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**SOCIAL BELIEFS PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF THE  
GENERATION Z**

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*Abstract*

In the process of socialization, a person builds an image of the world, which determines his/her further interaction with the surrounding reality. In this research the social beliefs as components of the image of the world of children born at the beginning of the XXI century are studied. The purpose of the study was to establish the relationship of social beliefs with psychological well-being, as well as to compare the psychological well-being, depending on the level of presence of social beliefs. We analyse 4 types of social beliefs - belief in a jungle world, belief in a dangerous world and belief in a just world (belief in a justice towards oneself personally and belief in a justice of the world in general). The 69 of 10-11th grades school students from two regions of Russia – 35 from Tatarstan and 34 from Bashkortostan – participated in our research. The results of the study showed that there are significant differences in teenagers with different levels of social beliefs. These belief systems have been found to negatively correlate with the level of psychological well-being. In this case, the most significant role is played by belief in a jungle world, which affects virtually all parameters of psychological well-being.

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**Keywords:** Image of the world, psychological well-being, belief in a just world, belief in a jungle world, belief in a dangerous world.



## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Image of the world**

Any image, as a form of reflection of an object in a person's mind, is a complex phenomenon that includes many characteristics. In Russian psychology within the activity theory framework developed by Leontyev (1983), the problem of the image is inextricably linked with the concept of "the image of the world". The basis of the image of the world formation is the perception of reality in the course of human activity, that allows to "fill" the image of the world with the meanings of objects and to turn it into a meaning field, a system of meanings.

In the social cognition psychology, the study of the process and the result of the construction of reality is primarily related to the concept of the "image of the social world" (Andreeva, 2005). Self-consciousness of a person, his/her self-perception and self-conception, which manifest themselves in life goals and motives, in relationships with other people as well as in the system of values and attitudes play a significant role in constructing the image of the social world.

Adolescence is a special period for the active building of the image of the social world. At this stage of their life the teenagers are actively looking for guidelines to assess what is happening with them and around them, at the same time the value system, that serves as a basis for structuring their knowledge of the world, is forming itself.

### **1.2. Social beliefs**

In psychological science there are at least two types of social beliefs. The first type is belief in a just world that plays an adaptive function in a person's life (Lerner, 1980). Here it is possible to identify belief in a just world in general and belief in a just world for oneself. There is a kind of "contract" between a person and society, which acts according to certain rules and regulations. In other words, a person has ideas that form his/her image of the world, these ideas imply that the fairness of the world will depend on appropriateness of one's behaviour.

In modern Russian psychological studies, it has been revealed that teenagers' beliefs in a just world is positively correlated with psychological well-being (Nartova-Bochaver, Khohlova, & Podlipnyak, 2013). Belief in a just world in general and in relation to oneself is positively correlated with optimism and resilience (Alishev & Atagunov, 2017). and exhibition of conformal thinking (Shpak, 2017).

In her study Nartova-Bochaver (2017) discovered that social beliefs are associated with personal boundaries, levels and various aspects of individual sovereignty, which in turn is one of the predictors of psychological well-being. Thus, super-sovereign individuals exhibit low level of faith in a just world in relation to themselves.

The second type of social beliefs is based on the two-component cognitive-motivational model of social beliefs (views of the world) by Duckitt (as cited in Grigoryev, 2017) - it is a belief in a jungle world and belief in a dangerous world. This theory is based on the idea that there are certain attitudes in society related to authoritarianism and an orientation towards social domination. Those who share these attitudes build an image of the world based on belief in a dangerous world and belief in a jungle world.

The maintenance of these ideas resulting from the influence of the social environment in which the image of a hostile and threatening world prevails.

Belief in a jungle world is positively correlated with an orientation towards egoism, money, as well as with an orientation towards power, and is negatively correlated with empathy and commitment to results (Knyazev & Belykh, 2017). Belief in a jungle world presupposes exhibiting nonconformity in a person's behaviour (Shpak, 2017). A low level of faith in a jungle world is correlated with life satisfaction, optimism and resilience (Alishev & Atagunov, 2017).

Belief in a dangerous world positively correlates with an orientation towards freedom (Knyazev, Belykh, 2017), perception of the world as dangerous negatively correlates with resilience (Alishev & Atagunov, 2017).

