	-0.51	1.1. p= 0.28
Activity of analysis in the real environment	3.74	1.08	-0.54	-0.32	
Analysis of activity in the virtual environment	3.58	1.11	-0.36	-0.65	4.1. p= 0.001
Number of activity episodes in the real environment	32.3	30.8	>10	>10	Wilcoxon test
Number of activity episodes in the virtual environment	33,1	31,3	>10	>10	0.012. p= 0.001

Having analysed the indicators presented in the table above, we can state that modern young people prefer: a) to be socially active in the virtual environment; b) organize interaction with others in the virtual environment; c) analyse various aspects and results of interaction in the real environment. As for specific actions within the framework of social activity with others, representatives of the younger generation perform them in both environments, neither of them can be described as the dominant one. In addition, representatives of the age group under study on average demonstrate a greater number of episodes of social activity per day in the virtual environment than in the real one.

Young people's preference of the virtual environment, which serves as a platform for manifesting social activity, can be conditioned by the following factors. Firstly, it is related to the development of information and communication technologies/tools, and their widespread availability. Secondly, partial transition of various activities from real environment to cyberspace, conditioned by the general trend towards distance technologies, which has been provoked, among other things, by the unfavourable epidemiological situation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virtual environment is a convenient platform within the context of organizing interaction with others (coordinating goals, means, methods, offering services, etc.). The possibility to instantly transfer the required information, multiple communication options, wide coverage of the target audience make cyberspace comfortable, flexible and suitable in terms of the organizational aspect. This is evidenced by the fact that representatives of the younger generation demonstrate a greater number of episodes of social activity in the virtual environment. In this context, an episode means every interaction with others on the Internet, one conversation via the phone or a conversation in a messenger. Implementation of specific actions within the context of interaction (resolving an issue, negotiating, providing a service, etc.) occurs simultaneously in both environments (real and virtual) on a parity basis.

Young people's preference for analysis and evaluation of their interaction results with others in the real environment (if compared to the virtual one) can be explained as follows. It is most likely that socio-psychological context of communication plays an important role in this case. On the one hand, virtual environment is more convenient and accessible for interaction, on the other hand, it is less constituent due to anonymity, asynchrony, lack of non-verbal signals, difficulty in recording emotional reactions and responses, lack of trust in contact. That could be the reason why young people are trying to analyse and

evaluate interaction with others in the real environment, since such an analysis will be more accurate in terms of ideas about further joint activities.

In the process of analyzing the obtained data, we identified four groups of interconnections between various forms of social activity of young people and subjective well-being components. Subjective well-being components include the following: satisfaction with achieving ideal organization of life (hereinafter Comp. 1); positive assessment of life circumstances (hereinafter Comp. 2); satisfaction with life (hereinafter Comp. 3); satisfaction with completeness of life content (hereinafter Comp. 4); satisfaction with and acceptance of the life scenario (hereinafter Comp. 5).

The first group (see Table 2) demonstrates direct significant interconnection between social activity forms and all components of subjective well-being. Changes in the social activity level in the forms, which have been singled out, will lead to changes in the whole structure of subjective well-being.

Table 2. Correlation analysis results for interconnections between social activity forms with all components of subjective well-being in young people

Forms of social activity	Components of subjective well-being				
	Comp. 1	Comp. 2	Comp. 3	Comp. 4	Comp. 5
Altruistic activity	,235**	,128**	,185**	,144**	,151**
Leisure activity	,202**	,162**	,193**	,184**	,143**
Sports and recreational activity	,230**	,176**	,213**	,196**	,174**
Cultural activity	,208**	,134**	,169**	,111**	,129**
Family and household activity	,300**	,276**	,318**	,293**	,272**
Environmental activity	,203**	,185**	,200**	,211**	,171**
Civic activity	,148**	,110**	,116**	,085*	,145**
Professional activity	,148**	,099**	,105**	,097**	,172**
Religious activity	,184**	,131**	,170**	,111**	,180**

** The correlation is significant at the level < 0.01 (bilateral).

* The correlation is significant at the level < 0.05 (bilateral).

The second group has no significant correlation between social activity forms and any components of subjective well-being. These social activity forms include: socio-political activity, Internet-network activity, Internet-search activity, radical-protest and subcultural activity.

The third group (see Table 3) has a heterogeneous structure of interrelationships between social activity forms and various components of a subjective well-being level.

All interconnections between this group of social activity forms with the subjective well-being components are significant and have a direct orientation, but such connections have been revealed for various components of subjective well-being rather than the general level of subjective well-being.

Table 3. Correlation analysis results for interconnections between social activity forms and some components of subjective well-being in young people

Forms of social activity	Components of subjective well-being				
	Comp. 1	Comp. 2	Comp. 3	Comp. 4	Comp. 5
Socio-economic activity	,171**	,091*	,077*	,053	,056
Educational-developmental activity	,145**	,060	,117**	,073*	,116**
Spiritual activity	,107**	,066	,082*	,051	,083*

The fourth group involves only one form of social activity, which has significant reverse correlation with the component of subjective well-being level assessment, which is called satisfaction with completeness of life content. Protest activity represents this form of social activity ($r=-,091$, at $p<0,05$). Based on the idea that subjective well-being mirrors reflexive-evaluative components of correspondence between like circumstances and individual's expectations (Osin & Leontiev, 2008), we can assume that the nature of interconnection between social activity forms and subjective well-being components is based on the content and purpose of the specific social activity form. Moreover, it is based on the expectation of possible result of social activity, depending on its form and correspondence of this result to real circumstances.

Therefore, we can see that the first group with significant direct interconnection involves social activity forms that most likely presuppose positive result of social activity. The priority goals of such activity forms are the desire to satisfy subjective needs, to improve one's well-being and the surrounding environment.

In the third group, we observe a more complex system of interconnections, which is also based on the content, purpose and likely outcome of activity. Thus, the process of socio-economic activity is primarily aimed at acquiring a higher level of financial prosperity, which is one of the components of subjective well-being. Educational-developmental activity has a direct significant interconnection with all of the components named above, except for positive assessment of life circumstances, since this form of activity is aimed at satisfying a fairly wide range of subjective needs, which can potentially lead to an overall increase in the level of subjective well-being, regardless of life circumstances. Spiritual activity has no significant interconnections with positive assessment of life circumstances and satisfaction with the completeness of life content. Satisfaction with completeness of the content of life does not form the need for spiritual enrichment, therefore, it does not lead to the implementation of this form of activity.

The fourth group contains only one form of social activity, which is interconnected with only one component of subjective well-being, but in this case we see a significant reverse interconnection. This interconnection can also be explained by the content of the key motive of protest activity, which is dissatisfaction with reality. In the process of implementing protest activity, it is not rejection of the existing reality in general that is important, but dissatisfaction with its specific aspects. Therefore, the interconnection is manifested not through subjective satisfaction in general, but through dissatisfaction with the completeness of the content of life only.

7. Conclusion

1. Correspondence between real and virtual interaction within the framework of personal social activity can be represented via the model with the following initial components. The organizational component of interaction is predominantly manifested in the virtual environment. The analytical and evaluative component of interaction is predominantly manifested in the real environment. The operational and evaluative component of interaction is equally manifested in both real and virtual environments.

2. Social activity as a socio-psychological phenomenon does not always lead to an increase in the level of subjective well-being. It depends on the specific form of social activity. The key aspect that regulates the presence and direction of interconnection between the level of subjective well-being and social activity of young people is the expected content, purpose and result of social activity, and their correspondence with real life circumstances.

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