

# Influence of ethnic and religious factors on the traditionalism and everyday life of students in the urban environment at the beginning of the XXI century (on the example of Makhachkala city)

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**Abstract** — The article analyzes the statements that consider the influence of ethnic and religious factors on the urban daily life of students, assesses the attitude of young people to the power structures in the field of preserving the traditional urban environment. The article is devoted to the results of sociological studies conducted during 2014-2018 in the urban student environment of the city of Makhachkala. The author of the article draws attention to the perspectives that allow to activate interethnic tolerance in the urban environment of Makhachkala, indicates the presence of corporate religiosity, and describes conditional division of the student urban environment into groups. Data slice of student consciousness was obtained from groups belonging to different ethnocultural worlds; the factors that have a consolidating potential for strengthening ethnic tolerance are analyzed. It was concluded that the issues of national identification are vitally important in the urban student environment, and the issues of inter-ethnic and inter-religious contact are quite relevant for new young generations of Russians.

**Keywords** — *everyday life; polyethnic region; inter-ethnic tension; students; ethnic tolerance; dialogue; youth.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, researchers began to actively consider issues related to inter-ethnic influence, in other words, with those reactions that accompany people upon coming into contact with the "Other". The probability of communication, meetings, and contacts with "other" people is increasing, since on the one hand, society is increasingly striving for unity in the era of globalization, but at the same time, the interest to the identity formation processes does not disappear, but only increases. Such processes are prevalent among young people, especially in the student environment.

According to Professor A.P. Skorik, a number of young people enter universities with long-held prejudices against

other ethnic groups. It is safe to assume that most of them will not be able to change their interpersonal communicative sphere throughout the education period, they will not be able to break their long-held beliefs. [1]

According to Professor Z. Abdulagatov, such situations can contribute to the fact that radical ideas are becoming popular among students, this tendency should be regarded with suspicion since such young people quickly find supporters in various international groups and organizations that are organized along religious or political lines. [2]

The religious component can lead to radicalization among young people, as rightly noted by M. Mchedlova [3], G. Shirokalova [4], S. Ryzhova. [5]

In the daily life of the students in Makhachkala, the percentage of contact probability with other cultures is rather high, as demonstrated by numerous studies of sociologists, historians, philosophers in 2013-2018. In particular, the survey showed that almost 80 percent of students confirmed the polyethnicity of the surrounding space. It can be said that in the absence of examples of mass conflictogenity manifestation for 2014–2018, this characterizes a fairly high level of ethnic tolerance of university students in the city of Makhachkala, despite the fact that almost 40 percent of the surveyed students noted that they had witnessed inter-ethnic conflicts.

Currently, some authors, such as V. Avksentyev [6] and S. Sokolovsky [7], pay special attention to language policy, emphasizing that sometimes protest sentiments among students can accept any reason for protest, including self-positioning of their language environment.

It may be reasonable to conclude that if we compare the data resulting from the polls with the statements that a number of abovementioned authors consider in their articles, it is arguable that it is very important to consolidate the

ideas of ethnic tolerance in society. It is no coincidence that this topic is of great interest to researchers.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS (MODEL)

A pilot sociological survey was conducted by means of a poll using a commonly structured questionnaire, involving social experts on the proprietary model of the project. They were used to the extent and form that serve the purpose of the study.

In 2014-2016 the project was carried out simultaneously in three cities: Armavir, Makhachkala and Novocherkassk. The total population is approximately 40,000 students currently studying at the Armavir State Pedagogical Academy, the Dagestan State University, Platov South-Russian State Polytechnic University (NPI).

The sampled population consists of the first-year students from the chosen institutions of higher education, as a border socio-psychological group (which still partly remains as schoolchildren), and the third-year students, as a formed student community. The approximate number amounts to 100 people of each course at each university, to ensure a sampling error of no more than 2-4%, and to carry out the repair of the sample at the stage of the preliminary analysis of standardized questionnaires.

The object of the paper is to analyze the ethnic-social structure, identify behavioral models and options for a positive socio-psychological perspective in the student community of Makhachkala to determine ethnic tolerance.

In 2016-2017, selective surveys were conducted in the student environment of the city of Makhachkala, which allowed to compile a great amount of data.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It should be noted that today the students' community composition is heterogeneous, it does not represent the homogeneous community. The question concerning the choice of principles using to divide modern Russian students is quite relevant today. It is conceivable that there is a formal division into groups in academic universities: courses, cohorts, but this is just a formal division and it does not reflect the true traditionalism and everyday life of students in the urban environment. In Makhachkala, as a city with a large number of students, this is particularly true.

According to the analysis of research results the student environment of Makhachkala universities can be divided into three groups:

- "radicals", account for 10 percent. It is significant that in this group, part of the student youth tried to covertly propose their opinion or make the answers less clear for perception.

In examining the reasons for the presence of such a group among the students, the consequences of the weakening of the nation-building in Russia are of paramount importance, the lost system of traditional values, numerous negative trends in the twisted psychological perception of young people, moods of infringement, failure, inferiority of national dignity, low level of positive experience representation in the student community in solving the

complex problems of inter-ethnic interaction of peoples in the Republic of Dagestan are common among the students.

