SOCIAL ISSUES | Vol.3, Special Issue, 2025
2nd International Conference on Social Work & Social Research-2025, pp.78-83
https://doi.org/10.30546/SI.2025.3.2.4038

CHANGES IN VALUES AND LIFE ORIENTATIONS OF YOUTH IN AZERBAIJAN

Rafail Hasanov*

Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan

Abstract
The transformation of values and life orientations of Azerbaijani youth is an important component of the sociology of post-Soviet youth. The relationship between "fathers" and "children" is important in any society. In modern Azerbaijan, this is influenced to a certain extent by the closed nature of the country and the slowness of political, economic and socio-cultural changes, along with the Soviet legacy. Young people experience the influence of all processes taking place in society.

Keywords
Changes in values, life orientations, youth, culture.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to identify and understand the main life values that are guidelines for the young generation in Azerbaijan, as well as to understand the antinomy of values associated with the combination of various opposing values.

For researchers of modern youth, such issues as the analysis of social differentiation, well-being and life attitudes are relevant. This situation is largely due to the level of income and property stratification of people in the modern period.

Before studying the problem, let us make a historical excursion to the problem of youth. Young people, as a special social group of society, stand out in the late 17th - early 18th centuries. This period was associated with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Thus, the development of factories and manufactories - industrialization in general led to the process of complication of production and in this regard, the need for vocational training outside the family. In traditional society, a teenager was considered an adult when he began to work. In other words, there was a transition from childhood to adulthood and young people were not singled out as a special social group. During the period of industrialization and urbanization, the social institution of education (for example, vocational schools and universities) developed powerfully. It focused on extracurricular education: representatives of this group broke away from their families, received an education and mastered new professions at various levels. However, the problem was that they did not gain complete independence. On this basis, they did not have the right to consider themselves adults. Hence, the transitional nature of their position: they were no longer children, but they were not yet considered adults. It is this group that is typically considered young people from a sociological perspective.

*Corresponding Author: Rafail Hasanov, e-mail: has_rm62@yahoo.com

2. Youth as a sociological phenomenon

Today, the concept of “youth” is widely used and applied in scientific research, although there is no generally accepted concept of this social group as an object of study and research. Different interpretations of this term depend on the methods of study and the researcher's affiliation with various sciences - sociology, psychology, political science, jurisprudence, etc.

The term “youth” in everyday speech is used as a definition of a particular group of people, where the emphasis is often placed on age. However, this concept indicates not only biological and temporal, but also psychological and social characteristics of an individual.

Azerbaijani youth today is a specific component of Azerbaijani society the number of youth in 2024 was 22.7 percent of the total population of Azerbaijan (https://report.az/ru/socialnaya-zashhita/v-gfsz-proizvedeny-novye-naznacheniya/) and a significant subject of social change and a huge innovative force. Youth is a social group whose interests and cultural life differ from the interests of representatives of other age groups. Young people are actively interested in religion and fashion, painting and computers, sports and music. Heterogeneity is one of the features of youth culture. This is expressed in their search for ways of self-expression in life and some subculture in particular.

3. Theoretical foundations of the problem

According to the German sociologist Karl Mannheim, youth is neither inherently progressive nor conservative, but rather a social group ready for any undertaking. It should be especially noted that the use of the resource potential of youth depends on society. In our opinion, this resource approach to youth is the most promising in modern sociology of youth. However, in modern scientific literature, in addition to this, there are also many approaches to the study of youth problems, which include stratification, psychophysiological, role, subcultural, conflict and others. Each of the approaches we have named captures the features of studying the phenomenon of youth within specific scientific disciplines and their corresponding scientific contexts.

