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The Motivation Structure of Young People and their Social Activity in the Complicating Conditions of Society Functioning

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Abstract

Introduction. Today, the social activity of young people in the real and virtual environment is undergoing significant changes, as the conditions for the functioning of the social environment become more complicated. It is associated with several factors that affect social conditions, in particular the pandemic situation and the handling of a special military operation. The study aims to identify and describe the motivation structure and social activity of young people in the functioning complication of the social environment. The correlations between motives and types of activity were revealed for the first time, new forms of social activity were identified, and enlarged components of social activity for young people were presented. Methods. Two hundred Russian residents participated in the study. The average age was 19.8 years. To study the structure of social activity, a questionnaire was applied, which included 18 scale questions and four new author scales. The motivational structure was evaluated using seven question scales developed by the author and tested in previous scientific research. **Results**. The most pronounced among young people are the motives for learning new things, harmony with others, self-development, and self-realisation. The interrelations between the motives for learning new things, self-realisation and leisure, and Internet search activity, and between preventive activity and the motive of learning new things, post-pandemic activity, and the motives of confidence and success are revealed. The structure of social activity is represented by three enlarged components: civil and political activity, including a religious component; professional-educational and recreational activity; preventive and post-pandemic activity. Both traditional and new forms are highlighted in the structure of the social activity of young people. **Discussion**. The results obtained are quite understandable from the standpoint of the system-diachronic approach, according to which the activity of an individual and a group and its motivation are determined by the external state of the functioning of the social environment. These conditions lead to the emergence of new forms of social activity and approaches to the classification of the phenomenon under study.

Keywords: motivation, social activity, youth, real environment, virtual environment, factor structure, enlarged group, post-pandemic activity, self-development, civic activity

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Introduction

Currently, there is an expantion in the number of studies on various aspects of the social activity of young people. First of all, it can be seen in the mainstream of social psychology. By social activity, modern authors mean not only the participation of representatives of the youth demographic group in various spheres of life and the fulfilment of their social roles but also a creative, proactive attitude towards themselves and various spheres of public life (Shamionov, 2020; Shamionov, 2018).

There are several areas of research in the context we are interested in. First, it is the development and description of various forms (types) of social activity (Shamionov et al., 2020). Further, it is necessary to mention the works of Russian authors devoted to the study of activity characteristics (Arendachuk, 2020), value (Shamionov, Bocharova, Nevsky, 2022), volitional (Shamionov, Grigoriev, Grigoriev, 2019) and socio-demographic predictors of social activity (Usova, 2019). The authors also consider the relationship between social activity and a tendency to risky behaviour (Shamionov, 2021), identity (Shamionov et al., 2022), and also the motivation of social activity and its relationship with civic consciousness (Grigorieva, Sharov, Zagranichny, 2022). A significant role in modern academic pursuits is occupied by examining the problematics of the interrelation between youth activity and various psychological characteristics (trust, psychological well-being, conformism) (Kislyakov, Shmeleva, 2022); analysis of oculomotor reactions in the process of young people's perception of stories with various forms of social activity (Shamionov, Nevsky, 2020). It is interesting to study the influence of the social activity of young people on their position in the labour market (Balog, 2017). It is particularly relevant to single out the types of social activity in real (physical) and virtual environments to consider their conjugation and the mechanisms of interlinking (Shamionov, Suzdaltsev, 2022; Zagranichny 2019). Moreover, there is a separation of an integrative branch of science – the psychology of social activity of an individual and a group (Shamionov et al., 2020). In foreign science, much attention is paid to virtual forms of social activity of young people, including deviant ones (cyber aggression, cyberbullying (Alvarez-García, Barreiro-Collazo, Núñez, & Dobarro, 2016; Nocentini et al., 2012; Schoffstall & Cohen, 2011; Mishna et al., 2018)), the study of the correlation of activity and social identity (Osborne, Jost, Becker, Badaan, & Sibley, 2018), and also the study of life orientations in the context of the social activity transformation (Hitlin & Salisbury, 2013), issues of digital socialization in general (Stornaiuolo, 2017).

In recent years, there has been a research interest in deviant forms of social activity in our country, both in real and virtual environments, in terms of diagnostics, typology, and interrelation (Sharov, 2019; Soldatova, Rasskazova, Chigarkova, 2020).

Thus, we can state a steady research interest of domestic and foreign authors in the topic

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of social activity, the tendency to expand its types and boundaries, and the interlinking mechanisms.

