



УДК 316.6

Protest Activity and its Psychological Content in the Context of Young People's Socio-Political Activity

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The purpose of the study presented in the article is to investigate socio-psychological characteristics of modern young people's protest activity within the context of socio-political activity. The relevance of the study can be explained by the need to create practice-oriented recommendations aimed at developing young people's socio-political activity, having taken into account social requirements and using theoretical data. The empirical study involved 60 people (aged from 18 to 27, among them 38 young males and 22 young females); 30 of them (23 young males and 7 young females aged 23 to 27) are representatives of opposition protest movements, and 30 young people do not identify themselves with any political associations (9 young males and 21 young females aged from 18 to 25). We used a questionnaire to study the manifestation degree of various social activity types (R. M. Shamionov, I. V. Aredanchuk, E. E. Bocharova, M. V. Grigoryeva, et al.), a questionnaire of personality protest activity (A. Sh. Guseynov), a questionnaire of personal volitional qualities (N. E. Stambulova), and a risk appetite questionnaire (A. G. Shmelev). The study has revealed that the general level of social activity in both samples is within the range of average values. We established that in the group of young people, who identify themselves with opposition groups, the level of protest activity is significantly higher for all indicators. It is shown that the structure of personal volitional qualities of young people with high and low protest activity differs in terms of substantive characteristics. The study has revealed that subjects with high protest activity express persistence and perseverance to a greater extent, but, at the same time, show a tendency to addiction more often than others. We have also established that there is a correlation interrelation between the components of protest activity and such characteristics as volitional personal qualities and risk appetite. Risk appetite in the sample of subjects with high protest activity is interrelated with all the components of protest activity.

Keywords: social activity, political activity, protest activity, risk appetite, young people.

Received: 13.05.2019 / Accepted: 13.09.2019 / Published: 30.11.2019

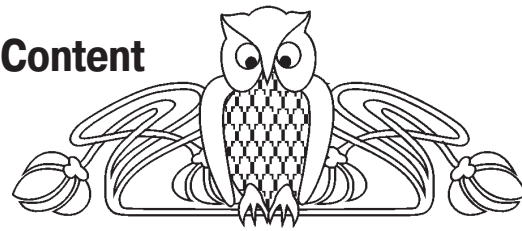
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18500/2304-9790-2019-8-4-362-367>

Introduction

The changes we observe in social relations are associated with transformation, which is taking place in interpersonal relations and personal attitudes to various aspects of reality. Value orientations of the society are changing significantly, which is the reason for changes taking place in the institutions of socialization.

Social activity of young people is associated with multiple phenomena of the social life as a whole, as



well as individual processes, states and qualities of an individual. Personal social activity ensures the inclusion of an individual in society. This inclusion is associated with various experiences and internal states of a socially active young person; effective and optimal inclusion causes satisfaction, experiencing subjective well-being and contributes to a positive and adequate attitude to the surrounding reality.

Modern socio-psychological investigations aimed at studying the content of social activity include a variety of aspects. Much attention is paid to the definition, structure and mechanisms of social activity [1]. Scientists consider social activity in the context of systemic diachronic approach [2]. They study the prospects and possibilities of further research [3]. Particular importance is attached to virtual social activity as a new direction in the study of this phenomenon [4]. Social activity is widely considered in terms of axiological content and structural organization of regulatory factors [5, 6]. When we talk about socio-political activities, we focus on the fact that young people, who are socially proactive regarding participation in political events within the society, usually support two diametrically opposed points of view: opposition and pro-political associations. In our study, we focused on the socio-psychological characteristics of young people who identify themselves as members of opposition movements. Modern socio-psychological studies of protest activity are focused on the subject-existential interpretation of protest [7]. In addition, protest activity is often studied as a prerequisite for extremist activity [8]. Data obtained from foreign studies is very interesting as well. Foreign scientists lay a great emphasis on the influence of the media on the development protest moods [9, 10]. They actively study the role of social networks in the emergence of protest moods [11, 12].

Thus, the purpose of the empirical research was to study characteristics of protest activity that we view within the socio-political context. *The hypothesis* of the study is the assumption that in the sample consisting of representatives of the opposition-minded youth, such characteristics of protest activity, as volitional personal traits and risk appetite, will be significantly higher than in the sample of young people, who do not belong to any political associations.

