# PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF STUDENTS' SOCIAL ACTIVITY

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**Abstract**

This article describes the structure of psychological factors influencing students' social activity and empirical results of its research. The psychological factors that promote the development of social activity and those that inhibit it have been characterized. The personal favorable factors of social activity include: students' psychological attitudes towards the value of social activity; feeling like a full member of the student group; positive personal experience; formed social abilities; the desire for self-realization, self-knowledge, self-creation, self-regulation; sense of personal value; awareness of the positive resources available and opportunities for their actualization; self-belief; self-promotion; comprehensive ideas about social activity and its factors; ability to take initiative in the social sphere; ability to self-regulate. The factors that slow down students' social activity are: wrong profession, despair in others, despair in social ideals, attitudes that make a person inflexible to changing conditions, absence or weakened sense of social responsibility.

*Keywords:* social activity, students, psychological factors.

**Introduction**

The current social and political situation in Ukraine requires young people to participate actively in all spheres of life, which is ensured by the fact that higher education institutions produce not just highly competitive specialists but also highly moral, mature, self-sufficient personalities with a clear view of life. The problem of promoting the development of social activity of an individual becomes challenging in the student's age, since this age is sensitive to the development of basic sociogenic potentials of a person.

A complex of diagnostic methods was applied, that allowed to discover the psychological factors of social activity. Many studies have confirmed that a socially active person is the subject of his/her own way of living (Smirnov, 2014; Geukes, 2017; Shutenko, 2015; Donnellan & Robins, 2015). The research is based on the conceptual ideas of the system-structural approach to the study of the problem of self-realization and a person's social activity.

Some aspects of this problem have already been the subject of research, but mostly in the field of pedagogical science. The problem of promoting the development of students' social activity during their studies, including its factors, has not previously been the subject of psychological research. This makes such research relevant, as it will allow to develop the means of development of social activity among young people, will help to form their humanistic values and will contribute to the qualitative restructuring of society, will bring positive changes in the psychosocial environment, and, as a result, social well-being. This thesis has been confirmed in many studies (Cicognani & Nosratabadi, 2008; Lent & Pinto, 2018).

The research of student social activity was based on the system approach methodology (Barclay & van Vugt, 2015) and on the well-known classifications of psychological components of different activity types (Khaikyn, 2000; Gromova, 2007). We offer an additional variant of this classification, which is to take into account the personal specifics of students' social activity, focusing on personal attitudes that contribute to or slow down a social activity.

In our own model there are five components: motivational, value, emotional & volitional, cognitive & reflexive, activity (Table 1). We take into relationships the components in between, their levels and general levels of social activity (low, medium, high), their criteria and indicators. According to the model we identify favorable and inhibitory psychological factors in the formation of students' social activity.

**Table 1.** Structure of Students' Social Activity

| Structural components and criteria of social activity | Indicators of social activity |
|---|---|
| Motivational<br>*Criteria: personal need for social activity* | prosocial motives (the motive of social responsibility, achievement of socially significant results); affiliate motive; the desire to obtain or maintain high social status; desire to carry out social activity, the wish to enjoy the process of its realization; self-development motive; aspiration for self-affirmation in social activity |
| Values<br>*Criteria: value attitude to social activity* | understanding the important role of the social component in the future professional activity and in the learning process; striving for high standards of social role fulfillment; priorities of active life values, values of social recognition; humanistic orientations (sense of social belonging, the importance of helping others); striving for active social contacts, search for the meaning of life |
| Emotional & volitional<br>*Criteria: persistent emotional attitude to social activity, ability to achieve goals* | internal locus of control; responsibility, autonomy, initiative in social activity; determination, persistent desire to provide social activity, decisiveness, perseverance, positive emotional attitude towards social activity; self-discipline, diligence; self-confidence, confidence in others and in work |
| Cognitive & reflexive<br>*Criteria: understanding the content of social activity, ability to analyze it* | the desire to receive new information on the content, ways and opportunities for social activity, the content of student self-government activities; interest in social events; ability of the analysis of one's own social behavior, anticipation of consequences of one's own activity; ability to analyze the social behavior of group members, analyze group values, adopt them |
| Activity<br>*Criteria: effectiveness in the social sphere* | sustainability of social activity; skills and ability to cooperate, protect one's interests, respect for the interests and rights of others; active participation in various types of social activity – educational, labor, scientific, creative, sports, public, etc.; ability to organize social activities, to attract others |

**The object of the research** is the psychological factors of students' social activity.

**The aim of the research** is to identify the predictors of students' social activity and analyze the factors that have a favorable or inhibitory effect.

