

Political dispositions of Russian youth

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Abstract

The paper is based on the materials of empirical sociological research and reflects dispositions, factor models of choice, and life strategies in the field of political trajectories of contemporary Russian youth. The paper presents the authors' typology of political dispositions of young people showing the importance of political aspirations in the ranks of life values. Indifferent, involved, immersed, and passive types of political dispositions of young people are identified as the main sociological types. The main life choices of young respondents in the field of political decisions were outlined; the importance of political initiative of every tenth young person was emphasized, and the problem of political peripherality characteristic of 88% of Russian youth was raised. Problematic issues in the implementation of Russian youth policy were identified in relation to the support of political activity and political literacy of Russian youth, the development of their electoral interest and activity. The contradiction between the relevance of the issue on supporting the political activity of Russian youth and the actual lack of effective practices of involving youth in political movements, creating a system of political education of youth, forming an adequate and active political position, ensuring youth participation in the political transformation of the state was revealed.

Keywords: youth, political activism, political literacy, political career strategies, life choices, youth politics

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INTRODUCTION

It is an undeniable fact that the transmission of social relations is provided precisely by the young generation; young people are the bearers of social innovations and the engine of social evolution. The core of such activity often lies in the political dispositions of young people, their involvement in the political life of the state. The study of youth political activity is especially relevant in times of crisis, when such activity becomes one of the conditions for the search for new forms of social structure. Developed capitalist states include political activism in the discourse of increasing young people's competitiveness, viewing it as a special point in improving the quality of life. Political activity can be represented in the form of increased, in comparison with generally accepted norms in society, participation in the activities of political parties, actions, social movements and organizations, involvement in various youth communities, as well as participation in social activities aimed at public benefits. As for Russia, young people in our country have remained on the margins of social and political life for quite a long time since the beginning of political reforms, joining the active mode only in the process of political party election campaigns. Over the past decade the situation in the political arena of the country has had a number of changes; the youth issues in this area have moved to one of the main places (Mouffe & Holdengräber, 1989). But, unfortunately, today's understanding of the political activity of Russian youth is seen primarily from the side of protest moods and social instability.

At the current stage of research on the socio-political activity of youth from the perspective of domestic sociological and political science, a variety of approaches have emerged, characterized by a wide range of differentiation of both general and specific problems of youth political activity as a separate socio-demographic group. Thus, the political consciousness of youth as a special socio-demographic group was investigated in the works developed by Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, Sinkovics, and Bohlen (2003); Gafiatulina et al. (2018). The electoral activity of young people, as well as their political participation in the life of the country is studied in the works of such authors as (Chareka, Sears, & Chakera, 2006; Sloam, 2014).

The paper by Melnikova and Romanovskaya (2021), in which the author explores the issue of the influence of political parties on the youth resource, revealing the phenomenon of leadership in youth movements, as well as highlighting various aspects of the involvement of the younger generation in the 2018 election campaign, attracts particular attention .

It is also worth noting the papers by (Keating & Janmaat, 2016), in which the authors provide an analysis of youth political activity, considering technologies for engaging young people in political processes at the state level (Keating & Melis, 2017; Rieber, 1996).

RESEARCH MATERIALS AND METHODS

The International Centre for Sociological Research of Belgorod State National Research University conducted research on the political dispositions and strategies of Russian youth using the example of one of the typical Russian regions (Belgorod region of the Russian Federation) in 2021. The research was carried out by means of a formalized survey. The object of the research was the youth of the Russian province (N=2500, sampling error 1.93%, 95% confidence

probability), distributed by gender, age, and three main quotas: high-school children, students, and working youth.

The aim of the research project was to study the political strategies of young people and the possibility of influence on them by regional institutions in the conditions of modern social environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The political dispositions and strategies of youth are important to researchers not only from the point of view of predicting their political choices, but rather from the position of diagnosing youth civic engagement. In this sense, the types of youth in terms of political behaviour are distributed from a detached position (held by 25.6% of respondents) to active involvement in political activity (it is only 1.3%). Four types of political behaviour of youth can be conditionally designated as: indifferent type, involved type, immersed type (10.7%) and passive (weakly interested) type (the prevailing majority is 62.5%). The conditionally politically passive (with the inclusion of the weakly interested in this group) can be considered 88.1% of young people; the politically active group accounts for about 12% (Figure 1).

