

Features of Conspirativist Mentality of Students of the Southern and Northern Regions

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Abstract

Introduction. In the modern world, one of the trends of public consciousness is the belief in conspiracy theories, which is a social risk that can damage social stability. Conspirativist mentality is a conspiracy adherent's mindset directed toward the object of the conspiracy, which is attributed special negative consequences for personal or public safety. Research on conspirativist mentality is sparse and has not previously examined the cross-regional aspect. The purpose of the study is to compare the peculiarities of conspirativist mentality and students of the southern and Northern regions of Russia. **Methods.** The sample was 768 people, 55% of the them girls; the age of respondents was 19-35 years ($M = 31$). The following methods were used: "Methodology for measuring the type of mentality" (MITM, V. I. Pishchik, 2019), "Methodology for measuring values through fears" (V. I. Pishchik, 2022), "Anxiety Scale" (J. Taylor), "Methodology for measuring belief in conspiracy" (S. Sh. Mutalimova, V. I. Pishchik, 2014, supplemented by V. I. Pishchik, 2019), "Methodology for measuring conspirativist mentality" (V. I. Pishchik, 2023). Statistical methods: descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney test, correlation analysis, regression analysis. **Results.** It was revealed that conspirativism is more represented in male respondents, predominantly in the Northern region. The type of mentality "resistant to belief in conspiracies" received the highest number of negative relations for all types of belief in conspiracies. Differences were found for the belief in clones, in informational conspiracy related to vaccination, with predominance in the southern region. Differences in belief in pharmaceutical conspiracy,

level of anxiety, values; expression of the "ready-made" type of conspirativist mentality were found in the Northern region. The construct of conspirativist mentality is defined by a two-factor structure. **Discussion.** Gender, age, and anxiety are consistent factors conditioning the conspirativist mentality of students. At the same time, the regional factor was also confirmed. The results can be a starting point for building educational work with students.

Keywords

conspiracy belief, conspirativist mentality, anxiety, fears, values, region, generations

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Introduction

International research on belief in conspiracy theories and conspiracy culture has experienced explosive growth over the past decade (Butter & Knight, 2020; Nestik, Zhuravlev, 2020; Kazun, Porshnev, 2021; Kazun, 2022; Douglas & Sutton, 2023). Throughout history, belief in conspiracies has been closely associated with prejudice, witch hunts, revolutions, genocide, and pandemics. Today conspirativism acts as an international trend, a carrier of a large number of risks (Nestik, Zhuravlev, 2020). The collective monograph presents a wide range of problems related to belief in conspiracy theories (history, semiotics of conspiracies; cosmology; psychonalism and conspiracy theories; anthropology, sociology and social psychology of belief in conspiracy theories; personality traits, motivation, social cognitions of conspirativism) (Butter & Knight, 2020). Factors (age, level of education, influence of television programs, female gender) of propensity to conspiracy thinking in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine are found (Kazun & Porshnev, 2021). A.D. Kazun (2022) raised questions about the problematic nature of studying conspirativism. Some ontology of conspiracy theories and belief in them

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is presented in (Douglas & Sutton, 2023), it is noted that conspiracy theories construct not only a version of events, but also a version of social groups, including between perpetrators and their victims, the enlightened and the ignorant.

Many perpetrators of terrorist acts have been found to be ardent supporters of conspiracy theories (Kruglanski et al., 2022). Conspiracy theories have caused people to abandon traditional medicine to the extent that once-cured diseases are now making a comeback in some parts of the world. Additionally, conspiracy theories encourage people to reject scientific consensus, most notably the consensus on anthropogenic climate change (Douglas et al., 2019; Nestick et al., 2021). It is becoming increasingly clear that belief in conspiracy theories is now becoming part of normal human psychology and is based on human ability (Brotherton, 2015; Nestik, Deineka, 2020; Zholdasov, Pishchik, 2022; Pishchik, 2023). At the same time, belief in conspiracies can be part of extremist influence on young people, who are the most vulnerable part of the population (Lyubtsova, 2020; Oettingen et al., 2022).