### **1.3. Psychological well-being**

One of the current topical objects of psychological research is the problem of well-being. Subjective and psychological well-being are actively investigated in modern psychology. The first is related to the hedonistic approach. In this paradigm various motives of the individual are reduced to the search for pleasure and the avoidance of suffering and are directly related to the external conditions of a person's life (Demenev, 2016). The research of psychological well-being is based on the eudaemonistic approach. This paradigm is based on the ideas of humanistic, positive and existential psychology. From this perspective a person achieves well-being thanks to a developed will and while overcoming difficult life situations (Baturin, Bashkatov, & Gafarova, 2013) as a positive personality functioning (Ryff, 2014). A person aimed at positive functioning is set to realize his/her own capabilities, which are integrated into indicators of satisfaction with himself/herself and his/her life (Zinchenko, Shaigerova, & Shilko, 2017), which manifests itself in the process of realizing his/her own potentials (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Benko, 2015). The eudaemonistic approach recognizes the significance and diversity of the motivating needs' sphere, as well as of the values that are necessary to achieve and unleash one's own potential (Demenev, 2016).

Thus, the hedonistic approach focuses on the integrity of well-being construction, as well as on the attitude of a person to his/her own life. The eudaemonistic approach examines well-being through the prism of a person's striving for self-improvement while embracing his/her own potential (Dubovskaya & Korablinov, 2018).

Psychological well-being is closely related to the optimistic thinking (Gordeeva, Lunkina, & Sychev, 2018), with coherence of values in the personality structure, with the ability to systematize their life plans and life scenarios (Chernyavskaya & Pogorskaya, 2017), with "values of change" (Tikhomandritskaya, Malysheva, Shaekhov, & Kabalnov, 2019; Mustafa, 2018), with an ideological view of the world, in particular, a belief in a just world positively affects the psychological well-being (Gulevich, 2017). Thus, psychological well-being is most likely linked to the person's desire to realize his/her personal potential in a favourable social environment while being optimistic and forward-looking.

## **2. Problem Statement**

While socializing a person constructs an image of the social world, which serves as a special integrated formation, as a cohesive, multi-level system of a person's ideas about the surrounding social reality, about himself/herself, his/her activities, about other people and the peculiarities of interaction with them. Even at the early stages of socialization, the image of the world is not only filled with social information, but also “acquires a certain sentiment, which in the future largely determines the general tonality of a person’s view of the world” (Andreeva, 2005, p. 232), and also, apparently, forms the basis of the social beliefs.

## **3. Research Questions**

The research is focused on the following question:

What is the role of social beliefs in the psychological well-being of teenagers?

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

The purpose of this study was to analyse the relationship of social beliefs and their role in the psychological well-being of teenagers born in the 21st century.

## **5. Research Methods**

### **5.1. Participants**

The sample included 69 respondents aged 16-17 years living in two regions of Russia ( $M = 16.5$ ): 35 students from Tatarstan and 34 students from Bashkortostan. Of these - 32 boys and 37 girls. During the research the participants were studying in grades 10 and 11.

### **5.2. Techniques**

Beliefs were evaluated using the technique of “Belief in a just world” (BJW) by C. Dalbert in the version adapted by Nartova-Bochaver et al. (2013) and the questionnaires of Duckitt “Belief in a jungle world” (JWB) and “Belief in a dangerous world” (DWB) in the version adapted by Gulevich, Anikeenok, & Bezmenova (2014). To assess the psychological well-being (PWB) the Ryff’s (2014) technique was used, adapted for the Russian-speaking population by Shevelenkova and Fesenko (2005). For statistical data processing, cluster analysis was used (k-means method), the Mann-Whitney U-criterion, the Spearman correlation coefficient.

## **6. Findings**

In order to answer the research question, we conducted a cluster analysis using k-means method to identify subgroups with high and low presence levels of each of the social beliefs studied.

At the beginning, we divided the sample into two subgroups according to the level of JWB: low scores for 25 respondents ( $M = 24,8$ ;  $SD = 3,88$ ) and high scores for 44 ( $M = 34,82$ ;  $SD = 2,97$ ).

Subsequently we divided the sample into two subgroups according to the level of DWB: low scores for 38 respondents (M = 33,67; SD = 3,08) and high scores for 31 respondents (M = 42,48; SD = 4,12).

While analysing belief in a just world, we took into consideration, that it includes two components - belief in a justice towards oneself personally (personal belief in a just world - BJWpers) and belief in a justice of the world in general (general belief in a just world - BJWgen) - therefore, the data for each of these scales of the questionnaire were analyzed separately. Using the k-means cluster analysis, we divided the sample into two subgroups according to the level of personal belief in a just world: low scores for 28 respondents (M = 15,71; SD = 3.45) and high scores for 41 (M = 25,24; SD = 2.95).

