

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE POLITICAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND SOCIAL WELLBEING OF POLITICALLY-ACTIVE YOUTH IN RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we present the analysis of the relation between the political self-identification and social wellbeing of politically active youth in Russia.

The method we used to study political self-identification included the identification of respondents' political views in the specter of ideologies representing the most established ideological and political trends in the public consciousness. We measured social well-being using a scale from 1 to 5 points to assess subjective satisfaction with the situation in the country in various fields. Although we measured the level of young people security: how do they assess their future - as confident or not?

The political activity of Russian youth exists in two forms: "support" and "opposition"- whether they support the authorities or oppose them. Based on this principle, we surveyed two groups of respondents. The first group includes participants of youth organizations actively cooperating with authorities, as well as participants of regional Youth Parliaments, Youth Governments, Youth Public Chambers (active supporters, N=300). The second group includes those young people, which represent the modern youth protest, first of all, volunteers of the Progress Party and the Libertarian Party (active oppositionists, N=300).

The study revealed that among active supporters, there are a lot of those who are not following any political ideology (40%) or cannot identify their political and ideological views (17%). Respondents with such position are quite a few among active oppositionists. The significant proportion of active oppositionists share liberal or libertarian views (51%). In both groups, radical views are not popular - almost no one identifies himself with the Communist or Nationalist ideology. We found that several wellbeing indicators have significantly different values in both groups. In particular, young supporters of the authorities are more secure: almost 80% of respondents feel security in one way or another, and only 16% are not secure, while among oppositionists, only 15% fell secure, and more than 80% of oppositionist respondents not feel security. The results of the survey showed that low levels of satisfaction, in general, characterize the social wellbeing of politically active youth. Politically active youth is most critical in the economic sphere of society. If we compare the social wellbeing of the two groups of politically active youth (supporting and opposing authorities), the indicators of satisfaction with the situation in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of society among active oppositionists are significantly lower than those of supporters.

We concluded that there is a relation between the social wellbeing of young people and their self-identification in politics: young people who identify themselves with liberal political views (close to the ideology of liberalism) express pessimistic social sentiment and sharply critical

assessment of social wellbeing. Young people with uncertain or "blurred" political orientation, show more optimistic mood and satisfaction with the current situation.

***Keywords:** youth, political activity, social wellbeing, political self-identification*

INTRODUCTION

The social well-being studies have gone interdisciplinary today. Their research activity was conducted between different human sciences such as social psychology, sociology, economy. Diener, Easterlin и Hagerty are those who contributed a lot in studying this issue [1], [2], [5]. Thanks to them we have understandings of social well-being as positive (happiness, joy, satisfaction) and negative (fear, unease, anxiety) conditions; also, they allocated social component of well-being - how one assesses his life concerning the situation in society. Basically, in their studies, they compared economic development and social well-being, and for the decades the results consistently demonstrated the stable connection between the welfare of the population and the level of happiness [5]. Also, the results of the studies conducted by Easterlin demonstrated that this connection is not so clear, and it is mediated by specific national and cultural features of perception [2]. The study of Petrova added to the understanding of this issue the notion of social well-being as a system of complex subjective assessments showing the degree to which people's diverse social, economic and cultural needs are being met [9].

The economic crises and political turbulence in recent years highlighted the problems related to well-being. Basing on the results of a national survey conducted in 2018, Mareeva allocated three zones: the subjective well-being, a subjective ill-being, and an intermediate zone that lies in between [7]. According to results of her studies, the subjective ill-being zone is much larger now, than a such of well-being. It is determined not by a low income, but to the problems its inhabitants meet every day but cannot resolve alone [7]. At the same time, the ill-being zone is typical for rural areas, elderly people and manual laborers, and the well-being zone is usual for the young urban "middle class". When we assess social well-being and subjective well-being we can identify and analyze young people as a specific social group because they occupy an uncertain position in the system of social inequality and is primarily focused on social change [14]. The place of young people in the life cycle is associated with the ability to successfully accumulate educational, professional, and other resources and with the possibility of self-realization.