The study of value orientations is a relatively recent development. Harvard University professors Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck developed value orientation theory in 1961, which proposes that all people, everywhere and throughout history, must overcome several problems (universal dilemmas) to survive. The choices vary from culture to culture. Strodtbeck and Kluckhohn’s universal dilemmas are: (a) Does the culture live in harmony with nature and the environment or does it want to dominate it? (According to the study, in Azerbaijan, there is a desire for harmony with nature); (b) Is the culture focused on the past, present or future? (In Azerbaijan, it is a focus on the present); (c) Is it a task-oriented culture or a relationship-oriented culture? (In Azerbaijan, it is a relationship-oriented culture. The fact is that in this culture, informal relationships - acquaintances, “pull”, nepotism, etc. are still of great importance; (d) Is the culture of “doing” or “being”? (In Azerbaijan, it is a culture of “being”, i.e., it prefers to adapt to reality rather than change it); (e) Individualistic or collectivist? (In Azerbaijan, it is a collectivist culture, which is also combined with an individualistic culture); (f) The concept of physical space: is it more personal or public? If we keep in mind that personal space is an area that a person perceives as private property, as an extension of his personality and public space is “the arena of people's actions performed by them in front

of each other" (H. Arendt), then public space is characteristic of Azerbaijan; (g) Human nature: are people good or bad by nature? (In Azerbaijan, the traditional tendency prevails that human nature is good).

The most intensive and methodologically sound direction of research into value concepts can be considered the studies conducted in the late 60s-70s of the 20th century in the USA by Rokeach, as well as in other countries, based on the method of direct ranking of values developed by him. Thus, the American psychologist Milton Rokeach developed a method of value orientations, dividing values into two types: (1) terminal/final (values-goals) (Ryndina, 2021) and (2) instrumental (values-means). At the same time, he noted that the origins of individual values are reflected in social institutions and can also be traced in all social phenomena (Rokeach, 1973).

The results of another study by Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede showed the following: the culture of society has a direct impact on the individual values of individuals. His theory proposed six cultural dimensions by which socio-cultural values can be analyzed: 1) individualism-collectivism; 2) uncertainty avoidance; 3) power distance index; 4) masculinity; 5) long-term orientation and finally, 6) acceptance and self-restraint. Finally, another fundamental approach to the study of value orientations in this article is the theory of basic human values, proposed by the Israeli researcher Sh. Schwartz in 2012. According to his theory, all value orientations are divided into social and individual. At the same time, if we take into account that both the values and the behavior of its citizens are the needs of the individual, which directly depend on the mentality of a particular society, then they are influenced by industry and historical heritage. In particular, if we talk about industrial influence, in developing countries where the agricultural sector is larger than the industrial sector, people tend to adhere to traditional values, while the population of developed countries with a more developed industrial sector prefers secular-rational values. As for historical heritage, the situation in countries with different religions looks different. Thus, Confucian societies have had a relatively secular worldview for many centuries, which continues today. Communist countries have also succeeded in this. However, the situation looks different in historically Catholic countries. They are distinguished by a strong resistance to secularization, which continues today.

Speaking about the empirical and theoretical contribution to the study of the problem of youth values, it is necessary to mention the largest comparative international project on the study of values, the World Value Survey, which regularly researches value models characteristic of the population of individual countries and regions of the world.

4. An Empirical Study of the Problems of the Youth of Azerbaijan

In this part of the article, we will conduct a secondary analysis of the data from two studies. The first study was conducted by the South Caucasus Office of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) of Germany in 2023 under the title "Youth Studies: The Voice of the Azerbaijani Youth - Attitudes, Values and Prospects for the Future". The above-mentioned study used a survey method. The other study was conducted by the Russian scientist I. Trozuk was with the financial support of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the initiative of the Swiss Development Academy. Since the end of 2004, for several years, Russian researchers have been implementing the project "Youth of the Caucasus: Between the Past and the Future". Within the framework of the project, five visiting seminars were held in the republics of the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia. Here, the

author uses an in-depth analysis of the respondents' responses. In this article, we used the responses that are the focus of our research.