M. A. Klenova (2018), V. A. Sitarov and V. G. Maralov (2015) emphasize that it is necessary to study the phenomenon of social activity of young people comprehensively, taking into account the dynamics of the functioning of modern society. In this context, the study by N. V. Usova and co-authors is representative. In this study, an attempt is made to substantiate diagnostic tools within the framework of studying person activity under forced self-isolation conditions (Usova, Arendachuk, Klenova, 2021). It can be assumed that currently a young person's activity is influenced by the increasingly complex circumstances of the functioning of the social environment. To these circumstances, firstly, it is necessary to include a fresh trace of the aggravated pandemic situation and various restrictions and prohibitions related to it, which have been continuing since February 2020, and, secondly, the unfavourable economic and geopolitical situation in which Russia found itself in connection with a special military operation.

The study aimed to identify and describe the motivation and social activity structure of young people in the increasingly complex conditions of the functioning of the social environment.

We have identified a number of hypotheses:

- 1. It is possible to assume the allocation of an enlarged structure of social activity of an individual and a group containing both traditional and new activity forms associated with the complicating conditions of the social environment;
- 2. There are significant correlations between the types and motives of social activity.

The objectives of this study are the development of new types of person's activity and their inclusion in the diagnostic block; the identification of the relationship between motives and types of activity; presentation of enlarged components of social activity of young people.

Methods

The study sample consisted of 200 respondents, the average age was 19.8 years (61.5% of women), and 86% of the respondents are not married. Respondents live in small towns – 22.5%, villages – 12%, regional centres – 63.5%, and 2% of megalopoleis residents. The sample group was formed in a simple randomized way. The study was conducted between April and June 2022.

As part of the research plan implementation, a questionnaire was applied, including 18 scale questions (Shamionov et al., 2020), meaningfully characterizing the forms of social activity of an individual (altruistic, leisure, sports and recreation, mass cultural, family and household, ecological, socio-political, Internet network, Internet search, civil, socio-economic, professional, educational and developmental, spiritual, religious, protest, radical protest, subcultural). Respondents were asked to rate their activity on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 – 'rarely' to 5 – 'constantly') (Shamionov et al., 2020).

Motivation for social activity was assessed using seven author questions-scales tested in the previous phase of research (Grigorieva et al., 2022). Among the scales are food and shelter provision (1); confidence and success (2); acceptance by others (3); love and respect (4); learning new things (5); harmony with others (6); self–realization and self-development (7). The proposed new forms of social activity were evaluated by three scales developed by author (Table 1).

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 Table 1

 Questions-scales of new activity forms

Scale name	Scale content
Preventive activity	Avoiding situations associated with staying in crowded places, using masks and gloves in public places and being in contact with people with symptoms of ARVI, revaccination, interest in news, preventive content within the scope of COVID-19
Post-pandemic activity	The use of digital services to search for information, purchase goods, receive services, interpersonal interaction, despite the abolition of the main covid restrictions, activities aimed at combating post-covid complications, building long-term plans in the aspect of life without taking into account the pandemic
Patriotic activity	Participation in collecting and sending humanitarian aid to residents of the DPR and LPR, in actions supporting a special military operation, the use of hashtags on social networks, symbols in the real environment (on clothing items, vehicles) of the Latin letter Z

The substantive validity of the new scale questions was evaluated by four experts. The Kendall concordance coefficient (W = 0.80) indicates a high degree of consistency in the assessment of experts. The indicated scales also demonstrated an acceptable level of reliability: α Cronbach = 0.74–0.83. Respondents were also asked to rate their activity on the Likert scale (from 1 to 5).

The diagnostic stage of the study was conducted using the Google Forms service. The average time to complete the questionnaire is 15 minutes. Statistical processing was carried out using the licensed statistical software package IBM SPSS Statistics 27.0.

Results

All indicators obtained during the analytical stage were checked for normality of distribution according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. An acceptable positive result was obtained (p > 0.05), indicating the presumed correspondence of the empirical distributions to normal and the possibility of using parametric statistical procedures (Student's t-test, Pearson correlation analysis, factor analysis using the principal component method).

Let us turn to the data received reflecting descriptive statistics. Table 2 shows the results by type of social activity.