In the act of belief, we deal with the ambiguity of the indubitable when it comes to groundless certainty, emphasized J. Lacan (1972). Faith is based on a lack of belief. That is, the faith is no longer there and we are trying to produce it. In fact, this confirms that belief in conspiracies is something that we construct again each time. Belief in conspiracy theory is a construct that unites a person's beliefs in the existence of a threatening action coming from a person or group of persons who have the goal of destabilizing the situation in society. Conspiracies are usually aimed at usurping political or economic power, violating rights, breaking established agreements, withholding vital secrets, or changing fundamental institutions. Researchers have identified a particular conspirativist mentality (CM), expressed by the fact that people are characterized by their general tendency to support conspiracy theories (Swami et al., 2016; Lazarević et al., 2021; Imhoff et al., 2022). CM is a broad concept that suggests that a particular community has a set of beliefs in conspiracy theories that support their value and meaning cohesion.

Today, based on the studies mentioned above, predictors that condition CM, conspirativist beliefs, and belief in conspiracies. These include anxiety, formal indicators (gender, age, education, cultural background), memory performance, situation, time, social relations, individual and personal characteristics, general predisposition to conspiracy ideas, thinking style, peculiarities of formation of delusions, beliefs, degree of religiosity, political preferences, level of anxiety, and other more specific ones. Unfortunately, a considerable number of predictors are not confirmed in repeated studies. These studies were conducted mainly on samples from other countries.

Many conclusions made by scientists remain ambiguous and limited, with insufficient research on Russian samples. Due to these circumstances, the purpose of our study was to compare the characteristics of the CM of students in the southern and Northern regions of Russia. Especially since it has already been established that in different regions the values orientations of young people are different (Atamanova et al., 2021). The subject

of the study, thus, is the relationship between the features of CM, belief in conspiracies, and gender, age, values, fears, and anxiety of students of the two regions.

Methods

To identify the types of mentality, among which traditional, transitional, innovative, post-innovation types are distinguished, the "Methodology for measuring the type of mentality" (MITM, V. I. Pishchik, 2019) was used. This methodology made it possible to establish which archetypes, world image, way of life, way of thinking, attitudes, and interactions determine the lives of generations Y and Z. "The methodology of measuring values through fears" (V. I. Pishchik, 2022) reveals the leading values of generations: the value of "Self", "Others", "Nature", "Technology", "Mystical", "Culture". Since the degree of influence of the level of anxiety on belief in conspiracies remains under question, we applied the technique "Anxiety Scale" by J. Taylor (adaptation of V. G. Norakidze, 1975). It allowed us to determine the level of anxiety in generational groups and its close relationship with the belief in conspiracies. Answering the question of what types of belief in conspiracies are common among generational groups, we applied the "Methodology for measuring belief in conspiracies" (S. Sh. Mutalimova, V. I. Pishchik, 2014, supplemented by V. I. Pishchik, 2019); the methodology includes scales of conspiracy types - belief in social conspiracy, political, state, belief in secret activities, belief in secret organizations, pharmaceutical conspiracy, belief in harmfulness of vaccination, food conspiracy, belief in clones, belief in aliens, belief in globality, belief in the end of the world, belief in information conspiracy. We also applied the new "Methodology for measuring conspirativist mentality" (V. I. Pishchik, 2023), which allows us to determine the expression of types of CM: ready to believe in conspiracies; resistant to believing in conspiracies; looking for reasons for conspiracies; productive type, puzzled by the consequences of believing in conspiracies on life.

Statistical processing of the data was performed with the free access statistical software package R 4.2.0. Initially, descriptive statistics were analyzed and the normality of the distribution of signs was determined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion. The Mann-Whitney criterion was calculated to prove the significance of differences. Correlation analysis was used to determine the closeness of the relationship between the indicators; dispersion one-factor analysis allowed to determine the relationship between the indicators age, sex, region, and the measured variables. Regression analysis was used.

The sample consisted of 768 people, divided by region:

- Rostov-on-Don, Rostov Oblast, Krasnodar, Krasnodar Oblast (Southern Federal District),
- Arkhangelsk, Arkhangelsk Oblast (Northwestern Federal District).