Therefore, subjective assessments of youth satisfaction with certain aspects of life are primarily projective. According to the results of the studies, in developed countries, life satisfaction and other indicators of social well-being among young people are lower than among older age groups because of their marginal and more vulnerable social status. Meanwhile, in Russia and some other countries with transition economy we do not observe such a tendency: Russian youth much more optimistic and content with life than elderly and retired people in particular [7], [8]. For these features, Russian youth today are a specific and quite interesting object for the study of social well-being.

Several objective and subjective conditions affect the social well-being of young people besides economic well-being. Among other conditions, Hogberg distinguishes national educational policies as institutional causes of inequality in well-being among youth [6]. Narbut and Trotsuk believe that value orientation - educational and work values - together with assessing one's generation in terms of actual threats determines social well-being of youth [8].

In our perspective, one of the subjective conditions affecting life satisfaction and other indicators of social well-being of young people is its involvement in the socio-political process and its political identity. Youth political and social activity issues are discussed very often in scientific papers [12], [13]. There are studies devoted to the youth and student's political involvement and political parties' recruitment issues [4]. Rainsford, in her research, depicted young activists from three main youth factions of British parties, their political attitudes, and motives for political participation [11].

Around different types of studies, the study of protest forms of youth activity is a special one [3], [10]. However, we practically see no studies of political self-identification of young people in the context of their social well-being. Therefore, the main aim of the article is to introduce the relationship between political identity and the social well-being of young people who are actively participating in the political process.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

We studied the social well-being of young activists according to two different forms of political participation - support and opposition. We studied the political self-identification of young activists through the determination of their political position from the specter of ideologies representing the most established ideological and political trends in the public consciousness. We studied social well-being: first, as an extent of youth security; second, using a scale from 1 to 5 points to assess the subjective satisfaction with the situation in the country in various spheres, where 1 means 'things going in an absolutely wrong way' and 5 means 'things going in an absolutely right way'. Our findings based on the data of a sociological survey of politically active youth from one of the largest Russian regions - Ural Federal District. We surveyed two groups of respondents. The first group includes participants of youth organizations actively cooperating with authorities, as well as participants of regional Youth Parliaments, Youth Governments, Youth Public Chambers (active supporters, N=300). The second group includes those young people, which represent the modern youth protest, first of all, volunteers of the Progress Party and the Libertarian Party (active oppositionists, N=300).

RESULTS

First, we wish to make a review of the politically active youth self-identification characteristics. The study results in convincing us that most young activists from both groups not sharing any political ideology (33%) and cannot identify their political and ideological views (Tab.1).

It is especially true for supporters (40%). For most of them, it was hard to answer this question (17%). Opposing activists responded to this question in such a way much rarely. The significant proportion of active oppositionists share liberal or libertarian views (51%). Social-democratic ideology more widespread among active supporters' group, and anarchist ideology more widespread among active oppositionists. In both groups, radical views are not prevalent - almost no one identifies himself with the communist or nationalist ideology (Tab.1).

Tab. 1 Political self-identification of young activists, %.

What political ideology if any are you sharing?	Political activists		
	Active supporters	Active oppositionists	Total
Not sharing any political ideology	40,4	25,3	33,0
Liberal	13,9	40,4	26,9
Social-democratic	15,2	6,2	10,8
Anarchist	1,3	8,2	4,7
Libertarian	0,0	9,6	4,4
Conservative	7,3	1,4	4,4
Nationalist	1,3	4,1	2,7
Communist	2,6	0,0	1,3
Other	0,0	3,5	1,5
Hard to tell	17,9	1,4	9,8
Total:	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: Cramer's V [0..1]: 0,550, significance: 0,000

Thus, at the present phase, Russian youth is based its opposition mainly on liberal ideology, which is quite clearly presented in the criticism addressed to the authorities (excessive strengthening of the state apparatus, democratic opportunities restrictions, freedom of speech restrictions, etc.). Youth authorities support lacks a clear ideological platform or varied from social-democratic to conservative ideology.

