

HEALTH FACTORS AND SELF-PRESERVATION BEHAVIOUR OF YOUNG PEOPLE: THE RESULTS OF THE STUDENTS' SURVEY IN YEKATERINBURG (RUSSIA)

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Abstract

The complexity of health determine the relevance of the studying its patterns. We need to estimate the economic consequences of health dynamics for justifying the most effective government strategies for the sustainable development. Healthy lifestyle and self-preservation behaviour are the crucial to save and improve population health. Russian youth (16-30 years old) have the death causes structure significantly different from the one of whole population. Believed the external causes being of behavioural nature, the article presents the results of a survey aimed to determine the relationship between the lifestyle of students and their subjective assessment of their own health, taking into account the social and demographic characteristics of the respondents. The results of the research are: (1) we found the most common problems of youth's health and self-preservation behaviour; (2) we confirm that the value orientations of young people are closely related to economic dynamics and socio-cultural attitudes. These conclusions are important to refine demographic forecasts, improve the effectiveness of strategies and programs for the social and economic development of Russia and its regions.

Key words: health, youth, self-preservation, behaviour, survey

JEL Code: J13, I12

Introduction

The negative economic and demographic trends of Russian development in the 1990s had a destructive impact on the demographic dynamics, especially on the number of young people. As a result, the population aged 15-29 years in 2019 in Russia amounted to only 23.5 million people decreased by 8.4 million people (or 26.3%) comparing with 2000. Two crucial factors determined such a decline: a deep drop in the birth rate in the 1990s and a high mortality rate at young ages. The least is associated with the psychological peculiarities and special life values of the youth because the young people are more passionate, less stress-resistant, more risky than elder people are. As a result, the external causes predominate among all death causes of youth.

According to Russian statistics of 2019, 2.8 thousand people died from injuries after road accidents (road accidents), 2.6 thousand and 0.7 thousand people died due to suicides and murders respectively; and also they died because of alcohol consumption (0.77 thousand people) and drugs (0.75 thousand people). Thus, the number of deaths aged 15-29 years in 2019 was 24 thousand people, 75% of whom were men. Nevertheless, last years there is such a positive trend in Russia as a decrease of youth mortality. The reduction in mortality is almost 4 times compared to 2000 contributed the age groups of 15-19 years and 20-24 years mainly. It should be noted that in comparison with 2000, violent deaths are actively decreasing: homicides decreased by 12 times and suicides by 5 times.

The decrease in mortality among young people is associated with the improving of life quality in Russia during the 2000s. Also the government developed a special policy to increase the fertility potential, to propagate a healthy lifestyle and to support the activities of young people. Thus, the Russian youth of 2000s have a high level of social, economic and political engagement being very different from the generation of the 1980-90s. The leading life values and goal of today's young people are personal pragmatism and individual success, rather than collective success, a high level of well-being and life quality. Thus, being healthy becomes prestigious. Based on trend named above, the purpose of the study is to determine the leading factors of youth's lifestyle influencing their perception of own health taking into account the demographic and social characteristics of the respondents.

1 Theory background

The theoretical frame of researching the youth's health is a concept of self-preserving behavior developed in Russia in the 1980s (Antonov, 1986; Antonov, 1988). It justifies the economic, social and psychological behavioural motives to be the most important to preserve human health and life. The different forms of self-preservation behavior create a conscious behavior about peoples' own health and life.

The sociological, psychological, pedagogical, and socio-psychological studies discuss the issues of developing a healthy lifestyle among young people and creating social ideas about a healthy lifestyle in general. The recent empirical results demonstrate a contradictory dynamics: on the one hand, the importance of health is increasing, on the other hand, self-preservation activities are of a fragmentary mode and differs greatly from one social group to another (Filonenko, Nikulina, Patrakov, Kovtun, 2018).

Many scientists focus their researches on a wide range of the factors determining the self-preservation behavior of the youth population. For example, based on a sense of the social and material order, a concept of well-being in the world believes a healthy lifestyle to be the most important factor developing the physical state, psychological health and social well-being of the younger generation (Tapia-Serrano, Jorge *et al* , 2021; Caluzzi, MacLean *et al*, 2021). Also such markers of ontological security as constancy, routine, and control positively affects the well-being of young people (Giddens,1991). The social environment and the ability to build the positive interpersonal relationships have a significant impact on health, thus, it contributes to improved mental health and self-awareness (Henwood, Redline *et al*, 2018).

The students at the University of Huelva (Spain) were employed to detect the patterns of freetime and self-estimation of health (Andres-Villas, Diaz-Milanes *et al*, 2020). The researchers found that the passive mode of leisure was the most popular and the cultural one was the least popular. Also they eliminated a significant gender gap about sport as a preferable leisure and perceived health status, thus, the men had "technoactive" mode of freetime. The results should be taken into account developing the university policies related to health promotion or prevention of risky behavior.