Men made up 45% of the total sample and women 55%, respectively. The group of respondents consisted of students aged 19-24 years of age of generation Z; 25-35 years of age – generation Y.

We made a number of assumptions:

- H1 - female students will be more inclined towards the ready type of CM;
- H2 - the age (generation) of the students is correlated with the expression of CM;
- H3 - students in the Southern FO will have a more pronounced willingness to believe in conspiracies;
- H4 - a close relationship can be found between anxiety, CM, belief in conspiracies, values, and age of respondents;
- H5 - predictors of CM of students in the two regions can be found.

Results

At the initial stage of statistical analysis, the normality of the distribution of signs was checked. By calculating the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion with the Liljefors correction, it was found that for all diagnosed indicators the distribution of the trait significantly differs from the normal one, which determined the choice of nonparametric criteria for statistical processing of the collected data (Mann-Whitney criterion and Spearman correlation analysis).

The results indicate that the general sample is dominated by belief in political conspiracy ($M = 8.0753 \pm 2.53144$), belief in social conspiracy ($M = 7.8433 \pm 2.43627$), belief in pharmaceutical conspiracy ($M = 7.0154 \pm 2.88227$) and belief in food conspiracy ($M = 7.0061 \pm 2.70156$). At the middle level among the study participants are belief in government conspiracy ($M = 6.3548 \pm 2.58249$), belief in secret activities ($M = 6.1551 \pm 2.46743$), belief in secret organizations ($M = 6.2304 \pm 2.84022$), belief in globality ($M = 5.4731 \pm 2.84802$), belief in information conspiracy ($M = 5.6175 \pm 2.49854$), belief in vaccination related conspiracy ($M = 5.3533 \pm 3.18427$). The belief in clones ($M = 2.9647 \pm 2.64755$), the belief in aliens ($M = 2.7896 \pm 2.43442$), and the belief in the end of the world ($M = 3.7481 \pm 2.83187$) are at a low level of significance. Regarding CM type, the sample profile is dominated by CM type "stable" ($M = 3.2504 \pm 0.89631$), followed by CM type "seeking" ($M = 3.1321 \pm 0.99587$), "ready" ($M = 3.0753 \pm 0.95861$) and "productive", represented by the lowest values ($M = 2.5422 \pm 1.04041$). The value profile is dominated by the "value of the self" ($M = 15.3917 \pm 2.83036$), then in decreasing order of importance diagnosed the "value of nature" ($M = 11.3518 \pm 1.99324$), the "value of the mystical" ($M = 11.1613 \pm 1.87947$), the "value of culture" ($M = 11.1260 \pm 2.00985$) and completing the profile are the "value of others" ($M = 10.86 \pm 1.67177$), the "value of technology" ($M = 10.4962 \pm 1.70553$). In the profile of mentality type, the sample is dominated by innovation mentality ($M = 11.7834 \pm 3.01087$), while traditional mentality ($M = 6.6283 \pm 3.18169$), transition mentality ($M = 5.9263 \pm 2.55176$) and post-innovation mentality ($M = 5.6621 \pm 2.20058$) are weakly expressed.

The groups of men and women (age $M = 22$) differed in belief in political conspiracy ($p \leq 0.05$), belief in aliens ($p \leq 0.01$), anxiety level ($p \leq 0.01$), CM by type of "persistent"

($p \leq 0.05$), by type of "ready" ($p \leq 0.01$), by type "productive" ($p \leq 0.05$), value of self ($p \leq 0.01$), value of technology ($p \leq 0.01$), value of mystical ($p \leq 0.01$), value of culture ($p \leq 0.01$), innovation mentality ($p \leq 0.01$), post-innovation mentality ($p \leq 0.01$) (Table 1).