Now we will review some parameters of social well-being of politically-active youth like its security and satisfaction with the situation in the country. We have found that active supporters are more secure: almost 80% of respondents feel security in one way or another, and only 16% are not secure, while among oppositionists, only 15% fell secure, and more than 80% of oppositionist respondents not feel security or rather feel it, than not (Tab.2).

Tab. 2 The activists' security extent, %

Do you feel yourself secure or not?	Political activists		
	Active supporters	Active oppositionists	Total
Yes, I do	41,4	1,4	21,8
Likely yes	38,2	13,7	26,2
Hard to tell	3,9	3,4	3,7
No, I don't	7,2	48,6	27,5
Likely not	9,2	32,9	20,8
Total:	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: Cramer's V [0..1]: 0,681, significance: 0,000

However, considering more specific assessments of the current situation in various spheres of society – the economy, politics, social sphere, and cultural life, we found that the social well-being of politically active youth characterized by low levels of satisfaction in general, regardless of the form of political participation. Politically active youth is most critical in the economic sphere of society (Tab.3), in politics and social sphere it is vital too. Thus, not only the active oppositionists characterized by a critical attitude in the evaluation of current situation, taking into account that their satisfaction significantly lower than that of the active supporters, but active supporters give a rather negative assessment also: average points of satisfaction with health and development of the situation in the country of 3.00 or slightly higher (with the exception of the cultural life of 3.32), and the economy - well below the 3 and is 2.68.

Tab. 3. Youth evaluation of the situation in the country (1 - things going in an absolutely wrong way; 5 – things going in an absolutely right way), average points (index)

What do you think things in the country going in a right or a wrong way?	Political activists	
	Active supporters	Active oppositionists
In economy	2,68	1,27
In politics	3,09	1,23
In social sphere	3,00	1,36
In cultural sphere	3,32	1,82

Analyzing the data of this study, we have found a correlation between the indicators of social well-being, namely the degree of confidence in the future, and the political self-identification of young activists (Tab.4). It let us prove the central hypothesis of our study about the influence of political self-identification on the social well-being of politically active youth.

Tab. 4 Correlation between the political identity and security, %

Political self-identification	Security			
	More or less secure	More or less not secure	Hard to tell	Total:
Not sharing any political ideology	51,0	46,9	2,0	100,0
Social-democratic	65,6	28,1	6,3	100,0
Conservative	69,2	23,1	7,7	100,0
Communist	75,0	25,0	0,0	100,0
Liberal	35,0	62,5	2,5	100,0
Libertarian	13,3	86,7	0,0	100,0
Anarchist	14,3	85,7	0,0	100,0
Nationalist	50,0	37,5	12,5	100,0

Source: Cramer's V [0..1]: 0,297, Significance 0,000

Young people following communist, conservative, and social democratic ideology feel the most secure - 75%, 69% and 65% of them accordingly feel more or less secure. Young people sharing liberal, libertarian, and anarchist ideology are more pessimistic in their social sentiment and much more critical on their social well-being.

CONCLUSION

Thus, assessing the results of the study, we can conclude the following.

First, young Russian political activists today not sharing any radical ideology - neither communist nor anarchist ideology is popular among both groups of youth we studied. Considering the complex Russian political history of the 20th century, as well as the current ambiguous situation in the country, this can be regarded as a very positive trend.

Second, the political self-identification of active supporters is highly blurred, and they highly uncertain what kind of ideology they follow. In this group, we can't identify any dominating political orientation. The active opposers consolidated mainly over liberal ideology.

Third, social well-being indicators of politically active youth have rather low points, especially in the economic sphere. At the same time, the degree of security varies depending on the form of political participation of young people – active opposers have it significantly lower than active supporters.

There is a relation between the social well-being of young people and their self-identification in politics: young people who share the communist, conservative and social-democratic ideology, recruited in politics through the forms of participation approved by authorities are more optimistic; young people, who identify themselves with liberal, libertarian and anarchist ideologies express pessimistic social sentiment and sharply critical assessment of social well-being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study conducted with the support of RFBR and EISR within the project “Youth as a political subject: social well-being and strategies of a political career in the context of civil activity” (grant № 19-011-31601).

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