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation survey data show that many respondents complain that their generation is rather infantile and believe that their problems should be solved by their parents and relatives. The Foundation's representatives believe that this situation is a legacy of Soviet paternalism: "Since the state performed the functions of the division of labor among young people, their parents were confident that they would be provided with work. The collapse of the Soviet system did not eliminate the expectation of guiding influence, but the parents themselves became the subject of its provision". However, in our opinion, there are other reasons for this. In particular, the country's closeness to Western influence, to a certain extent, the slowness of economic reforms and problems associated with the systemic transition to new political-economic and socio-cultural relations. In general, young people report that they get along well with their parents (87%) and only a small proportion report that they often argue with them (2%). Only 5% report living with friends or other relatives and less than 1% live alone (https://southcaucasus.fes.de/).

According to the survey, family values and attributes associated with personal success are widely accepted by Azerbaijani youth. For example, 82% of respondents attach greater importance to marriage, 77% to having children, 86% to being faithful to a partner and 86% to independence. According to the survey results, the most important values for Azerbaijani youth are personal dignity (35%), social prestige (19%) and material well-being (14%). Altruism was also frequently mentioned among moral values (14%), while values such as tolerance (3%) and solidarity (1%) were relatively marginalized (https://southcaucasus.fes.de/).

Another problem is the difficulties in finding employment for young people, which directly affects the change in the values of young people. According to Trozuk, this is explained, on the one hand, by the inflated requirements for the salaries of university graduates and on the other hand, by the reluctance of employers to hire specialists without work experience and their speculations around the concept of a probationary period, which would allow them to use students and university graduates as free labor. Let us turn to another study devoted to the sociological study of youth in Azerbaijan by Trozuk. As noted in the study, one of the respondents to the study notes: "...Basically, our youth goes to the oil sector and foreign companies, most of them are English-speaking youth, the construction market in Baku is very developed, labor is needed, engineers, this is the second contingent that is needed now. The third contingent is certain specialties, for example, PR managers. There is also a fourth state sector, where there is a constant rotation of personnel. In principle, if you have acquaintances or certain people, I don't know, all doors are open for you in government agencies. If there is no such person, then you will have to do everything yourself. I am sure that you will be able to find a job on your own. Here is an example of my brother: when I quit a year ago, I changed jobs three times a year, but now everything is fine, it works". Another respondent notes: "As for our local labor market, in principle, young specialists are not attracted to normal work. I am an economist and will not work in a mechanical workshop. But for normal work, experience is needed. You come and they require work experience from you. And when a student or a young specialist gains experience? Students are not hired because they cannot work full-time. There is another problem here: according to the law, an internship should last three months, but I know from personal experience that banks require an internship of at least six months and do not guarantee that you will be hired for

this position. That is, students work as unpaid workers and the turnover is high". As in the education sector, there are certain employment norms in the labor market, which means that the main guarantee of quick employment is the presence of high-level patrons or inclusion in the necessary network structure of social relations. Young people in Azerbaijan believe that the most important factors in finding a job are the level of education (81%), acquaintances and relatives (65%), family wealth (64%) and past experience (62%). This shows that, along with meritocratic factors, non-meritocratic factors also play an important role in getting a job in Azerbaijan (Trozuk, 2007).

The next issue that is in the center of attention of the named researchers is their activity in politics or participation in civil events or initiatives. When it comes to issues of democracy and governance, exactly half of Azerbaijani youth believe that this is the best way to govern the country. However, about a third of respondents are against this idea. If we talk about the position of youth in the ideological camp, then more than a third of young people (36%) put themselves in the center, 32% of them do not have a clear position on ideological self-assessment. In general, only a few respondents identify themselves with left or right political ideology. Most young people (36%) see themselves in the middle of a 10-point scale. 32% have not decided on an ideological platform. According to surveys, the views of young people on Europe are ambiguous. Firstly, a quarter of them consider Azerbaijan a European country. Most young people have a positive attitude towards Europe: 45% of respondents say that "there is a rule of law here" and a third "consider Europe the richest and most prosperous region". However, opinions on Europe are far from unambiguous: about 22% of respondents perceive it as "a place with aggressive and cold people" and 24% as "a place where morals have fallen and traditional values have been lost" (https://southcaucasus.fes.de/).

