RPTSS 2017

International Conference on Research Paradigms Transformation
in Social Sciences

CRISIS OF SOCIAL IDENTITY AS THREAT TO SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL SECURITY

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Abstract

The article deals with the problem of crisis of social identity as a threat to socio-psychological security of a person and society. It is shown that in modern conditions, given there is the need to ensure national security, an order has evolved in Russia for development in the younger generation of socio-psychological fundamentals of positive social identity, pro-social norms and standards. The formation of social identity of youth is characterized by awareness of the existing congregative values based on the principles of patriotism, cultural spirituality, as well as by formation of a socially mature person. The article presents the results of research to detect among youth students a level of development of the following indicators of socio-psychological security as a factor of positive social identity: pro-sociality (altruism) and egocentrism, resistance to conflicts and aggressiveness, suggestibility, conformism, readiness to risk, and social tolerance. The study has shown a high level of egocentrism and a low level of altruism in most students. This corresponds to the trends the authors pointed out for growing individualism in the Russian society. These trends testify to the possible emergence among modern youth of an intrapersonal conflict between social standards and their own desires, needs, and ambitions.

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Keywords: Social identity, socio-psychological security, pro-sociality, egocentrism, conformism.

1. Introduction

The issues of security in modern society remain relevant given there are active changes taking place in various spheres of life: geo-political, ethno-socio-cultural, political, economic, spiritual and others. The researchers unanimously point out that the chief danger for mankind and society is the fact that people may fail to find enough psychological resources for coping with requirements, nature and the rate of changes of social realities (Dontsov & Perelygina, 2013; Kislyakov et al., 2016; Zinchenko, 2011). The problem of a personality consists in not only getting used to changes, but also in how to preserve the system of values, psychological fundamentals, spiritual mainstay, and social identity (Toffler, 1970). The process of social identification may promote the individual's social conformism not only to the conventional society, and communion with values and traditions of society, but also to alien ideologies and, consequently, to the crisis of identity and formation of pseudo-identity.

In the process of globalization, mankind becomes a single permanently operating crowd and people's behavior acquires increasingly pronounced signs of relevant psychology. They lose their identity (gender-related, ethnic, national, civilian, religious, and political), easily respond to calls and appeals and are prepared – for the sake of "common good" – to obediently bring themselves to a meeting and to a conflict venue for doing away with a non-native individual or even self-destruction (Ramirez et al., 2017; Soldatova & Nestik, 2011; Van Cappellen et al., 2017).

Any state seeks self-identification, attempting to provide a sensation of "ontological security" (Giddens, 1991) which lack may lead the society to such adverse phenomena as psychological disorientation, spread of deviant forms of behavior, social marginalization, etc., which in turn threatens social identity. An ontologically protected person feels confidence in his own identity and in that of other people. Without such confidence, anxiety and apprehension emerge which are perceived as a threat to one's existence (Laing, 1965).

The lack of self-confidence, depression, cruelty, different forms of dependence, escapism from the real world, manifestation of excessive authoritativeness, disintegration of a personality, and psycho-social crises are by far an incomplete list of characteristics of the identity crisis (Martsinkovskaya & Yurchenko, 2016; Yurchenko & Gerasimov, 2009). Thus, a person may move along the path of complete freedom and independence, rejecting all possible forms of morality, social connections, etc., and simultaneously sustaining a concomitant psychological stress, i.e. feeling nothingness, solitude, and opposition to the environment, or accepting certain socially orientated values, public conventions, rules and socially positive forms of interaction with other people and groups, introducing himself to various social connections and restricting his individual demands, liberties, and independence, all of which can be regarded as compensation for his psychological wellbeing and an opportunity to meet his requirements in security (Fromm, 1941).

In modern socio-cultural practice the formation of a civil identity of young generation becomes complicated due to a consumerist attitude to life on behalf of many young people; insufficient social protection of young people which manifests itself in material and domestic difficulties; and erosion of traditional moral values (Strunkina et al., 2016). The western ideology of individualism, existing in the Russian society, galvanized young people into embracing the individual Self-concept aimed at self-development, self-actualization, and self-realization, as well as development of an independent view of

the self, while collectivism, common to domestic culture, and education promoted an inter-dependent view of the self in the context of social interrelations.