Table 1

Statistical analysis of the significance of differences in different-sex groups

Indicator	Groups	Mean value by groups ($\bar{x} \pm \sigma$)	Mann-Whitney U-criterion, significance
Belief in political conspiracy	Men	7,5038 $\pm$ 2,99583	U=30057,500; p=0.035
	Women	8,2192 $\pm$ 2,38210	
Belief in aliens	Men	3,4351 $\pm$ 2,78485	U=28713,000; p=0.003
	Women	2,6269 $\pm$ 2,31258	
Anxiety level	Men	14,3511 $\pm$ 6,42658	U=24644.500; p=0.000
	Women	18,9558 $\pm$ 9,73483	
CM type "stable"	Men	3,0916 $\pm$ 0,97231	U=29702,000; p=0.017
	Women	3,2904 $\pm$ 0,87257	
CM type "ready"	Men	3,2977 $\pm$ 0,99765	U=28694.500; p=0.003
	Women	3,0192 $\pm$ 0,94125	
CM type "productive"	Men	2,3511 $\pm$ 0,96016	U=30201,500; p=0.037
	Women	2,5904 $\pm$ 1,05508	
Value of self	Men	14,3969 $\pm$ 3,49214	U=27597,500; p=0.000
	Women	15,6423 $\pm$ 2,58179	
Value of technology	Men	10,0305 $\pm$ 2,01891	U=27277,000; p=0.000
	Women	10,6135 $\pm$ 1,59799	
Value of the mystical	Men	10,6641 $\pm$ 2,16123	U=28547.500; p=0.004
	Women	11,25865 $\pm$ 1,7821	
Value of culture	Men	10,4809 $\pm$ 2,12802	U=26866,000; p=0.000
	Women	11,2885 $\pm$ 1,94764	
Innovative mentality	Men	10,9466 $\pm$ 3,29408	U=27282,000; p=0.000
	Women	11,9942 $\pm$ 2,90073	
Post-innovation mentality	Men	6,2214 $\pm$ 2,34780	U=28082,500; p=0.002
	Women	5,5212 $\pm$ 2,14133	

Note. Abbreviation adopted: CM - conspirativist mentality

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Table 1 shows the following differences. Women are more likely to believe in political conspiracy than men; belief in aliens is statistically higher in the male sample. In other measures of adherence to different conspiracy theories, no differences were found between the male and female groups. The level of anxiety is statistically significantly higher in the female group. The ready type of CM is more represented in men than in women. The stable and productive types of CM are more represented in women. Women have statistically significantly higher values. Women have a higher level of innovative mentality and men have a higher level of post-innovation mentality. Hence, hypothesis H1 is rejected.

Next, it was necessary to determine the expression of CM in generations Y and Z. Table 2 shows the significant correlations related to the age of the respondents.

Table 2

Correlations of Indicators in groups of generations

Indicators	Correlations with the variable "age of respondents"	Significance of correlations
Belief in political conspiracy	0,172**	0,000
Belief in pharmaceutical conspiracy	0,231**	0,000
Belief in clones	-0,163**	0,000
Belief in aliens	-0,147**	0,000
Belief in globalization	-0,207**	0,000
Belief in the end of the world	-0,187**	0,000
Anxiety level	-0,100*	0,010
Resilient	0,080*	0,043
Value I	0,250**	0,000
Value of others	0,077*	0,049
Value of nature	0,103**	0,009
Value of technology	0,143**	0,000
Value of the mystical	0,115**	0,003
Value of culture	0,198**	0,000
Innovation mentality	0,080*	0,040
Post-innovation mentality	-0,104**	0,008

** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$

It turns out that the older the generation (Y), the more they believe in political ($p \leq 0.01$) and pharmaceutical ($p \leq 0.01$) conspiracies, the younger the generation (Z), the more they believe in clones ($p \leq 0.01$), aliens ($p \leq 0.01$), globality ($p \leq 0.01$) and the end of the world ($p \leq 0.01$). The level of anxiety decreased with age ($p \leq 0.05$). The stable type of CM is characterized by older age ($p \leq 0.05$). The level of values increases with age ($p \leq 0.01$). Age is positively related to innovation mentality ($p \leq 0.05$) and negatively related to post-innovation mentality ($p \leq 0.01$). Hence, to some extent, it can be argued that generation Y is more resistant to CM. Hypothesis H2 is rejected.