Selection of the technique and research methods

Participants of the study. The empirical study involved 60 people (from 18 to 27 years old, 38 young males and 22 young females), of which 30 people



(23 young males and 7 young females aged from 23 to 27 years) are representatives of opposition protest movements, who study at universities (SSU, SSLA) or work in various organizations in Saratov, and 30 young people who do not belong to any political associations (9 young males and 21 young females aged from 18 to 25 years) and are mainly representatives of the student youth (SSU, SSLA, SSAU).

Techniques. We used a questionnaire to study the degree of manifestation of different social activity types (R. M. Shamionov, I. V. Arendachuk, E. E. Bocharova, M. V. Grigoryeva, et al.) and the preferences of youth regarding the proposed types of social activity (altruistic, leisure, educational, socio-political, protest, etc.) [13], the questionnaire of personality protest activity by A. Sh. Guseynov [14], the questionnaire of volitional personal traits of by N. E. Stambulova [15], the questionnaire of risk appetite by A. G. Shmelev [16]. We examined these characteristics and personal qualities of the subjects depending on the degree of protest activity manifestation.

Methods. We processed the research results using mathematical statistics procedures and the SPSS 17.0 software package: descriptive statistics; correlation analysis (Pearson's chi-squared test); comparative analysis (Student's *t*-test).

Research results and their discussion

Table 1 presents the results of the study of manifestation of preferred social activity types in the two samples. These indicators reflect the subjects' subjective assessment of participation in those types of social activity that are presented in the technique.

The comparative analysis of the two samples indicators showed the following results. The general level of social activity, regardless of the preferred types, is manifested slightly more in the group of

opposition-minded youth. This indicator may point out that subjects who consider themselves to be part of protest associations are more willing to participate in social life than young people who are not members of such associations. We observed a moderate level of social activity manifestation degree in both samples, regardless of the criterion by which they were divided.

Altruistic activity is manifested approximately at the same level in both samples and the indicator is in the range of low values. These data indicate that young people do not devote much time to this kind of activity. Participation in such events is episodic in nature and does not spark much interest. The same can be said about subcultural activity. Respondents who participated in the study do not show interest towards informal youth associations. Low indicators are also characteristic of correlation between social activity of youth and radical protest activity. Within this type of social activity we imply participation in extremist associations.

Leisure, Internet-network and educational types of social activity received the highest preference ratings in both samples, regardless of the subjects' participation in opposition groups.

Internet-network activity in both samples is rather high, but in the sample of opposition youth these figures are significantly higher. These data can tell us that representatives of the opposition protest movements are more interested and ready for activities related to the expression of their social position via the Internet and social networks.

Civil social activity is also significantly higher in the sample of youth with opposition views.

Socio-economic, religious, spiritual, radical protest types of social activity are manifested slightly in both samples.

Let us view the manifestation degree for the protest activity parameters in the samples under study (Table 2).

Table 1 / Таблица 1

Average assessment indicators of social activity in public spheres of life

Social activity types	Young people who do not belong to any political associations	Representatives of opposition associations	Student's <i>t</i> -test ($p = 0,1$)
Altruistic	2,351	2,124	–
Leisure	4,175	4,612	–
Socio-political	2,225	4,187	2,032
Internet network	2,950	4,237	1,782
Civil	1,975	3,654	1,957
Socio-economical	2,452	2,301	–
Educational	3,025	3,214	–
Spiritual	2,775	2,343	–
Religious	1,775	1,742	–
Protest	1,575	4,141	2,147
Radical protest	1,225	1,921	–
Subcultural	1,812	1,754	–
Average	2,4423	3,044	



Table 2

The manifestation degree of the protest activity parameters in the samples under study

Parameters	Young people who do not belong to any political associations	Representatives of opposition associations	Student's <i>t</i> -test (<i>p</i> = 0,05)
Negativism	5,8	8,2	2,571
Emancipation	3,5	4,1	–
Opposition	4,1	8,3	2,641
Nihilism	3,4	6,7	2,499
Escapism	6,2	9,1	2,532
Average	4,60	7,28	

In the sample of opposition-minded young people, the indicators of practically all scales for protest activity assessment are significantly higher, which confirms our assumption that respondents who identify themselves with opposition associations express greater willingness to manifest protest activity.