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Table 2Descriptive statistics of social activity degree (n = 200)

Activity	Minimum	Maximum	Average value	Standard deviation
Altruistic	1	4	2.60	1.99
Leisure	1	5	4.09	1.01
Sports and recreation	1	5	3.36	1.22
Mass cultural	1	5	2.71	1.24
Family and household	1	5	3.93	1.03
Ecological	1	5	2.89	1.17
Socio-political	1	5	1.83	1.15
Internet network	1	5	3.18	1.37
Internet search	1	5	3.83	1.16
Civil	1	5	2.21	1.16
Socio-economic	1	5	2.67	1.35
Professional	1	5	3.11	1.26
Educational and developmental	1	5	2.83	1.26
Spiritual	1	5	2.99	1.31
Religious	1	5	1.91	1.13
Protest	1	5	1.70	1.05
Radical protest	1	5	1.88	1.18
Subcultural	1	5	1.80	1.20
Altruistic	1	4	1.66	0.89
Post-pandemic	1	5	1.91	1.18
Patriotic	1	5	1.61	0.94

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Table 2 shows that leisure, family and household and Internet search activity are the most pronounced among young people.

Let us turn to the data obtained concerning the motivation of social activity. Table 3 presents the results for the entire sample and also a comparative analysis between men and women.

Table 3Social activity motives (n = 200)

Variables		Young people's social activity motives						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ontire sample	Average value	3.35	3.29	3.42	3.94	4.29	4.04	4,36
	S. D.	1.17	1.29	1.28	1.10	0.89	1.10	0,92
Women	Average value	3.21	3.32	3.31	4.20	4.31	4.20	4,30
	S. D.	0.90	1.31	1.35	0.98	0.95	1.05	0,96
Men	Average value	3.42	3.22	3.47	3.41	4.24	3.71	4,47
	S. D.	3.19	1.18	1.24	1.14	0.77	1.13	0,85
Student's t-test		0.54	0.50	0.83	5.23*	0.61	3.21*	1.30

Note: Significance level p \leq 0.01.

Table 3 shows that the motives for learning new things, harmony with others, and also self-development and self-realization are the most pronounced among young people. The women are dominated by motives of respect, love, and harmony with others. The results obtained overlap with previous studies conducted in the framework of the study of the social activity of young people (Grigorieva et al., 2022).

Let's turn to the results of the correlation analysis of the most pronounced motives and types of social activity. Significant correlations were obtained between the motives for learning new things and leisure activity (r = 0.256 at p < 0.001), and also Internet search activity (r = 0.369 at p < 0.001), and also Internet search activity (r = 0.341 at p < 0.001). Of interest are also the revealed interrelations between the motive of finding a new and preventive activity (r = -0.176 at p < 0.001), and the motive of confidence and success and post-pandemic activity (r = 0.210 at p < 0.001).

Let us proceed to the results of the factor structure of youth social activity. Values were obtained according to the KMO test = 0.826, and the statistical significance of Bartlett's test of sphericity was equal to 0.000. This indicates that the data can be subjected to factor analysis. As a result of factor analysis by principal component analysis with subsequent Varimax rotation (rotation

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converged in 5 iterations) with Kaiser normalization, 3 factors were obtained, explaining 47% of variance. Each factor determines an enlarged group of elements in the structure of youth social activity. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4Factor loadings of social activity types (n = 200)

Type of social activity	1 factor	2 factor	3 factor
Altruistic	-	0.486	-
Leisure	-	0.666	-
Sports and recreation	-	-	-
Mass cultural	-	0.569	-
Family and household	-	0.488	-
Ecological*	-	-	-
Socio-political	0.806	-	-
Internet network	-	0.543	-
Internet search	-	0.686	-
Civil	0.718	-	-
Socio-economic*	-	-	-
Professional	-	0.484	-

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Type of social activity	1 factor	2 factor	3 factor
Educational and developmental	-	0.485	-
Spiritual	-	0.563	-
Religious	0.663	-	-
Protest	0.757	-	-
Radical protest	0.776	-	-
Subcultural	0.616	-	-
Preventive	-	-	0.855
Post-pandemic	-	-	0.887
Patriotic*	-	-	-
% coverage of total variance	21	16	10

Note: types marked with *, are not included in any of the factors.

We named the first factor, including social and political, civic, religious, protest, radical and protest and subcultural types of social activities, as «civil and political activity, with a religious component».

The second factor contains the following forms of social activities: altruistic, leisure, mass cultural, family and household, Internet network, Internet search, professional, educational and developmental, and spiritual. This factor is named as «professional and educational, and recreational and household activity». The third factor includes post-pandemic and preventive social activities, and we called it «preventive and post-pandemic activity associated with the spread of COVID-19». Moreover, from the table, we see that none of the factors end up including ecological, socioeconomic, and patriotic activity.