A cross-sectional study was conducted among different generations living in different regions of Russia to verify the proposed theoretical model. The Mann-Whitney criterion was calculated on groups divided by region: Rostov-on-Don (Southern region); Arkhangelsk (Northwestern region). The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Significance of differences in indicators between regions

Indicators	Mann-Whitney difference criterion (U)	Reliability (p)
Prevalence in the Southern region		
Belief in clones	44356,5	0,006
Belief in information conspiracy	43198,5	0,015
Belief in vaccination conspiracy	44262,5	0,05
Prevalence in the Northern region		
Belief in pharmaceutical conspiracy	40970,0	0,001
Level of anxiety	39518,0	0,001
Self value	41334,5	0,001
Threat from others	46966,5	0,002
Lack of information	46599,5	0,00
Belief in dark forces	48159,5	0,002
Fear of loss of tradition	46250,5	0,00
Ready type	41551,5	0,001

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Differences were found in belief in clones, belief in informational conspiracy, in conspiracy related to vaccination, prevailed in the generation of the Southern region. Differences were found in belief in pharmaceutical conspiracy), level of the anxiety, expression of value of self, value of Others (Threat from others), value of technology (lack of information), value of Mystical (belief in dark forces), value of culture (fear of loss of tradition), expression of CM type Ready, prevailed in the generation of the North West region. Hypothesis H3 is rejected.

The results of correlation analysis between CM types and diagnosed indicators are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlation interrelations of CM types, anxiety and values through fears

Indicators	Stable	Seeking	Ready	Effective
Belief in government conspiracy	-	-	-	0,109**
Belief in secret organizations	-0,108**	-0,085*	0,085*	-
Belief in pharmaceutical conspiracy	-0,098**	-	-	-
Belief in clones	-0,084*	-	-	-
Belief in aliens	-0,133**	-	0,121**	-
Belief in globalization	-0,172**	-0,115**	0,171**	0,100*
Belief in the end of the world	-0,158**	-0,086*	0,145**	0,097*
Belief in information conspiracy	-0,111**	-	-	-
Anxiety level	-0,213**	-0,438**	0,151**	0,457**

Indicators	Stable	Seeking	Ready	Effective
Value of others	-	-	0,088*	-
Value of nature	-	-	-	-0,120**
Traditional mentality	-	0,138**	-0,078*	-0,095*
Innovative mentality	0,126**	-	-0,079*	-0,116**
Transition mentality	-0,125**	-0,121**	0,109**	0,128**
Post-innovation mentality	-0,108**	-0,144**	0,108**	0,131**

Note. ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$

Application of the methodology revealed the degree of expression of the following types of belief in conspiracies in the "ready" type of CM: belief in secret organizations ($p \leq 0.05$), aliens ($p \leq 0.01$), belief in globality ($p \leq 0.01$), belief in the end of the world ($p \leq 0.01$). The value of others, which is correlated with the "ready" type of CM, shows a person's detachment from everything new, makes it difficult to make choices in one's life and to be oriented towards others. "Ready" type of CM is negatively related to traditional ($p \leq 0.05$) and innovative ($p \leq 0.05$) mentality, and positively related to transitional ($p \leq 0.01$) and post-innovation ($p \leq 0.01$) mentality. "Outcome" type of CM is positively related to belief in government conspiracy ($p \leq 0.01$), globality ($p \leq 0.05$) and the end of the world ($p \leq 0.05$), and negatively related to the value of nature ($p \leq 0.01$). "Result" type of CM is negatively associated with traditional ($p \leq 0.05$) and innovative ($p \leq 0.01$) mentality, and positively associated with transitional ($p \leq 0.01$) and post-innovation ($p \leq 0.01$) mentality. It was found that the higher the level of anxiety, the higher the indicators of "ready" ($p \leq 0.01$) and "productive" ($p \leq 0.01$) types of CM. "Resultant" type of CM is associated with anxiety to a greater extent. "Resilient" type of CM received the highest number of negative associations with types of belief in conspiracies: belief in secret organizations ($p \leq 0.01$), pharmaceutical conspiracy ($p \leq 0.01$), clones ($p \leq 0.05$), aliens ($p \leq 0.01$), globality ($p \leq 0.01$), end of the world ($p \leq 0.01$), information conspiracy ($p \leq 0.01$). "Sustainable" type of CM is positively related to innovation mentality ($p \leq 0.01$) and negatively to transition ($p \leq 0.01$) and post-innovation mentality ($p \leq 0.01$). The CM type "seeker" is associated negatively with belief in secret organizations ($p \leq 0.05$), globality ($p \leq 0.01$) and the end of the world ($p \leq 0.05$). The CM type "seeker" is positively related to traditional mentality and negatively related to transitional and post-innovation mentality. "Resilient" ($p \leq 0.01$) and "seeker" ($p \leq 0.01$) CM types are negatively related to anxiety levels.