Subjects with high negativity rates are characterized by down-to-earth way of thinking, rigidity of attitudes, rejection of everything new, stubbornness, irritability, discontent, emotional instability, impulsiveness and reduced self-control, incontinence, impatience, deep intrapersonal contradictions. While communicating with others, people with high negativity rates show willfulness, intractability, envy, demonstrate negative attitude towards others and readiness for antisocial actions

Emancipation, as a personal characteristic, indicates that a personality with a significant degree of emancipation is dominated by such features as self-confidence, courage, desire for independence and self-reliance. Unlike negativists, people with emancipated position are distinguished by independence of choice, ability to self-regulation and a more clear structure of values.

Respondents with predominant opposition preferences are characterized by manifestation of low communicative potential; self-control and self-regulation are usually low as well, moreover, there is a mindset for failures and misfortunes. According to A. Sh. Guseynov, opposition-minded individuals are characterized by attitudes to dissatisfaction with life, low level of adaptability, and disaffection toward others. The inability to defuse conflicts, to control oneself, a relatively high level of aggressiveness, inability to cooperate, also distinguish an opposition-minded personality. At the same time, the author of

the technique notes that an oppositionist has increased motivation coupled with intrapersonal anxiety.

Nihilism, as a personal trait, defines such personal characteristics as extreme disaffection toward social norms, rejection of others, loss and deprivation of purposes, cynicism, incontinence, focus on oneself and one's requirements, immature self-regulatory structures. Emotional instability, anxiety, the desire to dominate and compete, the desire to shift responsibility to others, is characteristic of the nihilist personality.

Escapism is characteristic of personalities with a high level of social anxiety, self-rejection, deep intrapersonal conflict, submissiveness, and externality. The desire to avoid independence in relation to decision-making is characteristic of escapist. Submissiveness and inability to express their true needs is also one of the characteristic features of respondents with high rates on this scale.

Having analysed the results of protest activity assessment, we can conclude that the overall level of protest activity is expectedly higher in the sample of opposition-minded youth. In the group of respondents who do not belong to any political associations, protest activity is manifested weakly. After carrying out the comparative analysis on the scales of the protest activity technique, we found significant differences in the indicators of the two samples on almost all scales. In the group of youth with oppositional moods, all significant differences incline towards larger indicators.

Let us view the degree of manifestation for parameters of personal volitional qualities in the samples under study (Table 3).

Data in table 3 indicates that subjects under study basically have an average level of development of each volitional quality in terms of manifestation

Table 3

Degree of manifestation for parameters of personal volitional qualities in the samples under study

Parameters of personal volitional qualities	Young people who do not belong to any political associations	Representatives of opposition associations	Student's <i>t</i> -test (при <i>p</i> = 0,1)
Tenacity	10,92	10,20	–
Courage and resoluteness	10,37	10,58	–
Insistence and perseverance	10,55	11,05	–
Initiativity and self-dependence	9,65	11,57	1,72
Self-restraint and moderation	9,82	10,	–



degree and generalization. However, we can note that such volitional qualities as tenacity, self-restraint and moderation are slightly higher than the rest. This is due to the fact that an essential character trait is integrity, which is understood as presence of firm beliefs and active desire for their implementation, despite obstacles and threats to personal well-being. The data analysis shows that the first volitional quality, i.e. tenacity, represents conscious and active orientation of a person towards a certain activity result, which is poorly manifested only among a few respondents. According to the Insistence and Perseverance scale, indicators are also at a moderate level both in terms of degree of manifestation and generalization. This suggests that the subjects show their will during the achievement of their intended goal, overcoming obstacles, despite temporary mistakes and failures, as well as the persistent and constant desire not to avoid difficulties. Insistence is the ability to overcome external and internal obstacles when reaching the goal. The manifestation degree of courage and resoluteness demonstrates the ability to independently and timely find and make weighted decisions, without fear of taking responsibility, acting energetically, and taking risks. Initiativity is the ability of a person for independent volitional manifestations. It is expressed through independent goal setting and independent organization of actions aimed at achieving these goals. This character trait is very complex. To take the initiative, you need to understand the current situation in which you have to act, orient yourself correctly in the situation and be able to evaluate it. The fifth volitional quality is self-restraint and moderation. Self-restraint is an ability and habit to control your behavior, to control yourself, your movements and your speech, to refrain from actions that are unnecessary or adversarial in the present circumstances. Moderation is understood as a steady manifestation of the ability to suppress impulsive, ill-considered emotional reactions, not to give in to temptation, suppress strong drives, desires. This quality is expressed in a steady manifestation of a state of restraint, if necessary. We noted a moderate degree of manifestation of this quality in the subjects.