**Participants of the research.** The study involved 388 students. The composition of the sample is determined according to our model.

Since student age is the most sensitive period for the formation of social activity, the sampling age range is 17-30 years. Considering the fact that students express themselves most clearly through student self-government activities, the following ones were involved in the study of the features of social activity: 11 students were students' self-government leaders, 66 were actively involved in student self-government and 311 were ordinary students; there were 229 women and 159 men.

Gender distribution was conducted because many studies have found that women are more humanistic and more likely to achieve social well-being than men (Kong, Ding, & Zhao, 2015).

**Methods of the research**

We used the standardized psychodiagnostic tests to investigate the personal factors of social activity in accordance with our model (Table 1): morphological test of vital values (Sopov & Karpushina, 2001), Cronbach's α coefficient in the present sample was 0.77 – value component; test-questionnaire to measure affiliation motivation (Magomed-Eminov, 1988), Cronbach's α coefficient in the present sample was 0.81; methodology "Diagnosis of the Degree of Basic Needs Satisfaction" (Raygorodsky, 2001), Cronbach's α coefficient in the present sample was 0.84 – *motivational component;* locus of control technique (Xenophon, 1999), Cronbach's α coefficient in the present sample was 0.76 – *emotional & volitional component*; methodology "Diagnosis of the Level of Reflexivity Development" (Karpov, 2003), Cronbach's α coefficient in the present sample was 0.77 and the author's questionnaire: "Studying the Level and Features of Cognitive and Activity Components of Students' Social Activity" (Bazilenko, 2014) – *cognitive & reflexive, activity components.*

To standardize the author's questionnaire, a sample of 135 students was formed, of which 45.9% were men and 54.1% – women. The total internal consistency coefficient of Cronbach's α equals 0.74. All Cronbach's α indicators for each question are sufficient in terms of the requirements for psychodiagnostic tools. The Guttman Split-half correlation coefficient of the questionnaire is 0.69. Cronbach's α for the first part of the questionnaire is 0.71, for the second part it is 0.73.

For statistical analysis of the obtained data, the following methods of mathematical statistics were used: factor and regression analysis. The obtained empirical data were processed using the statistical software package SPSS 21.0 for Windows.

**Research results.** The concept of individual social activity has been defined as personal formation, which is internally determined by individual needs, value orientations, volitional characteristics of a person and is externally manifested in the qualitative transformation of the social environment and personality, shaping a prosocially oriented person.

Based on the selected criteria and indicators (Table 1), the respondents were distributed according to the levels of social activity component and general levels of social activity formation (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Distribution of Students by Levels of Social Activity Components and General Levels of Social Activity

| Components | Levels of formation (students,%) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *low* | *medium* | *high* |
| motivational | 45.5 | 28.3 | 25.6 |
| values | 10.7 | 78.8 | 10.5 |
| emotional & volitional | 13.3 | 82.2 | 4.5 |
| cognitive & reflexive | 6.9 | 91.7 | 1.4 |
| activity | 26.1 | 64.4 | 9.5 |
| general social activity | 20.8 | 51.1 | 28.1 |

Observation of students' real behavior proves that to discover social activity, all the components should not be necessarily formed in full. For example, the intensity of the activity and motivational components compensate the underdeveloped cognitive, emotional & volitional components. The analysis of ratio between the intensity of the components in the structure of students' social activity shows that the most formed are the cognitive & reflexive component of social activity, and the least formed – the motivational and activity components.