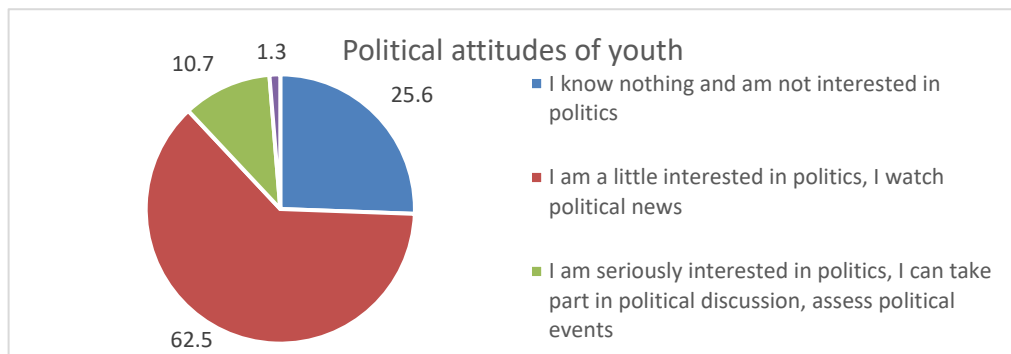


Fig. 1. Answers of respondents to the question: "Which group do you belong to?"

This typology is supplemented by the distribution of young people's attitudes towards electoral activity: Thus, among young people who are of voting age, 47.3% prefer going to the polls and making a conscious choice; 27.3% vote periodically, of these 10.5% make a random choice. The principal position of electoral ignoring is chosen by 7.4%. Thus, 24.2% of the youth group practically do not attend events related to political choice; 10.5% do not essentially influence their choice, increasing the group of those excluded from making a decision to 34% (1/3 of young people, and even somewhat more, in terms of young people aged 18 and over) (Fig. 2).

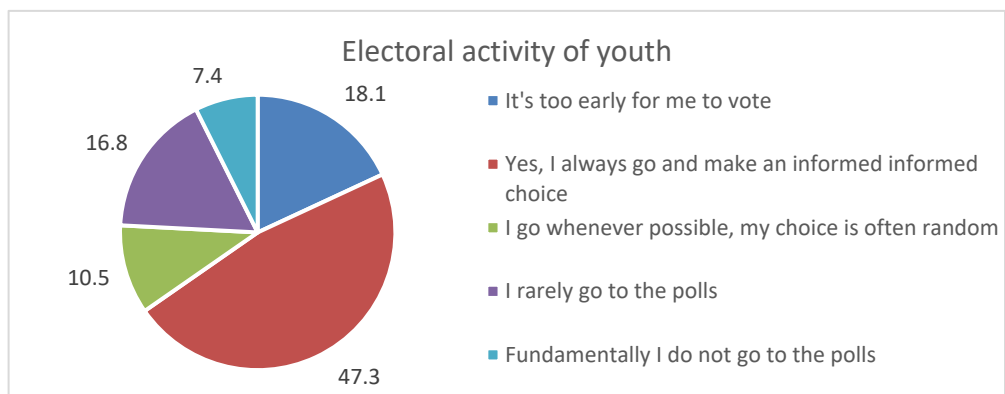


Fig. 2. Answers of respondents to the question: "Do you participate in voting?"

When choosing political principles (determining political trends), most young people inclined toward the liberal position (*"The main values are an individual person, his/her rights and freedoms, as well as the greatest freedom of people from the state and complete freedom of entrepreneurial activity"*) (50.7%), the second most important choice were the principles of social-democratic parties (*"Democratic principles should extend to all spheres; it is necessary to strive for freedom, justice, solidarity"*) (13.8%). The communist position is supported by 6.5%, but the nationalist position remained in the minority (5%) (Fig. 3). Since the parties that actively represent the liberal position are not on the list of ruling parties in Russia, and therefore they cannot implement their principles in the existing Russian reality, this determines the general dissatisfaction of young people with the political situation.