General characteristics of volitional qualities are quite highly manifested in both samples. After comparative analysis of the indicators in the two samples, we found that almost all indicators showed no significant differences. We discovered a significant difference in one scale only, i.e. Initiativity and Self-dependence. These indicators are significantly

higher in the sample of young people with oppositional moods. The data indicates that initiativity and self-dependence are more pronounced in the group of subjects with high protest activity.

Let us turn to the analysis of risk appetite indicators (table 4).

We obtained moderate and high risk appetite indicators in both samples. The moderate level of risk appetite manifestation degree indicates that subjects in a risky situation are able to quickly respond or adapt to the surrounding social situation and event. Such personalities are not able to take risks on their own initiative without the need in situations that do not require risk. A test subject with a high level of risk appetite is well-versed in current events; however, he/she is not able to deviate from risk, even when it comes to saving his/her own life. They can respond to what is happening in risky situations both positively and negatively.

The comparative analysis of the risk appetite level in the two samples showed that in the group of subjects with high protest activity the risk appetite is higher than in the sample of young people who do not belong to any political associations. Based on the obtained data, we can conclude that subjects with a high protest potential are more prone to risk than subjects with a low protest potential.

The next stage in our empirical study was to investigate the interrelations between the components of protest activity, volitional personality qualities and risk appetite. To do this, we conducted a study concerning correlation interrelations between indicators using the technique of protest activity with the characteristics highlighted in both samples above.

Correlation analysis between substantive characteristics of protest activity and volitional personal qualities in the sample of subjects with high protest activity revealed the following interrelations. Opposition is directly proportional to insistence and perseverance ($r = 0.451$, $p = 0.05$). These data indicate that the better the oppositional qualities of the personality are manifested, the more it shows such volitional qualities as insistence and perseverance. Escapism is inversely related to tenacity ($r = -0.377$, $p = 0.05$). In other words, protest-minded respondents with high rates of escapism, as a desire to avoid the responsibility imposed on the personality by society to a lesser extent, express tenacity among their volitional qualities. The obtained data once again confirm the assumption made by us above, when we concluded that people with high protest activity are more dependent, subordinate, and the structure of their volitional

Table 4/

The degree of manifestation of risk appetite parameters in the samples under study

Risk appetite	Young people who do not belong to any political associations	Representatives of opposition associations	Student's <i>t</i> -test
Average value	18,62	26,71	–
Std. dev.	2,33	2,31	–
<i>t</i> -test	–	–	3,271



orientation is not formed as clearly as in subjects in the second sample. We should also pay attention to the data obtained in the course of analysis of the inversely proportional interrelation between nihilism and self-restraint ($r = -0.391, p = 0.05$) in the group of subjects with high protest activity. In other words, the higher the level of nihilism, the lower such volitional quality as self-restraint is manifested. Other interrelations were identified in the group of subjects with low protest activity. Negativism is inversely proportional to tenacity ($r = -0.361, p = 0.05$), self-dependence ($r = -0.411, p = 0.05$) and self-restraint ($r = -0.323, p = 0.05$). Thus, the established correlation interrelations between the components of protest activity and volitional traits have a different structure in subjects with high and low protest activity.

Correlation analysis between the scales of protest activity and risk appetite in the group of subjects with high opposition orientation showed that risk appetite in this sample is directly proportional to almost all of the scales. Opposition ($r = 0.436, p = 0.05$), negativism ($r = 0.498, p = 0.05$), nihilism ($r = 0.612, p = 0.05$), emancipation ($r = 0.563, p = 0.05$), escapism ($r = 0.541, p = 0.05$). These data are very obvious; protest activity in any of its manifestations is related to risk. Risk appetite and features of protest activity are also associated with the group of subjects that do not belong to any political associations. However, these interrelations are less pronounced and not as structured as in the group of subjects with high protest activity.

To be socially active, to participate in projects under development means to be able to develop abilities that are the basis for developing readiness for action. To learn how to take risks, experiment, plan the future, get help from others and help others, establish cooperation, combine the ability to manage and the ability to comply, the ability to take responsibility and the ability to delegate authority, solve problem situations and conflicts – all this comes with experience and is an integral part of the personality of a young person. Participation in projects combining theoretical knowledge with practice allows one to take up an active life position and gain this invaluable experience, which will largely determine success of one's future professional career.