For the development of students' social activity, the formation of all its components is important. Nevertheless, the system-forming component, and at the same time the weakest one in the structure of social activity, is the motivational one. As a result of the regression analysis we will determine the prognostic model and the predictors of the indicator of the need for social activity (Dependent variable) (Table 3). The psychological essence of this component lies in the attractiveness of social activity for a person, the desire to improve one's knowledge in the social sphere, develop skills in the field of social activity, the desire for self-assertion in social activity. The independent variables were indicators of all structural components of students' social activity, as they are all interrelated.

A model is considered valid if the R-square is greater than 0.5. The value obtained is greater than 0.5, therefore, the resulting model is statistically significant. Table 3 shows the resulting coefficients of the linear association of the need for social activity with personal characteristics – predictors.

**Table 3**. Linear Coefficients for Predictors

| Model | | Non-standardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | t | Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **B** | **Std. error** | **Beta** | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 9.21 | 4.31 | | 2.13 | 0.04 |
| | the need for recognition | 0.44 | 0.08 | 0.76 | 5.88 | 0.00 |
| | social (interpersonal) needs | 1.97 | 0.14 | 0.45 | 13.21 | 0.00 |
| | the need for self-expression | 1.03 | 0.15 | 0.25 | 6.35 | 0.00 |

a. Predictors: (const) social (interpersonal) needs; the need for recognition; the need for self-expression
b. Dependent variable: need for social activity

The metric regression equation of the indicator of the need for social activity will look like this:

$$y = 9.2 + 0.44X_1 + 1.97X_2 + 1.03X_3 + e.$$

Therefore, the predictors that positively influence the indicator of the need for social activity (being oriented on satisfying the need to express one's spiritual essence in social activity) are: social (interpersonal) needs (motive of affiliation, motive of responsibility to society, achievement of socially significant results); the need for recognition (the desire to obtain or maintain a high social status); the need for self-expression (the desire for self-affirmation in the social activities).

Analyzing the satisfaction factors for the need of self-expression in students' social activity, 4 factors were identified on the basis of factor analysis, the contribution of which to the total data dispersion makes up 72.2% (Table 4).

Factor analysis was carried out on a sample of persons with a high level of self-expression in social activity (109 persons).

**Table 4.** Satisfaction Factors of the Need for Social Activity

| Factors | Factor capacity | Parameters forming factors |
|---|---|---|
| humanistic | 28.5% | social (interpersonal) needs (0.84), need for self-expression (0.78), need for security (0.73), motive for initiation (initiative) (0.71) |
| social pragmatic | 15.2% | need for recognition (0.78), social (interpersonal) needs (0.71), need for self-preservation (0.69), self-determination (0.68), material needs (0.63) |
| individually pragmatic | 14.4% | need for self-expression (0.72), self-realization (0.67), motive for positive personal expectation (0.65), material needs (0.62), self-development motive (0.61) |
| pragmatic | 14.1% | material needs (0.79), motive for success (0.76), motive for significance of results (0.71) |

Therefore, based on the data in Table 4, we can analyze and interpret the substantive content of the identified factors. The results of the study show that the most effective in the development of social activity are those manifested personal qualities, which are determined by internal needs and value attitude to social activity. The presence of the desire for self-expression in social activity characterizes the person as the one showing altruism, being able to get positive emotions from communication with others, from the process of being socially active.

Such characteristics of the factors identify those needs that should be emphasized in students' psychological development programs. They should encourage the development of the motivational orientation, directed to the positive relationships with others, as well as to self-realization, self-expression and recognition.

In the process of research of the value component of social activity the statistically significant differences ($p < 0.02$) by the levels of its formation depending on gender were established (Table 5). Significant differences were found only in the value component of social activity, with the remaining components – no differences were identified.

**Table 5.** Gender Differences of the Value Component of Students' Social Activity

| | Value | df | Asympt. Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 7.96[a] | 2 | .02 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 8.36 | 2 | .02 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 4.44 | 1 | .04 |
| N of Valid Cases | 647 | | |
| a. 0 cells (,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 31.42. | | | |

The analysis of variance shows, on the whole, the range of values in the sample that corresponds to the low and medium levels of the value component of social activity. In this case, the female students are characterized by higher rates of this component than the male students.