As a result, the last decade witnessed the collapse of public awareness and social identification accompanied by establishment of social individualism. The state began to respect its younger generation's active attitude to life, their independence, and desire to distinguish themselves and raise their status in the society. Sure enough, the assertion of this value, in bringing up the young people, became a foundation of socio-political and economic development. However, in Russia, an individual self-realization started acquiring destructive features and demoralizing the society. The modern youth, seeking their own "self", attempting to satisfy primarily their own demands and interests, and to insure their comfort, frequently do not identify themselves with their Homeland, compatriots, neighbors, etc.

Thus, the values of one's own wellbeing and concentration on one's own demands have become all-powering. As a result, the younger generation of Russian society has been split into multiple public, social, political, national, and religious groups, which has led to a crisis of social identity and essentially impaired the national security of the state in general (Kislyakov, 2015). The Federal Target Program "The fostering of unity of the Russian nation and ethno-cultural development of Russian peoples" (2014-2020) showed that Russia has sustained "a change of a single Soviet identity for various frequently competing forms of regional, ethnic and religious identities. In the context of profound public transformations leading to formation of a free and open society together with a market economy in post-Soviet Russia, a crisis emerged in civil identity along with inter-ethnic intolerance, separatism and terrorism. This has created a danger of disintegration of the society".

The social identity can be regarded as a sophisticated psychological formation that integrates a complex of value orientations, behavioral patterns, and socio-personal properties lying at the base of self-realization of a person and his self-concept. In the authors' opinion, the understanding of the ways of overcoming the crisis of social identity among young people and the prevention of formation of negative social identity by choosing the productive strategies to overcome it, is possible thanks to such personal properties as socio-psychological security (stability), political intellect, critical thinking, civism, patriotism, and pro-sociality.

2. Problem Statement

In modern conditions, given there is the need to ensure national security, an order has evolved in Russia for development, in the younger generation, of socio-psychological fundamentals of positive social identity, and pro-social norms and standards, including anti-extremist personal standing, a position of non-violence, tolerant attitude, tolerant awareness etc. Of special importance in this context is the social institutes' ability to meet requirements laid down in the Russian Federation's youth policy for the period till 2025 and the Federal Target Program "The fostering of unity of the Russian nation and ethno-cultural development of Russia's peoples" (for 2014-2020) that envision formation in young citizens of patriotism, creative outlooks, active citizenship, national and state identity.

3. Research Questions

In 2012 Russia launched a complex process of elaborating a strategy of national policy aimed at creating a safe society and a state reliant on conservatism and traditionalism resting on the careful and positive attitude to the value system of its own people, their principles and lifestyle. The geopolitical, social, ideological, and cultural routines of the Russian society change. New public organizations have been created and old ones restored that are engaged in performance of functions of social institutes. Among them are "Common Russian Popular Front", "Russian Schoolchildren's Movement", "Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy", "Cossacks of Russia", "Sports of Russia" all-Russian volunteer society and others. The Russian Orthodox Christian church also is getting increasingly involved in public life, seeking to relay to posterity its traditional spiritual and moral values.

However, formation of the positive social identity of a person (national, religious, civic, political) and pro-social behavior does not always succeed. So, the research by Strunkina et al. (2016) showed that modern youth, though they feel the cultural determination of demands for traditions and patriotism, nevertheless find it difficult to search for and find ideals. The new ideals have not yet become part of their world outlooks. This stems partially from the fact that in young people the formation of moral awareness, value system, ideals, civic properties of a person, and stable pro-social convictions is a rather difficult process. The age-specific desire to fulfill oneself in the context of liberalization and individualization may be a solid ground for a negative social identity and, hence, socially hazardous (asocial and antisocial) behavior.

Frequently, in describing phenomenological and existential aspects of man's development, the disturbance in mechanisms of identity formation is attributed to the loss of sense of true identity and emergency of its pseudo analogue. A convincing example of this is deformation of the religious identity in youth. Particularly alarming is the fact of the youth's joining the ISIL wahabi terrorist organization banned in Russia and some other countries.