Conclusion

Thus, the empirical study showed that young people's protest activity in the sample consisting of representatives of opposition-minded youth is significantly higher than among subjects who do not belong to any political associations. In addition, substantive components of protest activity are interrelated with such psychological factors as volitional personal qualities and risk appetite. In the sample of respondents with high protest potential, activity is interrelated with insistence and perseverance, however, at the same time, protest youth are more likely to manifest dependent behavior. The study revealed that the opposition-minded youth in some of their

personal characteristics differ from young people who do not consider themselves to be part of any protest movements. Oppositionists are more likely to pay attention to socio-political, Internet-network, civil and protest social activity. Risk appetite in the group of subjects with protest activity was significantly higher than in the sample of young people with low protest potential. The empirical study opens up possible prospects for further study of the substantive characteristics of socio-political activity in order to create practice-oriented technologies aimed at forming young people's social activity.

Acknowledgments and funding: *This work was supported by the grant of the Russian Science Foundation (project No. 18-18-00298).*

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Cite this article as:

Milena A. Klenova. Protest Activity and its Psychological Content in the Context of Young People's Socio-Political Activity. *Izv. Saratov Univ. (N. S.), Ser. Educational Acmeology. Developmental Psychology*, 2019, vol. 8, iss. 4 (32), pp. 362–367 (in Russian). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18500/2304-9790-2019-8-4-362-367>

Протестная активность и ее психологическое содержание в контексте социально-политической активности молодежи

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Цель исследования, представленного в статье, заключается в изучении социально-психологических характеристик протестной активности современной молодежи в контексте ее социально-политической активности. Актуальность выполненного исследования состоит в необходимости создания на основе теоретических данных практико-ориентированных рекомендаций, направленных на формирование социально-политической активности молодежи с учетом социального запроса. В эмпирическом исследовании приняло участие 60 человек (от 18 до 27 лет, 38 юношей и 22 девушки), из них 30 (23 юноши и 7 девушек в возрасте от 23 до 27 лет) – представители оппозиционно протестных движений и 30 человек – молодежь, не относящая себя к каким-либо политическим объединениям (9 юношей и 21 девушка в возрасте от 18 до 25 лет). Использованы анкета, направленная на изучение выраженности видов социальной активности (Р. М. Шамянов, И. В. Арндачук, Е. Е. Бочарова, М. В. Григорьева и др.), опросник протестной активности личности (А. Ш. Гусейнов), опросник

волевых качеств личности (Н. Е. Стамбулова), опросник склонности к риску (А. Г. Шмелев). Выявлено, что общий уровень социальной активности в обеих выборках – в границах средних значений. Установлено, что в группе молодежи, относящей себя к оппозиционным объединениям, уровень протестной активности значительно выше по всем показателям. Показано, что структура волевых качеств личности у молодежи с высокой и низкой протестной активностью различается с точки зрения содержательных характеристик. Выявлено, что испытуемые с высокой протестной активностью в большей степени демонстрируют настойчивость и упорство, но при этом чаще других проявляют склонность к зависимости. Установлено, что существует корреляционная взаимосвязь компонентов протестной активности и таких характеристик, как волевые качества личности и склонность к риску. Склонность к риску в выборке испытуемых с высокой протестной активностью взаимосвязана со всеми компонентами протестной активности.

Ключевые слова: социальная активность, политическая активность, протестная активность, склонность к риску, молодежь.

Поступила в редакцию: 13.05.2019 / Принята: 13.09.2019 / Опубликовано: 30.11.2019

Статья опубликована на условиях лицензии Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY 4.0).

Благодарности и финансирование: Исследование выполнено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда (проект № 18-18-00298).

Образец для цитирования:

Milena A. Klenova. Protest Activity and its Psychological Content in the Context of Young People's Socio-Political Activity [Кленова М. А. Протестная активность и ее психологическое содержание в контексте социально-политической активности молодежи] // Изв. Сарат. ун-та. Нов. сер. Сер. Акмеология образования. Психология развития. 2019. Т. 8, вып. 4 (32). С. 362–367. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18500/2304-9790-2019-8-4-362-367>