By conducting regression analysis in the sample of students, we obtained the following results presented in Tables 5-6.

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Table 5 shows the predictors for the models of CM types of SFD students.

Table 5
Data for the models of CM types (SFD students)

CM type	R	R ²	Significant change in F	Predictors	Significance of coefficients
Stable	0,392	0,154	0,000	Belief in secret organizations	0,016
				Belief in the end of the world	0,000
Seeker	0,616	0,379	0,000	Belief in a public conspiracy	0,010
				Belief in a government conspiracy	0,013
				Level of anxiety	0,000
				Value of nature	0,032
Fini- shed	0,371	0,138	0,000	Belief in secret organizations	0,004
				Belief in the end of the world	0,001
				Belief in a vaccination conspiracy	0,022
Resul- tant	0,560	0,313	0,000	Belief in public conspiracy	0,037
				Faith in a government conspiracy	0,008
				Belief in an alien	0,019
				Anxiety level	0,000

In the CM types, the following dependencies are characteristic for SFD students: CM type "stable" depends on such factors as belief in globality and anxiety level; CM type "seeking" depends on such factors as belief in social conspiracy, belief in state conspiracy, anxiety level, value of nature; CM type "ready" depends on such factors as belief in secret organizations, belief in the end of the world, belief in the vaccination conspiracy; CM type "productive" depends on such factors as belief in social conspiracy, belief in state conspiracy, level of anxiety, value of nature.

Table 6 reflects the predictors for the models of NFD students' CM types.

Table 6
Data for models of CM types (students of NFD)

CM type	R	R ²	Significant change in F	Predictors	Significance of coefficients
Sustai- nable	0,290	0,084	0,000	Anxiety level	0,000
Seeking	0,500	0,250	0,000	Level of anxiety Value of the mystical	0,000 0,012
Ready	0,321	0,103	0,002	Belief in clones Belief in globality Level of anxiety	0,033 0,045 0,028
Outcome	0,539	0,290	0,000	Level of anxiety Value of the mystical	0,000 0,024

In the model of CM types, the following dependencies are characteristic for NFD students: CM type "stable" depends on such factors as belief in globality and level of anxiety; CM type "seeking" depends on such factors as belief in social conspiracy, belief in state conspiracy, level of anxiety, value of nature; CM type "ready" depends on factors such as belief in secret organizations, belief in the end of the world, belief in vaccination conspiracy; CM type "productive" depends on factors such as belief in social conspiracy, belief in government conspiracy, level of anxiety, value of nature.

Discussion

By comparing the groups of males and females in our study, it turned out that males are more likely to have the CM type "ready". This result is somewhat at variance with Swami, Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham (2010), who show a greater degree of belief in conspiracies in women. In a study (Eidelman, 2016), it is shown that men are more likely than women to hold a "hopeless" stance in evaluating themselves and others in a group. This could also be an explanation for the result we obtained. It is possible that the situation related to SWO and world threats may to some extent explain some anxiety of men, their increased responsibility, and insecurity.