- the second group is conditionally denoted as "students with aggressive reactions" to ethnic and religious factors, accounts for 22 percent. These students tried to explain their complex of aggression with the fact that they were influenced by negative periods in the history of their region, by the actualization and accentuation of aggressive behaviors, by the excessive idealization of not always positive images of athletes or contemporary heroes, by the realization of national customs. Such a topic as "Caucasian War XIX" very often becomes the subject of extreme and polar disputes and discussions, not only in the North Caucasian society but especially among the youth. [8]

In our opinion this group is quite dangerous because it does not realize the danger of such sentiments, they exist in a constant state of dissatisfaction, and their negative reactions become the foundation for xenophobia in the ethnic environment.

- the third group "passive students", accounts for 32 percent. These are people who strongly emphasize their unwillingness to participate in any form of ethnic conflicts. On the one hand, we can say that they are "not dangerous", because even in cases of provocations they have always avoided the conflict, but on the other hand we cannot exclude the accumulation of implicit threats to society and public order. Although, it should be noted, that the wait-and-see position of such students has a very positive orientation.

In our view, it should be particularly emphasized that the students feel favorably disposed toward the creation of good-neighborly relations between the republics and peoples, approve the opportunity to use the experience in solving ethnic conflicts with the help of civil society institutions. At the same time, the majority of urban students (56 percent) believe that people should be responsible for the "positive ethnic climate" and it is necessary to provide each other with more information about traditional culture, customs and holidays. From this perspective, we can conclude that the larger part of this group considers it possible to overcome any confrontations, primarily at the local community level.

All three groups in the urban student environment noted the necessity to design and promote the similarity, common customs and traditions of the peoples living in the urban agglomeration. In the traditional perception, within the city's day-to-day activities, students have a positive attitude to such manifestations of national culture as respect for the mother, attention to elders, traditions of hospitality.

Pleasingly that among a number of positions in the questionnaire, questions about the probability of interethnic marriages won the approval and support of almost 50 percent of respondents. In our opinion, this fact can be considered as a certain potential for ethnic tolerance.

The number of students who did not believe in the facts of the state authorities' influence and control of issues related to inter-ethnic contacts was alarming in the polls. Almost 30 per cent of respondents say that the authorities are powerless in solving problems of such nature, this statement primarily indicates the extremely low impact of all the activities carried out by public authorities, the

inability or underperformance of the authorities to establish a dialogue with local communities created in cities on a national basis.

But, it is fair to note that 39 percent of respondents believe that local authorities have a positive potential in addressing issues related to interethnic problems, thus, the percentage of confidence in authorities is still quite high. In such a case, account must be taken of the acuteness of the problems, inconsistency and complexity of the dialogues in the North-Eastern region of the Republic of Dagestan. There are also prospects for intensifying inter-ethnic tolerance and involving regional authorities in this process.

In addition to ethnic factors, a huge impact on the daily life of young people and, primarily students, affects the religious factor [11]. It is long accustomed that young people are the most active participants in public events held by the muftiat, a large number of young people must take part in the weekly collective prayer, for young people the attitude of freedom of conscience as a natural right of every person prevails. However, sometimes some young people interpret the concept of freedom of conscience as freedom of religion. "Forest Brotherhood", popular 5 years ago, with their inhumane attitude towards the faithful can be considered fall a long way short of respect the principles of freedom and true faith.

It should be noted that in general, half of all respondents were very reluctant to answer questions relating to faith and freedom of religion. On the one hand, the opinion that "faith is a personal issue" is quite clear, but at the same time this opinion causes slight anxiety because in such an environment it could give rise to negative initiatives, in particular, religious fanaticism or universal rejection of atheism.

We scarcely identified atheists among the respondents during the polls, and at the same time there is a line of corporate religiosity when young people emphasize that they experience positive emotions only when they contact people united in groups who are adherents of the same religion as they are. Professor P. Lukichev [9] and Professor A. Skorik paid attention to this fact in their works. [10]

In General, it should be noted that almost 50 per cent of the students surveyed are not comfortable to talk openly about the "pros and cons" concerning issues of religion. In the polls we drew attention to the so-called group of "converts", whose representatives came to realize their faith and religion not through the preserved family values, not through the social experience of the older generation, but under the influence of ideology. In the latter case, it could be preachers or their disciples, who enjoyed great popularity in the Republic of Dagestan, it could be a group of young people united on the principle of "morality and faith". In this case, these groups of urban youth have attracted our attention by the fact that they consider "new conversion" as a form of reality rejection, a kind of nihilism, when the main thing for them is the desire to demonstrate their religious affiliation at every possible way, to emphasize their behavior in public. It causes a negative attitude of the rest urban youth, who ask, "how religious is this young person, how sincere is he in matters of faith?" and "why is he shocking others by the degree of his religious commitment?".

Judging by all appearances the answer to such questions resides in the fact that a young believer is well treated in his environment, such people are not rejected by the youth community, they become attractive and popular among peers.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Along with the fact that the urban students of Makhachkala are widely different, first of all, should be noted the presence of constant trends to the issues of stability and interfaith dialogue in the student environment.

To summarize, it should be noted that the topics of interaction in the interethnic issue among students is very wide, within the framework of ethnic and social relations, attention is focused on ethnic history, attempts to identification, youth subculture, inter-confessional relations.

For our research, it was important not only to get a data slice of student consciousness from the groups belonging to different ethno-cultural worlds but to a greater extent to analyze the factors that have a consolidating potential for strengthening ethnic tolerance.

Most of the respondents did not demonstrate any difficulties in indicating their ethnicity. Hence, it can be concluded that the issues of national identification are vitally important in the urban student environment, and the issues of interethnic and interreligious contact are relevant for the new young generations of Russians.

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