In 2013-2014 Russian researchers survey the students' attitudes to health at Lomonosov Moscow State University and the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (Puzanova, & Tertyshnikova, 2017). This study showed the critical physical development of the younger generation. The main health problems of students were the harmful habits (alcohol, drugs, smoking), untimely nutrition, lack of sleep, lack of physical activity, etc. Thus, the study provide a fairly complete presentation of the factors affected the student health.

Family is a key generator of self-preservation behavior of the young people. From this point of view the life values were employed to investigate the patterns of youth's self-preservation behaviour. Based on the Rokich method to eliminate the life goals and values, the researches found seven patterns of self-preservation behavior including the contradictory ones such as a physical body worship and indifference to one's own health (Shayakeimetova, Sadretdinova *et al*, 2020).

Thus, the youth's health is closely related to the patterns of self-preservation behaviour and life values of young people. The survey of the students is believed to highlight the main factors of lifestyle developing a positive perception of their own health.

2 Data and Methods

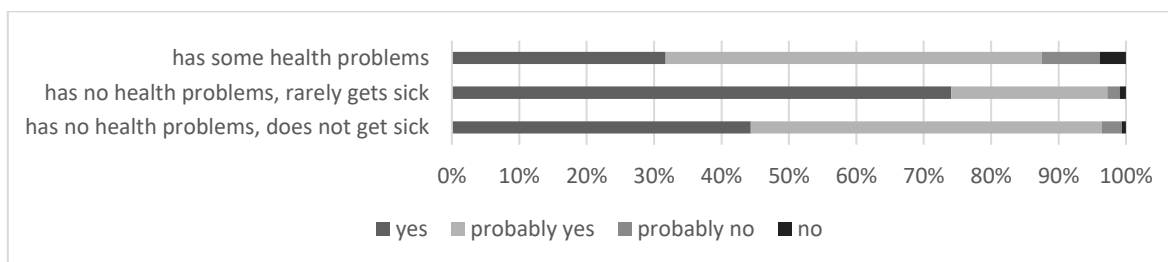
The survey was conducted at the leading universities of Yekaterinburg, Russia in 2018 year. The random selection covered conducted 537 students of major Yekaterinburg universities in 2018, and 88% of participants were 17-24 years old, 33% of respondents are men and 67% are women. 56% of respondents have studying as main activity, and another 44% combine studying and working.

The questionnaire included 18 questions of closed and semi-closed type due to assess the social and demographic characteristics of a respondent, to express an attitude to health, and to determine the value of self-preservation behavior. The survey results were processed by the software “Vortex” due to its possibility to count the coefficient and distributions under the special sociological procedures.

3 Results and Discussion

The survey is aimed to demonstrate how Russian students feel about their health and what behavior mode they prefer. Assessing own health, 58.3% of respondents noted its good state, 20.4% of respondents noted that they sometimes get sick, but this is rare, 21.3 % of respondents have health problems (Fig. 1). It is worth noting that women indicate existing problems more often than men do (16.6% and 4.7% respectively).

Fig 1: The answers to the question "Does your health depend on you?", % of those who rated their health.



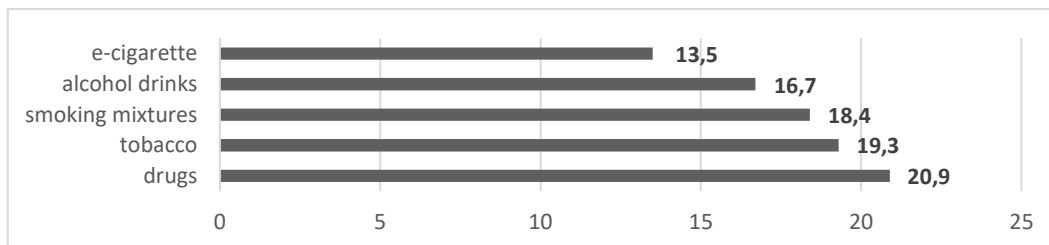
The Kramer coefficient is 0.216 for the two-dimensional distribution ($\alpha=0.000$)

In addition, the young people tend to demonstrate the high importance of self-preservation behavior: more than 90% of respondents believe that health depends on them. Moreover, the higher the respondents' responsibility for their own health, the better the assessment of health is.

The youth is believed to have risky behavior under alcohol and drugs influence. It results in population losses due to a high level of suicidal states, injuries of road accidents, fights and

murders. The survey partially confirms the awareness of such a risk, and Fig. 2 displays how the respondents ranked the health risk factors.

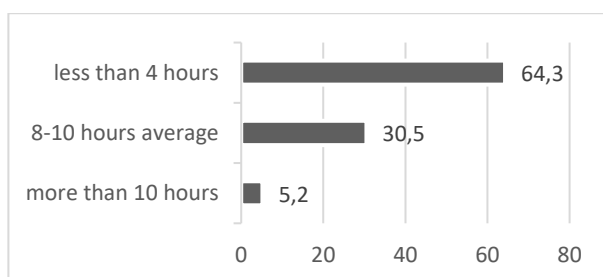
Fig. 2: The answers to the question “Do you consider it is harmful to your health?”, % of answers.