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Many studies point to anxiety (for example, feelings of lack of control, subjective insecurity) and stress as prerequisites for belief in conspiracy theories (Brotherton, 2015; Swami et al., 2016; Douglas & Sutton, 2023), but this hypothesis was partially confirmed by the authors. In our study, it was confirmed; anxiety entered the CM model according to the results of the regression analysis. Krüppel, Yoon & Mokros (2023) found that conspiracy beliefs were associated with higher levels of dispositional but not situational anxiety.

Swami (2010) showed that the younger the age of the respondents, the higher the desire to expose conspirativism. Our result showed that members of Generation Z believe in different types of conspiracy beliefs.

Fatfouta et al. (2021) found that belief in conspiracies of certain external groups corresponds to a collective narcissistic stance of intergroup hostility, but collective narcissism is also related to other conspiracy theories because it simultaneously involves a belief (that the internal group is great) and a threatening belief (that the internal group is not recognized). A study (Molenda, Marchlewska & Rogoza, 2023) demonstrates the relationship between "national narcissism" (i.e., a defensive national identity that stems from unmet needs and is associated with hostile intra- and intergroup behavior) and the willingness to conspire against one's own group. This is supported in our study by the result that the type of mentality (mentality is interrelated with national narcissism) is related to belief in conspiracies.

In the study of R.M. Shamionov (2019) notes that the values of preservation and self-transcendence determine the formation of discriminatory attitudes in young people. In our study, the value of self is associated with belief in political conspiracy, predominantly in women. The stable type of CM had a negative correlation with belief in information conspiracy, which, in our opinion, confirms that they are no longer sensitive to information distortions. This result can be correlated with the study (Barababanshchikov et al., 2018), which found that participants in the study assessed the information reported by an active interlocutor as reliable.

Regionality was practically not considered as a factor in the problem under consideration earlier, however, turning to the study where the "psychological typhoon eye" ("psychological typhoon eye") was described (Yang et al., 2023), there is an interesting pattern: When people are at the epicenter of a crisis event (e.g., an earthquake), they are more appropriate and report lower risk perceptions than people on the periphery who are more anxious, as confirmed in our study on the prevalence of belief in conspiracies in the northern region.

The «ready» type of CM had different predictors across regions. However, it included both anxiety and different types of belief in conspiracies. T. A. Nestick et al. (2020) found conspiracy beliefs to be associated with belief in a just world, low self-efficacy, orientation to moral grounds of loyalty to one's group, and respect for authority, low institutional trust, and social cynicism. G. N. Eidelman (2016) empirically proved that the dominant life position is more related to subjective assessments of the world and self than to socioeconomic parameters.

Regarding the previous hypotheses, we can conclude that hypothesis 1 on the predominance of belief in conspiracy theories in women was rejected. Hypothesis 2 on the relationship between age and the expression of conspirativist mentality was accepted. Hypothesis 3 that conspirativist mentality is predominant in the southern region was rejected. Hypothesis 4 about the relationships between anxiety, CM, belief in conspiracies, values, and age of the respondents is accepted. The paper found predictors of CM of students from two regions, so hypothesis 5 is accepted.

Conclusion

The generalization of research on belief in conspiracies and CM has confirmed that certain factors have been identified that condition the actualization of CM in young people of predominantly foreign countries. At the same time, not all factors have found their empirical confirmation in repeated studies. The regional factor is not noted in the work, leading to a comparative analysis of two regions of Russia.

The empirical study of CM revealed such peculiarities as: the presence of gender differences in the adoption of conspirativist attitudes with predominance in men; a close relationship between age and the manifestation of belief in conspiracies; with the predominance of belief in conspiracy theories both in the older and younger generations; a vivid regional specificity in the predominance of negative manifestations of belief in conspiracies among young people in the northern region.

CM is an important part of the worldview of the modern young generation, which depends on the subjective perception of the world in general. The presented data can be taken into account in work with young people, in building youth policy in universities: by actively educating students, offering them reliable tools for information search, developing their critical thinking skills, psychologists and university teachers will contribute to the formation of a more mature, sober view of life events and their coverage in the media.

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Conflict of interest information

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.