Another example of distorted religious identity is the youth's unpreparedness to live in the ethno-religious environment: this manifests itself in numerous Internet forums condemning the affected devoutness of Russian politicians and public figures, desecration of churches, the removal of worshipping crosses, exhibitions – sacrilegious to believers – of modern "art" and, finally, the outrageous punks' thanksgiving in the Church of Christ the Savior followed by a massive psychosis from all quarters. It was not by chance that the state Duma had to turn to this subject and pass in 2013 a federal law aimed at protecting the religious sentiments and convictions of believers.

4. Purpose of the Study

The authors have carried out a research to detect among youth students a level of development of the following indicators of socio-psychological security as a factor of positive social identity: pro-sociality (altruism) and egocentrism, resistance to conflicts and aggressiveness, suggestibility, conformism, readiness to risk, and social tolerance. 112 students training for bachelor degree in pedagogy, psychology, and psycho-pedagogic education were involved in the research.

5.   Research Methods

The mean age was 19 years. The results of diagnostics are shown in Figure 1. The study on the levels of students' pro-sociality was carried out using the methods "Diagnosis of personal attitude to altruism and egotism" and "Diagnosis of personal egocentrism" (N.P. Fetiskin, V.V. Kozlov, G.M. Manuilov). For diagnosing the general level of the students' social tolerance the so-called "Tolerance Questionnaire" was used, developed by a group of psychologists of the Gratis Center headed by G.U. Soldatova. Three sub-scales of the questionnaire are aimed at diagnosing such aspects of tolerance as ethnic tolerance (attitude toward people of other racial and ethnic groups), social tolerance (attitude toward minorities, the impoverished, mentally ill people), and tolerance as a personal feature (readiness to constructively resolve conflicts and fruitfully cooperate). For estimating the critical thinking the method of O.P. Yeliseyev was employed (2003) known as "The estimation of suggestibility". For determining the students' resistance to conflicts the same method (N.P. Fetiskin, V.V. Kozlov, G.M. Manuilov) was used. This also determined the level of aggression in students with the help of the method known as "Determination of predisposition to deviant behavior" (A.N. Oryol) (The scale of predisposition to aggression and violence).

6.   Findings

The study has shown a high level of egocentrism and a low level of altruism in most students. This corresponds to the trends the authors pointed out for growing individualism in Russian society.

The data of the research show that with most students the tolerance is at a medium level. Analysis of the tolerance infrastructure has detected the highest level of development of ethnic and social tolerance. To a lesser extent the students demonstrate tolerance as a personal feature.

The research showed that only half the students have a low level of suggestibility. Also, suggestibility relates to such socio-psychological indicator of the personal development as conformism. Conformism can manifest itself not only as abidance by generally accepted social standards but also as a resort to destructive ideologies under the influence of real or imagined (informational) pressure. The results of diagnosing the students by the method known as "Determination of predisposition to deviant behavior" (A.N. Oryol) (The scale of predisposition to overcoming standards and rules) showed that most students can be categorized as a conformal type of individuals.

The research showed that only 10% of students feature a highly developed resistance to conflicts, i.e. every third student is predisposed to aggression.

The correlation analysis carried out with the aid of the Pearson's correlation has displayed an existence of a genuinely strong correlative connection between conformism and egocentrism. This fact shows that in the student environment one observes a trend for conventional identity, i.e. conventional standards (standard agreements, standard rules). Overall, the students share national interests and the ideas of civil patriotism, love for Motherland, and communion with the national culture, including religion. They are prepared to participate in mass events like the Popular Unity Day, Victory Day, the Crimea Spring and other events like volunteer movement, Orthodox Christian youth, Young Guard, and others.

However, normally such group rules are used by the students for achieving personal goals complying with the standards that are accepted by and prestigious with the standards accepted by the group (receiving education, material aid, career growth, etc.). This fully explains the fact that based on the results of survey carried out by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center, around 60% of the Russians declare that they consider themselves citizens of the country and are proud of its history (90%), culture (88%), strong armed forces (90%), science (82%), sports (75%), and Russia's standing in the international arena (72%) (https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115866).

