



Social and Political Orientations Attitudes and Interests of Students (on the Example of the Republic of Tatarstan)

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Abstract

The paper presents the main research results of interests and political attitudes of students conducted in 2014 at the Kazan Federal University and its affiliates in the territory of the Republic of Tatarstan. The choice of students as a reference group is due to several factors, among which are the highest intellectual and creative potential and high social and political mobility that allows us to speak about the students as potentially active power of social and political changes in the country, and Kazan Federal University was chosen for the reason that it is the largest the highest educational institution in the region including humanitarian, social-science and natural-science directions that allows to consider specifics of respondents. Obtained in the survey data, in comparison with results of previous studies, including results of researches and sociological surveys conducted by the Fund of "Public opinion" (FPO), the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (RPORC) and others leading research centers in Russia, allow us to determine the dynamics of the social and political attitudes of students in the region.

Keywords: College students; Political attitudes; Political interests; Modern Russia; Social well-being of young people

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Introduction

At present, Russia undergoes a modernization process which assigns a special role of society's ability to self-organization, self-regulation, which requires a corresponding high level of social and political activity of all levels of population, including young people [1]. In this respect, the study of the political component of the contemporary Russian youth social status, above all, their interest to the world of politics, participation in the political process, their motivation is highly significant. These problems are also issued with a number of factors related to the peculiarities of the social and political development of Russia. First, today we may observe a renewal of the political processes participants and that of social movements, which may affect the nature and forms of political participation of young people, models of behavior, and can't but affect the dynamics of the development of the main political institutions. Second, the identification of young people's attitude to politics has always been topical for the state and society, as to the state it is important to understand the way young people perceive life in a given society, the way they assess the impact of social and political institutions and, first of all in the states [2]. Third, it is necessary to know how the young

generation contributes in social development and activities of the country. The present situation prevailing in the area of social and political development of young people is of great importance in the study the given topic. Its ambiguity and a certain conflict arise from the fact that, on the one hand, the modern Russian youth is distinguished by the growth of independence, mobility and responsibility for their own future. The youth quite clearly express concern about the possibility of getting high-quality education, training and orientation to further employment and career, mindset to integrate into the international youth community [3]. On the other hand, as evidenced by the study's results of the leading research centers in the country (the Fund of "Public Opinion" (FPO) and the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (RPORC), and others), there is a low level of political activity of Russian youth [4]. Fixed among young people certain apathy, the expression of alienation of the world of politics, demonstration of lack of interest in what is happening in the political life, stipulate necessary to study the motivation of young people participation in politics. Respectively, in this situation the study of political orientations, attitudes of students acquire particular topicality. It

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is represented not as much as a special age group but as a social and psychological group representing the most educated and informed of the younger generation, its intellectual elite with creative, innovative potential, in many respects setting value orientations and attitudes in the world of politics and power, not only among young people, but also affecting the outlook of other social groups. Being one of the most mobile groups, students come out as an active force of social and political changes in the country, the subject of political and social relations in Russia and in the regions.

Methodology

The research includes:

1. Questionnaire to identify the social well-being of students in Kazan held in March-April 2011 in five universities of Kazan: (Kazan (Volga) Federal University, Kazan State Technological University, Kazan State Technical University after AN Tupolev, Kazan State Architecture and Engineering University, Kazan State Power Engineering University) aged 17 to 23 years old. As a general summation to determine the size of the sampling was taken the number of the given group, which according to the RT State Statistics Committee data and official information of universities themselves was 91,200 people.

The sampling summation was 540 people and represented different categories of young people, depending on age, occupational and territorial factors.

2. Questionnaire of Students of Kazan (Volga region) Federal University (KFU), including its affiliates in the Republic of Tatarstan was held in 2014, with the aim of determining the dynamics of the social well-being of students. As a general summation to determine the size of the sampling was taken the number of the given group, which according to the report on self-examination data in KFU and its affiliates amounted to about 44 000 people:

- Parent organization-28 414 students (Report on results of self-inspection of Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, 2014);
- Branch in Chistopol-1 041 students [5],
- Branch in Elabuga-4 068 students [6],
- Branch in Naberezhnye Chelny-5 939 students of resident instruction, total about 10 000 students [7],
- Branch in Zelenodolsk-287 students [8].

The sample summation was 550 people and represented different categories of young people, depending on age, occupational and territorial factors.