Caucasian youth do not believe that the essence of youth problems has changed: "Youth problems have always existed, regardless of today or tomorrow and at the same time they are a little different, because time is becoming less and less and the pace of life is increasing". Accordingly, the main self-identification turns into an understanding of one's socio-demographic position in the structure of the dominant society.

Complex social phenomena, the heterogeneity of political and economic processes affect the change in social ideals and values. The priorities that previously seemed unshakable are replaced by others that determine today's life realities. A new spectrum of value orientations arises, accompanied by the destruction of old ideals, traditions and the formation of a different type of personality.

Thus, Azerbaijani youth defines its nature as extremely "paradoxical", since its mentality combines opposite features - lack of collectivism and the ability to work in a team; self-criticism and the "Napoleon" complex; high potential for adaptation to any changes in the surrounding world and commitment to traditional models of behavior, sometimes bordering on inadequate behavior; Rational calculation of immediate benefits and irrational fatalism in making fateful decisions - it is in this paradox that they see and feel their "strength and endless possibilities for development" (Trozuk, 2007).

We agree with the opinion that modern youth of post-Soviet countries and even Azerbaijan, can be divided into different social types based on their life aspirations:

- "Enterprising" people planning to succeed in business and wealth,
- "Maximalists" are confident that they will succeed in almost all spheres of life,
- "Hard workers" counting on a good job,
- "Family people" whose main aspiration is to create a strong family,
- "Hedonists" counting on a life full of pleasure and

• "Careerists" believing that they will achieve everything, but only at the cost of such efforts that it will not allow them to have much free time (Jafarov & Imamaliyev, 2012).

At the same time, these models of life aspirations are influenced by the characteristics of the social environment in which the youth is formed. New priorities in the system of values, interests and social norms of young people will subsequently be reflected in their consciousness and then in their behavior, activities and ultimately, in their social well-being.

5. Conclusion

Thus, any social group or community is based on a special central idea inherent only to it. If this concept is destroyed or undermined, the community and civilization are doomed to radical modification. As soon as the spiritual and cultural foundations begin to weaken, we can talk about the beginning of their completion. The cultural boundaries of the unification of individuals, communities, ethnic groups, etc. not only create conditions for satisfying material needs and ensuring personal security, but also bring a certain order to life, establish moral principles, norms, customs, canons, forms of behavior, etc. Given this diversity, individuals coexisting in a single socio-cultural field feel the need for common, unshakable values, rules, guidelines and norms.

There is a direct connection between the changes taking place in society and the value system. The system of value orientations is not given once and for all: with a change in living conditions and the individual himself, new values emerge and sometimes they are completely or partially re-evaluated.

References

https://report.az/ru/socialnaya-zashhita/v-gfsz-proizvedeny-novye-naznacheniya/
https://southcaucasus.fes.de/

Jafarov, A.M., Imamaliyev, E.B. (2012). *The Role of Youth in the Public Life of Azerbaijan*. St. Petersburg-Baku: Secretariat of the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, 100. (In Azerbaijan).

Farini, F., Scollan, A. (2025). Solving the Paradox: The Social Semantics of Children's Right of Self-Determination. *Socium, 2*(1), 5-23.

Rokeach, M. (1973). *The Nature of Human Values*. Free Press, 438.

Ryndina, A.S. (2021). Large-scale values research: Opportunities and limitations. *Theory and Practice of Social Development*, 6, 63-69. (In Russian). https://doi.org/10.24158/tipor.2021.6.9

Trozuk, I.V. (2007). Is it easy to be young on Caucasus? *RUDN Bulletin, Sociology Series, 1*(11), 45-59.