For a more detailed study of the favorable and inhibitory factors of students' social activity the author's questionnaire aimed at "Studying the Level and Features of Cognitive and Activity Components of Students' Social Activity" was used.

Exploring the range of students' ideas about psychological factors for social activity, the students were asked the open questions: "What can contribute to students' social activity?" and "What can inhibit students' social activity?". The answers received were very different, as shown in the Table 6.

**Table 6.** Favorable and Inhibitory Factors of Students' Social Activity

| Favorable factors | | Inhibitory factors | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *value & motivational* | | | |
| interest and personal desire | 13.4% | depression, temper, complexes, vulnerability | 8.7% |
| civic consciousness | 8.5% | indifference | 6.2% |
| institute encouragement, moral and material encouragement | 7.7% | financial problems | 3.9% |
| the desire for power, the desire to be the first | 4.2% | detachment, lack of support | 3.6% |
| ideology, determination | 4.1% | consuming position | 3.2% |
| a favorable situation in the country, or, conversely, a complete collapse of the system | 3.4% | pessimism | 2.7% |
| the desire to help people; self-confidence and one's own strength | 3.1% | lack of encouragement | 2.4% |
| material reward | 3.1% | | |
| *social* | | | |
| opinion of other people | 4.8% | different views with others, fear to be judged | 4.1% |
| social contacts | 3.1% | an unfavorable climate in the group, | 2.8% |
| wider promotion of youth volunteer programs, trainings of future volunteers | 1.5% | disinformation and lack of information from social institutions aimed to organize and regulate the social activity of student youth during their studies | 2.7% |

| positive, friendly atmosphere, goodwill of administration and colleagues | 1.4% | passive mood in the team | 2% |
|---|---|---|---|
| *communicative* | | | |
| sociability and desire for communication | 7.2% | modesty | 4.8% |
| ability to find common ground with other people | 3.1% | inability to find common ground with others | 1% |
| *activity* | | | |
| availability of free time | 3.1% | laziness | 19.3% |
| a clear goal | 1.8% | apathy, passivity | 10.2% |
| vision of positive results | 1.8% | lack of time | 7% |
| awareness of the mechanisms of the implementation of plans | 1.4% | irresponsibility | 5% |
| self-discipline and ability to adapt to new conditions | 1.4% | previous failures | 3.5% |

Summarising we can say that the favorable factors of social activity of student youth are: comprehensive ideas about social activity and its factors; their psychological attitudes towards the value of social activity; formed social abilities; feeling like a full member of the student group; ability to take initiative in the social sphere; the desire for self-realization, self-knowledge, self-creation, self-regulation; sense of personal value; awareness of the positive resources available and opportunities for their actualization; self-belief; positive personal experience, etc. The factors that slow down students' social activity are: contradiction of social and moral ideals, wrong profession, despair in others, despair in social ideals, attitudes that make a person inflexible to changing conditions, absence or weakened sense of social responsibility.

The correspondence between students' perceptions of their own social activity and their real participation in the activities of student self-government bodies was established. Thus, among the respondents who consider themselves as socially active persons, more than a half (57%) participate in the activities of student self-government, while among the students who do not consider themselves as socially active, this indicator makes up only 12%.

**Discussion**

The student's age marks the transition to adulthood and is sensitive to the development of the basic sociogenic potentials of a person. The features of its course, undoubtedly, have an impact on the future of a student (Shamionov & Grigoryev, 2014). Therefore, an important psychological task of this period is to form a highly qualified specialist, a moral, mature, self-sufficient personality with a clear view of life, taking an active part in the social life of the country. A personal entity in which such characteristics are embodied is the social activity of an individual (Barclay & Graziano, 2015). This makes it necessary to study the psychological factors of student social activity.

Our research proves that students' social activity is directly and indirectly influenced by a complex of psychological factors.