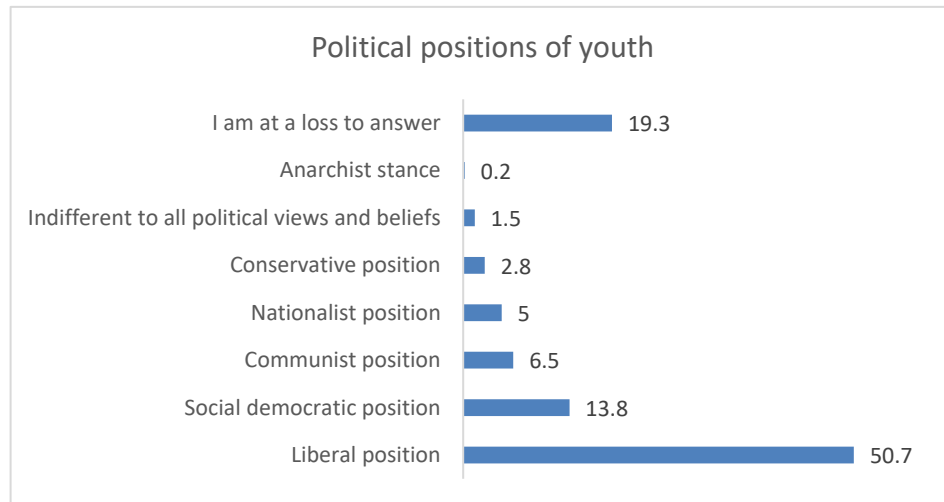


Fig. 3. Answers of respondents to the question: "What political position do you uphold?"

Looking at young people's life choices regarding political steps, we see that most of the indicators are not significant: young people can easily do without active political activity and political parties. These steps turned out to be vital only for 16.8% and for 11.2%. At the same time, similar statistical groups are obtained for political trajectories that involve deputy (parliamentary) and state administrative activity (11.9% and 12.2%), and while this percentage of importance for political activity is obviously low, it is very high for "political advancement". According to our research, every ninth young person has political ambitions. Purposefulness and high public activity make these political prospects very real, which imposes additional obligations on the institutions of socialization (first of all, on the institution of education) to upbringing to an appropriate moral and competence profile of future leaders in regional politics (Fig. 4).

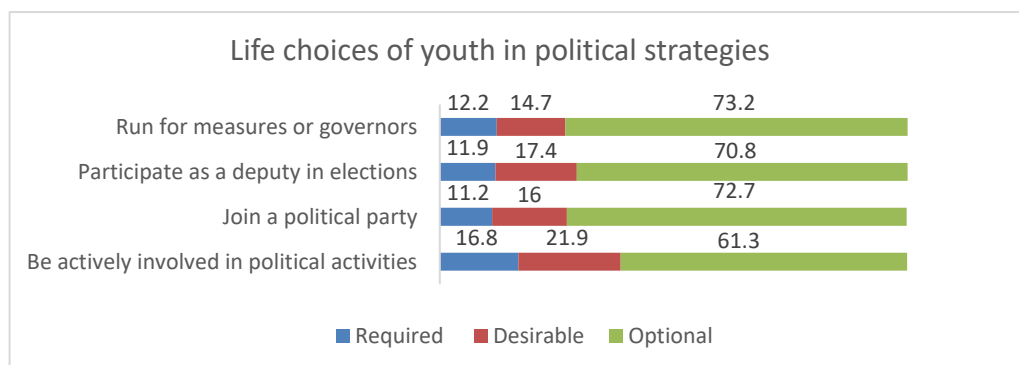


Figure 4. Respondents' answers to the question, "How important is it for you to take the next steps in the future?"

When assessing the implementation areas of youth policy in Russia, young people note a lack of satisfaction with the situation in all activities. As a rule, the indicator here does not rise above 55%. The greater satisfaction zone includes the activity of the authorities on patriotic education of youth; the values of satisfaction with political education and involvement of youth in political activity fall below 50%. As for the indicator for the "not satisfied" value, 16.4% of respondents are not satisfied with patriotic education, and in fact every fifth young person is not satisfied with the other two positions. There is high percentage of those who found it difficult to answer again points to the problems of information: it is difficult to assess something you do not know about. Accordingly, this also forms a vector of action, a separate direction for the promotion of information in the framework of assistance in the implementation of political and socialization trajectories.

