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SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF URBAN YOUTH OF THE REPUBLIC
OF TATARSTAN

Kozlov Vadim Evgenievich (a)*, Titova Tatyana Alekseevna (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) Kazan Federal University, 18, Kremlevskaya str., Kazan, Russia, vadim.kozlov@list.ru

(b) Kazan Federal University, 18, Kremlevskaya str., Kazan, Russia, tatiana.titova@rambler.ru

Abstract

The negative processes in the global economy caused by the pandemic have affected the socio-economic situation in the Russian Federation leading to a drop in the standard of living of a significant proportion of citizens employed in various fields of activity. Such negative phenomena often become a key factor in increasing collective frustration and lead to an increase in discontent in various social and demographic strata in relation to state power, as well as intergroup and interpersonal tension on various objective and subjective grounds. The analysis of the group emotional state in a cohort of young people and the identification of the most actualized social attitudes that can act as a trigger for radicalization acquire practical importance. The purpose of the article is to analyze the actualized social attitudes of representatives of urban youth. The methodological basis of the study was the theory of social constructionism, implemented using the structural-typological method. The materials under study were obtained in the course of a mass survey of residents of large cities of the Republic of Tatarstan at the age of 18–35 years. The sample consisted of 1000 respondents, of which 49.9 % were men and 50.1 % were women. The analysis made it possible to identify the structure of social priorities in youth groups, to characterize the dynamics and orientation of assessments of socio-economic status, emotional background and the importance of such categories as ethnicity and religiosity.

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Keywords: Communication, identity, intergroup distance, social well-being, social mobility, xenophobia



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1. Introduction

Young people are traditionally in the focus of scientific interest as one of the most socially active and dynamic groups in society. Despite the fact that the share of young people in Russian society has not increased in recent decades, it remains a key driver of socio-political and economic processes. The Republic of Tatarstan is one of the leading subjects of the Russian Federation in terms of economic development and overall quality of life, while possessing exceptional ethnic and religious diversity. In terms of their socio-cultural and economic needs, the youth of the republic on the whole does not differ qualitatively from groups of youth in other countries, retaining the general framework characteristics typical for the entire demographic stratum. Scientists make regular attempts to comprehend the general social priorities and needs of young people in different countries (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

In addition, discussions continue about methods and directions for further research on youth (Irwin, 2020). Separately, the problems associated with the scientific reflection of the so-called youth policy implemented in different countries are highlighted (Bacalso & Farrow, 2016; O'reilly et al., 2019).

Anthropological studies of youth are characterized by an emphasis on socio-cultural needs and communicative practices of various groups of young people in the modern social context (Warde & Crossley, 2007).

2. Problem Statement

In recent years, there has been a tendency to involve youth representatives from among the residents of the republic in various destructive groups and movements (Kozlov & Mingaliev, 2020). These trends are most actively implemented in a virtual environment (Ivanov, 2020). But these processes are largely a reflection of the characteristics of group perception of the current socio-political and economic situation in the country. Thus, the general social well-being of young people can significantly influence not only individual strategies of social mobility, but also lead various young people to protest and even destructive activity. To understand the motives that drive young people and identify the most urgent problems in their environment, complex studies are needed based on a representative sample, reflecting the main parameters of the corresponding demographic stratum.

3. Research Questions

Based on the materials of mass surveys carried out in 2017 and 2020, the dynamics and direction of social processes among urban youth were studied. The object of the study were the representatives of the youth of the Republic of Tatarstan living in cities. The subject of the research was the peculiarities of social well-being, as well as group ideas about the priorities of the country's social development.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was a comprehensive analysis of the group social well-being of the socio-demographic group of young people, as well as internal and external factors that influence this indicator.

5. Research Methods

The theory of construction of social reality was chosen as the leading methodological principle of the research. In particular, the position that “everyday life is a reality that is interpreted by people and has subjective significance for them as a whole world” (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 62). Additionally, the authors used a structural-functional approach to systematize and subsequent interpretation of quantitative indicators obtained during the 2017 and 2020 mass survey.

6. Findings

The research toolkit used in the survey of young people included a number of questions that make it possible to assess the emotional state of the respondents based on the analysis of the results of answers about general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the current socio-economic situation. The results obtained indicate that, in comparison with the data of 2017, there were no significant quantitative changes in the most numerous groups of young people, which can be attributed to the segment of the republic's residents with an average income level. Moreover, the group that, in addition to everyday expenses, can afford expensive purchases like a car, according to the materials of this year, demonstrated an increase of almost 8 %.

Additionally, in order to be able to express their socio-psychological well-being, the respondents were asked to assess the overall trajectory of changes in their lives over the past year. Comparison of the research results of 2017 and 2020 again demonstrates a fairly stable distribution of shares in the answers of respondents, the bulk of which lies in the range of assessments: life has remained unchanged and life has become better (48.5 %).

Finally, the distribution of indicators of individual frustration of respondents in terms of their perception of themselves in the social hierarchy also does not allow us to reveal any significant discrepancies in the shares of respondents who positively and negatively assess their current social status according to the results of the 2017 and 2020 surveys. The generalized share of young people with positive self-reference as a whole remains at the level of more than 2/3 of the number of respondents, and with a negative one a little more than 1/4.

Summarizing the results of the block of questions about the characteristics of the respondents' social well-being, we can talk about a stable – over the horizon of several years – and a predominant share of people with positive self-esteem and an average level of income. At the same time, the share of young people with a negative perception of themselves in a social context does not exceed 25 %. That is, we can say that external social and economic circumstances are not a factor of deprivation for the majority of respondents. It is noteworthy that in relation to another important social institution, which is the media, the trends are not so unambiguous. In order to obtain more detailed results, all media formats were conditionally divided by the authors into two categories: television and print, which can be classified as “traditional” and electronic, which are often called “new media”.