The specificity of our research is that we approach social activity as a system, taking into account all its structural components and their interconnections, focusing on its various aspects,

within a *system approach* (Barclay & van Vugt, 2015). At the same time, scientists (Lent & Pinto, 2018) see social activity as an instrument of both internal personality transformations and external environmental changes. Social activity aims to change the psychosocial environment for the better, and accordingly, it shapes the sense of social well-being of a person.

Considering the results of factor and regression analysis, and due to the systematic study of the structure of students' social activity, we can say that the importance for the development of social activity belongs to: value-meaning orientations, personality needs and personality characteristics. That is why, emotional & volitional, cognitive & reflexive and activity components have a less significant role.

The results of our study have shown that in the process of social activity development it is necessary to pay attention to the humanistic values – the sense of social belonging, the importance of helping others, involvement, self-development, self-realization; to develop the inner need and value attitude to social activity (Shamionov & Grigoryev, 2014).

**Conclusions**

1. The results of the study became the basis for defining the phenomenon of social activity as personal formation, which is internally determined by individual needs, value orientations, volitional characteristics of the person and is externally manifested in the qualitative transformation of society and personality, making the person socially oriented. The development of social activity among young people helps to form their humanistic values and contributes to the qualitative restructuring of society, brings positive changes in the psychosocial environment, and, as a result, social well-being.

2. The factors of social activity are: updating generally accepted value orientations that form a prosocial public position; active involvement of students in individual study; positive image of student self-government; being a full member of a student group; awareness of one's own needs and interests; formed social abilities; desire for self-realization; humanistic values; the formation of such features and qualities as: determination, independence, initiative, altruism, objectivity. Such understanding of the psychological factors of social activity has a system-level view and integrates preexisting ideas that are mostly limited in explaining the phenomenon of social activity to only one of its components.

3. The most expressed components in the structure of social activity are those manifested personal qualities, which are determined by internal needs and value attitude to social activity. The predictors that positively influence the social activity are: social (interpersonal) needs; the need for recognition; the need for self-expression.

4. The favorable factors of social activity of student youth are: comprehensive ideas about social activity and its factors; their psychological attitudes towards the value of social activity; formed social abilities; feeling like a full member of the student group; ability to take initiative in the social sphere; the desire for self-realization, self-knowledge, self-creation, self-regulation; sense of personal value; awareness of the positive resources available and opportunities for their actualization; self-belief; positive personal experience, etc. The factors that slow down students' social activity are: contradiction of social and moral ideals, wrong profession, despair in others, despair in social ideals, attitudes that make a person inflexible to changing conditions, absence or weakened sense of social responsibility.

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# SOCIAL ACTIVITY

*Summary*

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**Methods of the research:** We used the standardized psychodiagnostic tests to investigate the personal factors of social activity in accordance with our model: morphological test of vital values (Sopov & Karpushina, 2001) – *value component*; test-questionnaire to measure affiliation motivation (Magomed-Eminov, 1988); methodology "Diagnosis of the Degree of Basic Needs Satisfaction" (Raygorodsky, 2001) – *motivational component*; locus of control technique (Xenophon, 1999) – *emotional & volitional component*; methodology "Diagnosis of the Level of Reflexivity Development" (Karpov, 2003) and the author's questionnaire: "Studying the Level and Features of Cognitive and Activity Components of Students' Social Activity" (Bazilenko, 2014) – *cognitive & reflexive, activity components*. For statistical analysis of the obtained data, the following methods of mathematical statistics were used: factor and regression analysis. The obtained empirical data were processed using the statistical software package SPSS 21.0 for Windows.

This article states that the factors of social activity are: updating generally accepted value orientations that form a prosocial public position; active involvement of students in individual study; positive image of student self-government; being a full member of a student group; awareness of one's own needs and interests; formed social abilities; desire for self-realization; humanistic values; the formation of such features and qualities as: determination, independence, initiative, altruism, objectivity. Such understanding of the psychological factors of social activity has a system-level view and integrates preexisting ideas that are mostly limited in explaining the phenomenon of social activity to only one of its components.

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