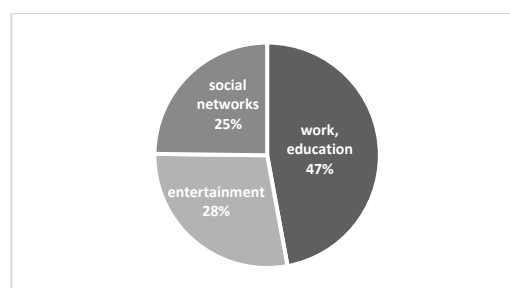
Drugs take the first place with 20.9% of all responses, smoking tobacco and smoking mixtures are in the second and third places – 19.3 and 18.4%, respectively. Despite the alcoholic beverages being destructive for health, only 16.7% respondents claims its harm. In addition, the youth do not recognize the damage of energy drinks and smoking of electronic cigarettes (11.3% and 13.5% respectively) likely due to their power to overcome stress and emotional tension.

The excessive use of digital technology is an important destroyer of health at currnt age. Prolonged using a computer leads to such chronic diseases as disorder of the eyes and nervous system, scoliosis and other diseases. According to medicine reccomendations, the harmless time of computer using is no more than 3-4 hours a day for students. The Fig. 3a shows that the students do not put themselves at such a risk: 64% of respondents spend no more than 4 hours a day at the computer. But 30.2% of respondents spend 8-10 hours a day at a computer an average and another 5.2% do more than 10 hours a day, which affects the youth’s health negatively. At the same time, 47% of respondents said that the main purpose of using a computer is work and learning, 28% for entertainment, and 25% for communicating in social networks (Fig. 3b). So using a computer is a requierment more then a want.

Fig. 3: The answers to the questions about using a computer, % of answers.



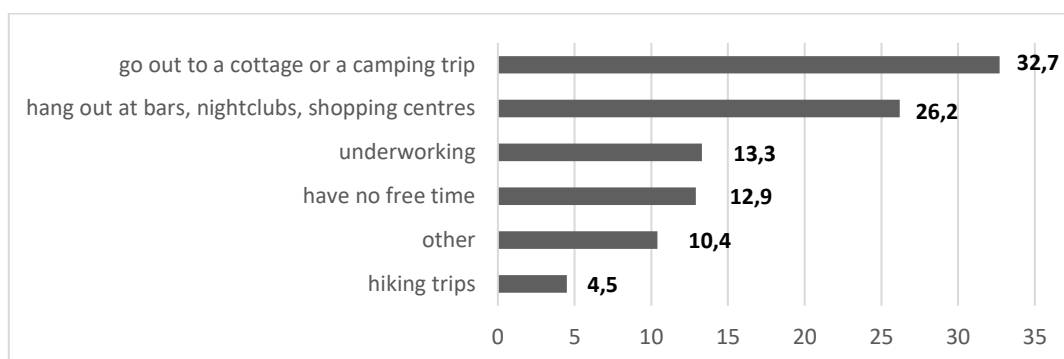
a) “How much time do you spend using a computer?”



b) “What for do you use a computer?”

The quality of free time is an important factor in of the population health due to its recovering or destroying power. Fig. 4 displays that only 37.2% of the respondents spend their free time on camping or hiking trips, trips, thereby restoring their vitality and health. The rest of the respondents spend their time in nightclubs, bars, and shopping centers (26.2%), having a kind of leasure. It's sorrowfully that more then a quater respondents do not employ the recovering power of leasure because of earning money (13.3%) or having no free time (12.9%).

Fig. 4: The answers to the question “How do you spend your free time”, % of answers.



Thus, the survey showed that the prevailing life values of modern Russian youth are ranked as follows: self-realization in society (26.8%), family values (24.5%) and personal health (16.1%). This indicates the respondents believe the health being important to construct a high life quality along with its other components. Such social and economic factors as the environment quality, the availability of healthcare and sports equipment, and the well-being also contribute greatly to improve the health. All these findings should to determine the priorities of state and regional social policy.

Conclusion

The paper presents a piece of researching how the Russian students in a large city perceive their own health. The survey results showed that young people have become more careful and attentive to their health and lifestyle, use less alcohol and drugs, and pay more attention to their physical status. Thus they should have a self-preservation mode of behaviour.

At the same time, the our study revealed a contradiction between the high value of health the youth declared and the underdevelopment of everyday practices aimed to save and and strength the health. The results obtained allow to conclude that it is necessary to form motivational attitudes of self-preservation behavior among Russian youth as one of the most important ways of implementating the state policy to protect the public health in general.

Thus, the results of our study once again confirm the importance of both behavioral and economic factors to develop a healthy lifestyle of young people. Using the research findings can contribute greatly both to the develop the health-saving programs and to implement some effective measures to form the healthy behavior of young people, as well as the employ the positive technologies of the youth's self-preservation.

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