This method was chosen because it provides verifiable and statistically reliable data [9-12]. Special aspect of the study was to investigate the political component of social status [13,14]. The object of study is the youth studying at universities in the region of Tatarstan at the age from 17 to 23 years. The main differentiating indicators are:

Branches of learning

- Natural-science,
- Humanitarian,
- Marital status:

- Single,
- Married,
- Divorced,
- in civil marriage,
- Nationality:
- Russian,
- Tatar,
- Another,
- Place of residence:
- Kazan,
- another city of the Republic of Tatarstan,
- another city of Russian Federation,
- urban settlement,
- village,
- Year of study:
- 2,
- 4,
- Gender:
- Male,
- Female,
- Age:
- Less than 18 years,
- 18-19 years,
- 20-24 years,

Questions, given to the respondents in the frames of social and political block:

- What problem in the life of Russia concerns you most?
- Do you want to live in Russia?
- Have you ever belonged to any youth organization or youth club?
- How can you assess youth policy in Russia?
- Would you like to become a member of any political party or organization?
- From your point of view patriotism - is:
- Can you call yourself a patriot of Russia?

At that there could be more than one answer to questions 1 and 6, but no more than three. The answers to questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 imply only one variant.

Empirical Data for Analysis

It seems significant to complete data on the first question. The results of the survey on all the differentiation criteria of respondents on the other issues with the measurement errors have no fundamental differences from the aggregated data (Tables 1-6).

Results and Discussion

The study of political attitudes, preferences, level of students' interest in the political life was conducted by the authors of the paper in 2014 in one of the leading regions of Russia - in the Republic of Tatarstan. The analysis of political attitudes, preferences and degree of activity of students was based on the identification of a number of indicators (degree of interest in politics, the level of personal involvement of young people in political life), as well as the factors that determine the motivation of political behavior of students which are identified with the

Table 1 Social and political attitudes of the students depending on the branch of learning (in % from the number of respondents by the given differentiating factor).

What problem in the life of Russia concerns you most?	Natural science direction	Humanitarian direction
Relations between Russia and Ukraine	13.00%	19.50%
Threat of aggression from abroad	28.00%	27.00%
Corruption practice in the power structure	42.60%	42.90%
Inflation, price growth	43.20%	34.80%
Income inequality increase	17.50%	21.20%
Health care and education state	23.80%	25.50%
Unemployment	30.30%	18.60%
Economic weakness and dependence of the country	13.50%	20.20%
Threat of riots	4.75%	9.20%
Gross materialism and inspirituality of population	15.40%	24.60%
Ecological situation	20.65%	14.40%
No answer	3.80%	5.00%

Table 2 Social and political attitudes of the students depending on the marital status (in % from the number of respondents by the given differentiating factor).

What problem in the life of Russia concerns you most?	Single	Married	Divorced	Civil marriage	No answer
Relations between Russia and Ukraine	15.8%	7.1%	30.8%	29.4%	100.0%
Threat of aggression from abroad	27.2%	28.6%	30.8%	47.1%	100.0%
Corruption practice in the power structure	41.0%	53.6%	15.4%	70.6%	33.3%
Inflation, price growth	36.1%	71.4%	38.5%	29.4%	
Income inequality increase	21.5%	7.1%	7.7%	29.4%	
Health care and education state	26.4%	28.6%	15.4%	11.8%	
Unemployment	21.9%	25.0%	23.1%	17.6%	
Economic weakness and dependence of the country	18.5%	28.6%		11.8%	
Threat of riots	6.9%	3.6%	7.7%	5.9%	
Gross materialism and inspirituality of population	22.5%	21.4%	23.1%	23.5%	66.7%
Ecological situation	18.5%	14.3%	15.4%	5.9%	
No answer	4.7%				

Table 3 Social and political attitudes of the students in the context of nationality (in % from the number of respondents by the given differentiating factor).