The results obtained have confirmed the feasibility of such a methodological approach. In particular, the attitude towards “traditional media”, which was expressed by the respondents, coincides with the general trend of falling confidence in the authorities: over three years it has decreased, albeit

slightly, by 5 %, but the share of those who trust is only slightly more than ¼ of the respondents, while those who do not trust, on the other hand, grew by 10 % in three years and amounted to more than 67 %, which, in our opinion, indicates a crisis of trust in traditional media among young people. At the same time, the level of trust in “new media” for the same period, albeit insignificantly, but increased and reached almost 54 %, while the share of those who do not trust such media remained at the same level, accounting for less than 1/3 of the total number of respondents.

In addition, the attitude of young people to various social, political and social groups existing in the state was studied. The results obtained make it possible to divide all the groups to which the respondents were asked to express their attitude into two parts: the first includes groups with a pronounced critical assessment of the social situation taking place in the state, among them “supporters of the radical opposition”, nationalists and right-wing radicals; to the second, social groups not associated with a critical and even more radical attitude towards the state – migrants and hipsters.

We can talk about the general differentiated attitude of the respondents to the selected categories of social and socio-political groups with the consistency of assessments in relation to the groups within them. Thus, the category with groups of radical orientation has similar distributions in terms of the nature of the attitude: positive, neutral and negative, with a clear predominance of the latter. Moreover, since 2017, there has been no significant redistribution towards more positive assessments, all changes are within or near the value of the statistical error. Only in relation to the “non-systemic opposition” group, the respondents demonstrated a higher level of positive assessments and a lower level of negative ones. But there was no dramatic shift in the range of positive perception between the studies.

In the presence of the above processes, it becomes important to understand what exactly the young citizens expect from the state. In the study, respondents were asked to express their priorities, which were then ranked according to the total number of selected options, that is, the data is not an indicator of the share of respondents, but the share of selected responses from the proposed options, in the total number of responses, since respondents were asked to choose up to three priority options and a total of 2376 responses were received to this question. The data were reviewed in order of decreasing popularity of the selected options.

The systematization of the received answers shows that the since 2017 first two most popular answers: “increasing social protection of citizens” (25.8 %) and “freedom of speech and self-expression” (20.6 %) have not undergone changes in terms of priority and kept commensurate indicators. They are significantly ahead of all other options noted by the respondents, thus being an obvious value for the respondents. Based on their semantic content, we can talk about a stable orientation of young people towards social support from the state with guaranteed freedom of personal expression. This combination of priorities corresponds to the generalized type – the “welfare state” – which has been implemented in practice in a number of European countries (Northern and Western Europe). The answer option “protection of private property,” which, compared to 2017, has moved from 4th to 3rd position, increasing the share of responses from 8.5 to 11.6 %, is in the same semantic range.

At the same time, the answer options that can be characterized as an orientation towards state interests: “the presence of a tough and authoritative leader of the country”, “nationalization of large enterprises privatized in the 1990s”, “protection of state sovereignty and the right to vote in the

international arena” did not cause visible interest of the respondents except for the last one. And even in the case of the answer option “nationalization of large enterprises privatized in the 1990s”, a tendency towards a decrease in attractiveness is noticeable, since it not only moved from the 3rd to the 4th-5th position in the overall rating, but the share of submitted votes for it decreased from 14.7 to 11.2 %. Taking into account the options located on the 6th and 7th places, confirming the interest of the respondents in the friendly interaction of the state with the United States, Europe and China, we can state the general predominance among young people of attitudes towards social openness both inside and outside the state. Moreover, during the time that has passed since the last study, the priorities in a friendly foreign policy orientation have also undergone some changes, in particular, the answer option “development of cooperation with China” in 2017 was ahead of the option “friendship with the United States and the European Union”, and in 2020 they changed places in the ranking. This should be supplemented with the increased popularity of the answer “to preserve the principles of democracy at any cost”, which rose from 6th place to 4–5 in 2020, and also increased the share of answers from 8.3 to 11.2 %, equaling this indicator with the option “protection of state sovereignty and the right to vote in the international arena.” Summing up, the results of the question about the young respondents' vision of the priorities in the country's development demonstrate the expressed orientation of the majority towards the model of the “social state”, which implies broad support of citizens by the state, combining mutually respectful interaction between the state and society within the country and positive cooperation between Russia and leading states in the international arena.

The generalized collective level of socio-psychological comfort in the study group is mainly within the average values, demonstrating stability in the period from 2017 to 2020. The level of prosperity and satisfaction recorded in the aggregate of the respondents' positions on the issues of individual economic and social status is not considered by them as a result of the activities of the state and its institutions, but to a greater extent as the result of personal efforts.

This conclusion follows, according to the authors, from a significant discrepancy between the sufficiently high and stable assessments of the respondents of their economic potential, as well as their social status with a rather critical attitude towards the generalized state.

7. Conclusion

Speaking about the results and general trends that were considered in the framework of this study, the following can be singled out as the most significant:

- the social well-being of representatives of the youth of the republic as a whole has not undergone significant changes since 2017, they, for the most part, assess economic opportunities as average and this does not cause them serious deprivation, which would be reflected in a negative assessment of the current personal social status and changes that have occurred in their lives over the past year. At the same time, tendencies conditioned by the perception of the social environment in the state as stagnating and not meeting the notions of modern society began to appear more and more clearly in the integral level of social well-being;

- a consequence of the absence of a positive “image of the future”, which is, as a rule, a projection of the current state of society and the state, is a drop in confidence in important institutions of the state;
- the emergence of civil society actors capable of forming role trajectories of social mobility in the predominant part of this socio-demographic group becomes essential for the direction of the further development of the situation with the social well-being of young people.

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