Speaking of problem areas in implementing youth policy in Russia in the sphere of political strategies, young people clearly outline the problematic perimeter. First of all, these are problems related to the low electoral activity of young people (81.1% believe so); problems of political literacy (80.9%), and the creation of a system of patriotic education (80.3%).

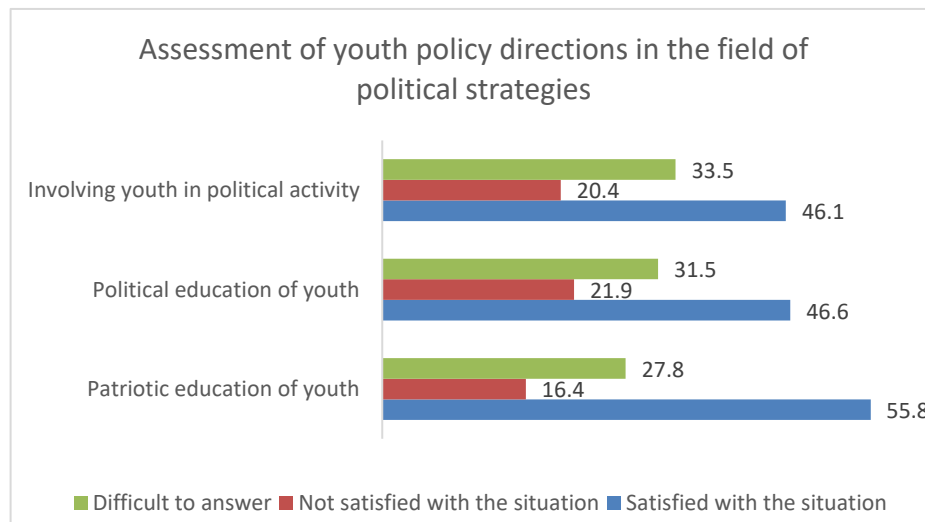


Fig. 5. Answers of respondents to the question: "Express your attitude to the current situation regarding the following questions".

Low awareness is confirmed by the answers of young people to the relevant question: awareness does not exceed 52% for the political education and involvement activities. Slightly better is the situation with patriotic education: 61.3%. There are many young people excluded from the information field, but willing to receive information on these issues, especially in the field of political education: the group of interested young people is almost 1/5 of the people mass surveyed. This group is slightly less represented with respect to patriotic education, but by combining those who have information and are interested in it, we come out to virtually the same level of interest among young people on this issue: it is about 70%. This distribution fully confirms the distribution of young people by type of political behaviour, where the group of politically indifferent young people was 25.6%.

CONCLUSION

The general conclusion with respect to the political research of political dispositions and life choices can be considered the following:

Young people of the new generation are characterized by a rather high political passivity: no more than 12% are active in receiving political information and engaging in political activity. A quarter of young people in Russia consciously exclude themselves from the possibility of political choice (electoral practices); together with the group of people making random choices, they form a fairly high percentage of "electoral peripherality" of young people (over 1/3).

Political life trajectories are not close to modern youth. Those who define them as obligatory steps in the election of their lives remain in the minority. At the same time, young generation demonstrates high political ambitions (over 10%): motivation for political career and political recognition is present in every 9 young people; all this predetermines the necessity of regulation of political outlook and interests.

Today's youth are close to the ideals of liberal parties and the social-democratic movement, while those who support communist principles remain in the minority. Freedom in all its expressions is the key unit of choice for contemporary Russian youth.

With a low awareness of measures to support political development and promotion, young people demonstrate a low level of satisfaction with the implementation of the direction of youth policy related to increasing the political activity and competence of young people. Interest in obtaining political information and expanding the field of political socialization is demonstrated by about 70% of young people. Such interest, together with the high level of unawareness, forms the demand for activities related to the implementation of political education and improvement of political literacy and discussion competence.

The following contradiction can be considered the general conclusion of our study: despite the articulation of the importance of supporting the political activity of youth, at the moment Russia does not present effective practices of competent involvement of youth in political movements; no system of political education has been created to ensure the formation of an adequate and active political position, which could be expressed in the participation of youth in the political transformation of the state.

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