What problem in the life of Russia concerns you most?	Tatar	Russian	Another
Relations between Russia and Ukraine	18.9%	15.7%	11.3%
Threat of aggression from abroad	27.0%	29.4%	29.0%
Corruption practice in the power structure	43.0%	41.5%	38.7%
Inflation, price growth	38.1%	37.5%	35.5%
Income inequality increase	19.3%	23.0%	16.1%
Health care and education state	25.4%	26.6%	22.6%
Unemployment	24.2%	20.2%	19.4%
Economic weakness and dependence of the country	18.9%	18.1%	16.1%
Threat of riots	7.4%	7.3%	1.6%
Gross materialism and inspirituality of population	23.0%	22.6%	22.6%
Ecological situation	16.8%	19.4%	14.5%
No answer	3.3%	3.2%	11.3%

help of both direct and indirect issues. The obtained results allow us to draw a conclusion that there is interest among young people in the political development. Thus to the question "What problem in the life of Russia concerns you most?" only about 4% of respondents said they did not know, but the vast majority understands the current social political and economic situation in the country, the problems of internal development, relations with the world and gave adequate assessment (**Table 7**).

If we build a ranking of problems in the development of today's Russia on the basis of the obtained data, in the students' opinion, shared by the majority of respondents (42%), the first place takes corruption in the power. It is perceived especially acutely in the senior age group of 18-24-year-old students, in which there are 1.5 times more respondents emphasizing this problem, compared to those who have not yet turned 18 years old, and among the male respondents. In comparison with girls, boys are 1.4 times

Table 4 Social and political orientations attitudes of the students depending on the place of residence (in % from the number of respondents by the given differentiating factor).

What problem in the life of Russia concerns you most?	From Kazan	From another city in the Republic of Tatarstan	From another city in Russian Federation	From an urban settlement	From a village	No answer
Relations between Russia and Ukraine	12.7%	17.6%	12.7%	21.6%	20.5%	21.4%
Threat of aggression from abroad	28.8%	30.1%	21.1%	33.3%	27.3%	14.3%
Corruption practice in the power structure	42.4%	43.4%	45.1%	39.2%	34.1%	28.6%
Inflation, price growth	32.2%	37.9%	45.1%	39.2%	36.4%	35.7%
Income inequality increase	24.6%	23.4%	21.1%	7.8%	4.5%	28.6%
Health care and education state	36.4%	21.9%	29.6%	19.6%	22.7%	14.3%
Unemployment	15.3%	21.1%	16.9%	35.3%	38.6%	14.3%
Economic weakness and dependence of the country	16.1%	19.9%	28.2%	9.8%	11.4%	7.1%
Threat of riots	7.6%	9.4%	2.8%	2.0%		7.1%
Gross materialism and inspirituality of population	22.9%	23.0%	26.8%	23.5%	18.2%	7.1%
Ecological situation	22.9%	13.7%	11.3%	25.5%	25.0%	28.6%
No answer	1.7%	3.9%	4.2%	3.9%	4.5%	28.6%

Table 5 Social and political attitudes of the students in the context of gender self-identity of respondents (in % from the number of respondents by the given differentiating factor).

What problem in the life of Russia concerns you most?	Male	Female
Relations between Russia and Ukraine	13.6%	18.6%
Threat of aggression from abroad	21.3%	33.0%
Corruption practice in the power structure	49.8%	36.6%
Inflation, price growth	37.1%	37.8%
Income inequality increase	24.9%	17.7%
Health care and education state	19.5%	29.7%
Unemployment	20.8%	22.5%
Economic weakness and dependence of the country	18.6%	18.0%
Threat of riots	3.6%	8.7%
Gross materialism and inspirituality of population	19.5%	24.9%
Ecological situation	14.5%	19.8%
No answer	5.9%	3.0%

Table 6 Social and political attitudes of the students in the context of age of respondents (in % from the number of respondents by the given differentiating factor).

What problem in the life of Russia concerns you most?	Under 18	18-19 years	20-24 years
Relations between Russia and Ukraine	9.1%	16.2%	17.1%
Threat of aggression from abroad	9.1%	29.8%	28.1%
Corruption practice in the power structure	27.3%	42.4%	42.0%
Inflation, price growth	27.3%	35.4%	39.1%
Income inequality increase	9.1%	20.2%	21.2%
Health care and education state		27.8%	25.2%
Unemployment	18.2%	24.2%	20.6%
Economic weakness and dependence of the country	9.1%	16.7%	19.4%
Threat of riots		5.6%	7.5%
Gross materialism and inspirituality of population		24.2%	22.6%
Ecological situation	9.1%	19.2%	17.1%
No answer	36.4%	2.5%	4.1%

more concerned about corruption in the country's authorities. One can't but recognize the validity of the students' concerns, the importance of their understanding that the dynamics and efficiency of the society functioning is crucially defined by the

ruling class. The most acute problem of internal development defined in the eyes of students is inflation, rising prices (37.5%), the state of health and education (25.6%) and the growing income disparity (20.6%). In the rank scale these problems take

Table 7 Opinion of students on the problems in the life of Russia (in% to the number of respondents).