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Discussion

An analysis of the activity primary indicators allows us to state that leisure, family and household, and Internet search, are the priority types of social activity among young people. The results are consistent with previous studies (Shamionov, 2021; Arendachuk, 2021), which found that the priority types of activity among young adults are Internet network and leisure activities. This means that the listed types of activity also dominate in the increasingly complex conditions of the social environment.

The motives for learning new things, harmony with others, as well as self-development and self-realization, turned out to be the most expressed among young people. These results are consistent with previous studies (Grigorieva et al., 2022), which showed that the motives of self-development and learning new things are of importance for young adults. A comparative analysis showed that female respondents value the motives of harmony with others, respect and love, to a greater extent than males. This fact testifies to the orientation of women to a positive social response from the people around them in the process of social activity. We can see the expressed identity of the data obtained in different periods of time. This may indicate that the structure of motivation for the social activity in young people is relatively static, despite the increasingly difficult conditions for the functioning of society.

As for the relationship between motives and types of activity, it can be stated that the motives for learning new things, self-realization and self-actualization are associated with Internet search and leisure activities. From the other persective, the lower the motive for learning new things, the higher the preventive activity. The motive of confidence and success is associated with post-pandemic activity. In other words, in the increasingly difficult conditions of the functioning of the social environment, the implementation of motives related to learning new things and self-development occurs through a person's leisure and Internet search activity. In addition, confidence and success are correlated with post-pandemic activity.

Patriotic activity was not included in any factor (the indicators have a low spread and a low average score). This can be explained by the fact that the actions of patriotic youth in this context can be included in civil and protest activity, identified at the early stages of the study (Shamionov et al., 2020) and later included in the first factor (an enlarged component of social activity named «civil and political activity, with a religious component»). The fact that the preventive and postpandemic activities were identified as an independent factor (preventive and post-pandemic activity associated with the spread of COVID-19) can be explained as follows. The situation associated with the pandemic, various restrictions, isolation, and other aspects of the spread of coronavirus infection, appears quite longstanding. Despite the removal of the main restrictive measures in Russia at the time of the study, the situation remains tense and unpredictable. According to the epidemiological forecasts, an increase in the incidence of coronavirus infection is possible in the autumn-winter and spring periods, which is associated with a decrease in the level of antibodies (Barvina et al., 2021; Karpova, Stolyarov, Popovtseva, Stolyarova, Danilenko, 2022). It can be stated that news, as well as preventive, scientific and medical content has been actively broadcast in the media, the virtual environment, since 2019. This is probably why preventive activity, as a new type of social activity, was included in the mentioned enlarged component. The recent decrease in pandemic stress leads to the allocation of another new variation of activity, which is postpandemic. Its aim is to build life plans without focussing on the pandemic situation, using the

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acquired experience of interaction skills in a virtual environment, as well as activities aimed at overcoming the post-COVID complications.

The identification of motives, their association with social activity, and its enlarged components can be explained from the standpoint of a system and a diachronic approach. According to it, various types of social activity are determined not only by social and psychological characteristics, but also by the external conditions of the functioning of society in which an individual or a group is located. In this case, the emergence of a situational enlarged component of social activity (preventive and post-pandemic) is associated with changes in external living conditions caused by the spread of coronavirus infection.

Conclusion

- 1. In the structure of social activity of young adults, we can distinguish both traditional forms of social activity (altruistic, leisure, sports and recreation, mass cultural, family and household, social and political, Internet network, Internet search, civil, professional, educational and developmental, spiritual, religious, protest, radical and protest, subcultural), and new ones, which are due to the changing conditions of life and the functioning of the social environment (preventive, post-pandemic, patriotic).
- 2. The motives of searching for the new, self-development, and self-actualization are associated with leisure and Internet activity. The motive of confidence and success determines post-pandemic activity.
- 3. The structure of the social activity of young people in the increasingly complex conditions of the social environment includes three enlarged components: civil and political activity, with a religious component; professional and educational, and recreational and household, as well as preventive and post-pandemic.

The results of the study can be used as part of the development of programs for psychological and social support under the increasingly difficult conditions of social environment functioning, as well as the organization of modern youth activities. Prospects for further research may be associated with the identification of new situationally determined forms of social activity, depending on the emergence of new conditions and challenges of the current times.

Limitations

The limitations of the study lie in the sample's imbalance in gender (most respondents are women), as well as in place of residence (most respondents are residents of the regional center). In addition, a significant part of the subjects are students of educational institutions of higher education.

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Conflict of interest information

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.