As an indirect confirmation of the fact that the BJWpers in our study demonstrates defence psychological mechanisms, we can assume that the majority of our respondents perceive the world as unfair. The cluster analysis allowed us to divide the sample into two subgroups according to the level of BJWgen presence: low scores of general belief in a just world among 51 respondents (M = 17,61; SD = 3,95) and high scores - in 18 respondents (M = 26,89; SD = 3,95).

**The relationship of psychological well-being and social beliefs**

The correlation analysis shows the social beliefs are generally negatively correlated with the PWB (Table 01). The exception is the positive relationship of BDW with the “autonomy” scale. We believe that teenagers, who perceive the world as chaotic and unpredictable, are expected to seek support in their own judgments and are focused on being independent. However, in general, this does not lead them to a high level of general well-being, but does not prevent it either, as evidenced by the lack of significant correlation with an integrated index of PWB.

**Table 01.** The relationship of social beliefs and indexes PWB

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
JWB	-,403***	-,202	-,251*	-,272*	-,428***	-,385***	-,425***
BJWpers	-,396***	-,413**	-,363**	-,264*	-,323**	-,513***	-,493***
BJWgen	-,264*	-,071	-,369**	-,017	-,339**	-,438***	-,313**
DWB	-,287*	,336**	-,079	0,013	-,352**	-,333**	-,145

Notes: I. The names of the scales of the C. Ryff questionnaire given in the table: 1 – Positive relations with others; 2 – Autonomy; 3 – Environmental mastery; 4 – Personal growth; 5 – Purpose in life; 6 – Self-acceptance; 7 – integrated index of psychological well-being.

II. Legend. \* - p≤ ,05; \*\* - p≤ ,01; \*\*\* - p≤ ,001

PWB was assessed depending on the level of presence of each type of beliefs. The most pronounced differences are observed only in relation to belief in a jungle world. Table 02 presents data demonstrating that on all scales, with the exception of “Control of the environment”, higher scores are observed for those participants who perceive the world as less competitive. Thus, BJW is associated with the greater isolation and frustration in relationships with others, with a greater dependence on their opinions, a lesser sense of self-realization and meaningfulness of life with a more pronounced dissatisfaction with themselves. At the same time, BJW does not give advantages as the feeling of being

able to control the environment and use the opportunities to achieve one’s goals. All of this creates quite contradictory emotional experiences that in general do not contribute to psychological well-being.

**Table 02.** The relationship of social beliefs and indexes of pwb

Scales	Level				U-criterion Mann-whitney
	Low		High		
	M	Sd	M	Sd	
Positive relations with others	57,40	9,08	50,11	8,20	<b>,004</b>
Autonomy	57,52	10,03	53,02	7,48	<b>,022</b>
Personal growth	61,80	8,75	55,73	9,05	<b>,008</b>
Purpose in life	58,24	8,17	52,16	7,62	<b>,003</b>
Self-acceptance	55,32	7,87	49,64	6,11	<b>,004</b>
Integrated index of pwb	346,16	40,55	313,09	31,47	<b>,000</b>

In regard to other types of beliefs, there is no such differentiation observed in terms of level of PWB. As a trend, it can be noted that teenagers who believe in a dangerous world experience less life meaningfulness - their indexes on the “life goals” scale are significantly lower ( $p = ,009$ ) than among those who have a low DWB ( $M = 51,74$ ;  $SD = 8,19$  and  $M = 56,5$ ;  $SD = 7,87$ , respectively). Such results seem logical as it is difficult to choose a certain goal and move towards it, if the world is unpredictable and chaotic. Results also show that high level of BJWpers have a significantly lower level of self-acceptance compared to those who are less susceptible to this type of belief (on the “Self-Acceptance” scale  $M = 49,59$ ;  $SD = 5,77$  and  $M = 54,79$ ;  $SD = 8,22$ ;  $p = ,013$ , respectively). It is possible that in adolescence there are still few opportunities to control one’s own life, to achieve success and well-being, therefore personal belief in a just world for oneself serves as a psychological defence. In other words the current state of affairs is perceived as fair and leading to dissatisfaction with oneself, but it allows one to keep hope of that everything can be corrected and the world will repay with success and recognition in the future.

Therefore, the obtained results suggest that social beliefs can be considered as risk factors for PWB. At the same time, the most significant role can be played by belief in a jungle world, which affects virtually all parameters of psychological well-being. While the role of belief in a dangerous world and in a just world is limited to only a few scales.

## 7. Conclusion

The conducted analysis allowed us to see certain patterns in teenagers’ beliefs about the world and demonstrated the negative role of such views on PWB of younger generation.

In addition, at this stage, the question of the intercorrelation of the studied variables remains open. In the future, we plan to conduct confirmatory factor analysis, that will allow to clarify the conclusions about the role of social beliefs PWB.

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