The results the authors obtained tally with the trends detected in the studies made by European sociologists. The monitoring carried out for more than 25 years by the American sociologist, professor Inglehart (2000), shows that economically developed countries with democratic institutions witness a steady growth of the significance of "post-materialistic" values, i.e. an opportunity to freely choose one's lifestyle and express oneself (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). According to Beck & Willms (2003), the new generations have highly developed moral standards and they do not restrict themselves by national borders. Young people, in the words of Beck, feature an egoistic altruism. Egoistic altruists are, for instance, those who while carving a career for themselves, find time to help the homeless or disabled. This is not just self-sacrifice. This is also a calculation, a blend of curiosity and a desire to help plus an aspiration to learn the world at large and something new about oneself (Beck & Willms, 2003).
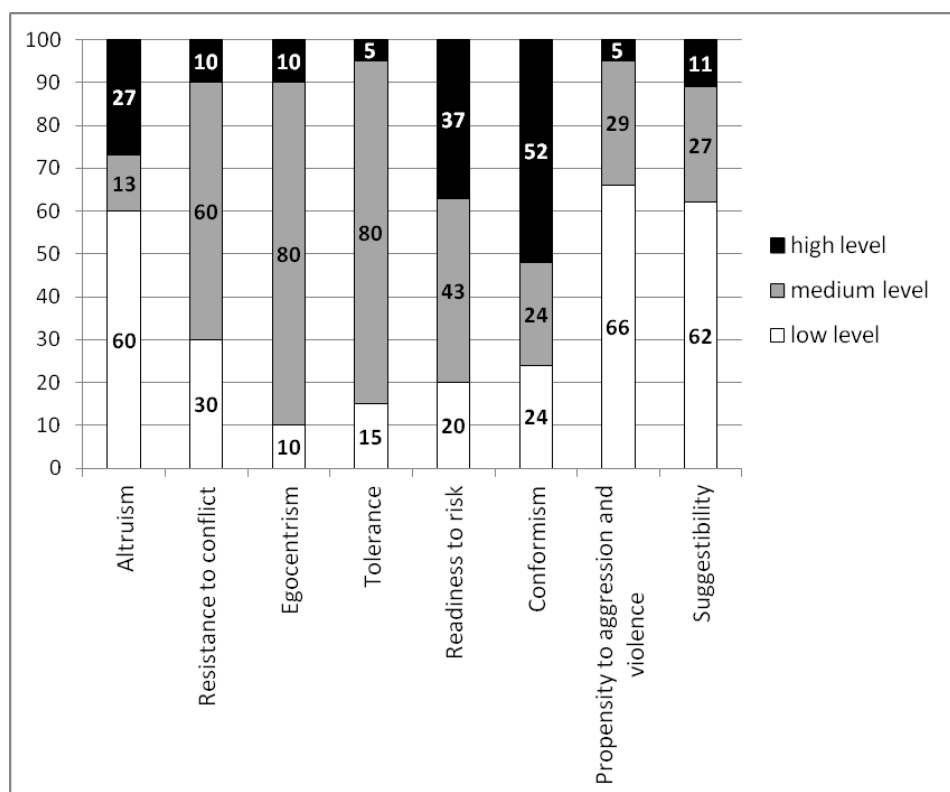

Figure 01. [Levels of development of indicators of socio-psychological security of students (social identity factors), %]

7. Conclusion

What are the current perspectives for consolidation of egocentric and conformist values in public consciousness? The authors believe that these trends testify to the possible emergence among modern youth of an intrapersonal conflict between social standards and their own desires, needs, and ambitions. The prolonged frustration of these drives may result in serious functional failures for the society in general and an individual in particular. An explosive force of young man's unrealized needs and drives put in "confinement" can be utilized by interested communities (nationalistic and antisocial movements).

In this connection, the social institutes today (family, educational establishments, public, religious, scientific and artistic organizations, etc.) face the task of forming a positive civic, ethno-cultural, and commonly human identity through development and implementation of relevant programs. The formation of social identity of youth is characterized by awareness of the existing congregative values based on the principles of patriotism, cultural spirituality, and by formation of a socially mature person. Sustaining the dynamic process of social identification and opposing the ethno- and religious-political extremism are important factors of a steady development of the country and society.

Acknowledgments

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