What problem in the life of Russia concerns you most?	%	Rank
Relations between Russia and Ukraine	16.6	10
Threat of aggression from abroad	28.3	3
Corruption practice in the power structure	41.9	1
Inflation, price growth	37.5	2
Income inequality increase	20.6	7
Health care and education state	25.6	4
Unemployment	21.8	6
Economic weakness and dependence of the country	18.2	8
Threat of riots	6.7	11
Gross materialism and inspirituality of population	22.7	5
Ecological situation	17.7	9
No answer	4.2	

the second place. Differences in the respondents' assessments of these problems, depending on their nationality practically have not been recorded. However perception acuteness differs significantly depending on the age of respondents, gender and marital status. Thus for example, among students up to 18 years there are more than two times fewer respondents emphasizing the importance of growing income inequality among the population than in the senior age group of students (18-24 years). Among married respondents there are nearly two times more of those concerned about inflation and rising prices (71.4% vs. 36.1%). Students' concern about issues of material security of life, as prior in the development of the country, is largely explained by a relatively low level of life of students. As the respondents stated, 80% of them are supported by parents and relatives. But even with this financial support 26.9% of respondents are forced to look for jobs, they noted that they have additional earnings and 18.8% of students work on a permanent basis. The third place in importance is taken by the problem associated with the foreign policy aspects, threats, aggression from abroad that was emphasized almost by a third of respondents (28.3%). This result shows the attention of students to the foreign policy of Russia, to the international community's attitude to our country, to the problems of cooperation on the international arena and it confirms the interest of young people to the world of politics and modern political development.

The growth of aggressive statements, threats by certain Western countries, an open information war, enhanced in recent years have not gone unnoticed and are defined in the minds of young people as a fairly serious problem in the country's development and its security ensuring. Nevertheless the foreign policy problems concern students to a much lesser degree. Thus, Russia's relations with Ukraine are considered important only by the sixth part of those participating in research (16.6%), though at the time of the survey this topic, the development of events in the region was one of the most debated in Russian society, in the media and in political discourse. Partially this conclusion is connected with a relatively stable social and political situation in the country and in the region (only 6.7% of the respondents expressed their concern about the possibility of mass disorders) and satisfaction with conditions of life.

To the question "Is there difference between what you would like to have and what you have?" every second responded replied that even if there is the difference, it is not essential, what allows us to estimate the life of students in the homeland as a whole as happy. The youth esteem of living standard can be considered as a factor determining life satisfaction. According to the obtained data two-thirds of respondents (67.5%) when asked to rate their material status, responded that their life conditions are not worse than those of friends.

The evident dominant in the political consciousness of students are issues of internal political development: gross materialism and spiritual impoverishment of the population (22.7%), the problem of employment was noted by 21.8% of respondents, economic weakness and dependence of the country as a topical problem is considered by 18.2% of respondents and 17.7% stressed the importance of the situation in the environmental sphere. In many ways, this result is due to the pragmatic value in the personality structure of students caused by the current problems of life, the conditions of self-realization.

But there is no doubt that the given data are in no way evident of students' distancing from the world of politics. This conclusion is confirmed with the respondents' evaluation of policy, pursued by the Russian government in relation to the younger generation. The number of those who rated the youth policy in Russia as ineffective is more than two times higher than of respondents emphasizing its effectiveness (28.7% vs. 13.7%), which also confirms the attentive interest of students to the activities of the state, to the policies. At the same time these results demonstrate a specific protest behavior (a quarter of respondents said they did not know such a policy - 25.5%) towards some irresponsible public authorities, to avoiding solving problems in the social development of youth in Russia, to the actual absence of the youth policy strategy in the country and ineffective of carried out measures. It is typical that one-third of respondents (32.1%) found it difficult to give the answer to the question and did not give any assessment (**Table 8**).

Interesting is the section dedicated to patriotic sentiments and attitudes. Most respondents explicitly prefer to live in Russia (56.9%). At that only 22% of respondents gave unambiguously negative answer to this question. Most of the respondents identified themselves as patriots of Russia (68.5%). 21.6% of respondents do not consider themselves patriots. However, only 16.6% of respondents associate patriotism with belonging to the state. More than half of respondents (52.7%) believe that patriotism is love for their native land, language, culture and traditions (**Tables 9-11**).

However, our study confirms the overall result of many surveys

Table 8 Students' evaluation of the youth policy effectiveness (in % to the number of respondents).

How can you evaluate the youth policy in Russia	%
Effective	13.7
Ineffective	28.7
I don't know such policy	25.5
No answer	32.1

Table 9 Life attitudes of students depending on place of residence (in % to the number of respondents).

Do you want to live in Russia?	%
Yes	56.9
Haven't thought so far	20.9
No	22.2

Table 10 Definition of the concept of "patriotism" by students (in % to the number of respondents).

From your point of view patriotism is:	%
Love for motherland, language, culture, traditions	52.7
Feeling of belonging to motherland, its history, future	27.3
Pride for belonging to the state	16.6
Another	4.3
No answer	5.2

Table 11 Patriotic self-identity of students (in % to the number of respondents).

Can you say you are a patriot of Russia?	%
Yes	23.6
Rather yes, than no	44.9
Probably not	13.7
No	7.9
No answer	9.7

that young people's interest in politics is limited primarily by informational level, sometimes by the desire to express their own position or assessment of certain political situations [15,16]. The level of real political participation, social and political activity of students is still low. According to our data, only 7.4% of respondents said of their membership in a youth organization or a club, 26.5% were in them before, and the majority, almost two-thirds do not participate in any youth associations and organizations. This conclusion is consistent with the results associated with the identification of students aim to participate in the work of political parties. Only 19.1% of those participating in the survey (less than one-fifth) expressed such a wish, every second participant (51.8%) responded categorically "no" to the question if they would like to become a member of a political party or organization, and nearly a third of respondents (29, 1%) did not think about it. Thus, we can conclude that the degree of formation of desires and real participation of students in youth organizations, political processes are not identical. So, today's youth is ready only to get information and debate on politics rather than to actively participate in it (**Tables 12 and 13**).

Conclusion

The obtained results are consistent with previous studies of the political behavior of young people in the region. Throughout the 2000s low level of political activity was invariably fixed [17]. In fact, election campaigns were the only form of youth participation in politics. In many ways, this model of passive

Table 12 Participation of students in youth organizations (in % to the number of respondents).

Have you ever been a member of a youth organization or club?	Total
Registered currently	7.4%
Was registered before, but not now	26.5%
Have never been registered	63.5%
No answer	2.5%

Table 13 Students' attitude to participation in political parties and organizations (in % to the number of respondents).

Have you thought of membership in some political party or organization?	Total
Yes	19.1%
No	51.8%
Haven't thought of that	29.1%

political behavior was the result of weakness in the transitional period of civic consciousness of all groups of populations, including young people [18, 19]. For a decade, the State failed to comply fully with its regulatory and socializing functions towards the younger generation in general and students in particular. As a result students have not formed in their political consciousness the values of political participation, the importance of their own efforts, activity in the solution of state and public affairs, involvement and responsibility for the current situation and the future of the country. The youth have begun to form and accumulate potential of social pessimism, political nihilism, disbelief in the possibility to achieve positive changes in the development of society through their own political participation. Beside underdevelopment of patriotic consciousness in the Russian society, including youth and students, and the virtual absence of the political spectrum of Russian political forces reflecting and aggregating its interests, the model of passive political behavior of students is still preserved.

In this regard, it is important to establish contact of society, the state and future intellectual elite of the country, having an innovative energy, moral potential and ability to become in the short term the main social force for democratic, dynamic and effective development of the country. The establishment of such an interaction is possible not only by providing indisputable priority of the state youth policy, long-term investment in it, but also with the efforts of state and social institutions on the formation of political ideals, moral values, citizenship, patriotism and political culture of students' participation. The study of political attitudes of modern youth in Russia is extremely relevant. Therefore, we assume that this study will be held annually. It is extremely important not only to keep track of the current state of social and political attitudes of young people, but also to monitor its dynamics. Regular research will allow predicting and modeling the variants of the younger generation behavior development, which in turn will allow amending the existing youth policy.

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