

**THE PROTEST ACTIVITY OF RUSSIAN YOUTH: THE TENTH YEARS OF THE 21ST CENTURY (BASED ON EMPIRICAL RESEARCH)**

***A ATIVIDADE DE PROTESTO DA JUVENTUDE RUSSA: OS DÉCIMOS ANOS DO SÉCULO XXI (COM BASE EM PESQUISAS EMPÍRICAS)***

***LA ACTIVIDAD DE PROTESTA DE LA JUVENTUD RUSA: LOS DÉCIMOS AÑOS DEL SIGLO XXI (BASADO EN INVESTIGACIONES EMPÍRICAS)***

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**ABSTRACT:** In the present era of evolution, language holds an essential place in the value system of any country. In globalization, there is an interaction on between various nations in politics, science, culture, economics, which results in meaningful changes in national languages and cultures. The present study is based on an empirical study carried out by the authors at the Moscow State University of Technology and Management named after K.G. Razumovsky (PKU), an analysis of the effect of English language on youth (students) in the 2010s. The conclusion is made about the transformation of the youth's English learning skills and attitudes in the digital society. This present paper shows that beneficial (creative) forms of the effect of English language on Russian youth can assist in forming a productive and functioning culture of communication and interaction between the young people and others, especially in the educational spheres.

**KEYWORDS:** Language. Cultures. English language. English learning skills.

**RESUMO:** Na era atual de evolução, a linguagem ocupa um lugar essencial no sistema de valores de qualquer país. Na globalização, há uma interação entre várias nações na política, ciência, cultura, economia, o que resulta em mudanças significativas nas línguas e culturas nacionais. O presente estudo é baseado em um estudo empírico realizado pelos autores da Universidade Estadual de Tecnologia e Administração de Moscou em homenagem a K.G. Razumovsky (PKU), uma análise do efeito da língua inglesa sobre os jovens (estudantes) na década de 2010. A conclusão é feita sobre a transformação das habilidades e atitudes de aprendizagem de inglês dos jovens na sociedade digital. O presente artigo mostra que formas benéficas (criativas) do efeito da língua inglesa sobre a juventude russa podem auxiliar na formação de uma cultura produtiva e funcional de comunicação e interação entre os jovens e os outros, especialmente nas esferas educacionais.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Idioma. Culturas. Língua inglesa. Habilidades de aprendizagem de inglês.

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**RESUMEN:** *En la era actual de evolución, el idioma ocupa un lugar esencial en el sistema de valores de cualquier país. En la globalización, hay una interacción entre varias naciones en política, ciencia, cultura, economía, lo que resulta en cambios significativos en los idiomas y culturas nacionales. El presente estudio se basa en un estudio empírico realizado por los autores de la Universidad Estatal de Tecnología y Gestión de Moscú que lleva el nombre de K.G. Razumovsky (PKU), un análisis del efecto del idioma inglés en los jóvenes (estudiantes) en la década de 2010. Se llega a la conclusión sobre la transformación de las habilidades y actitudes de aprendizaje del inglés de los jóvenes en la sociedad digital. Este artículo muestra que las formas beneficiosas (creativas) del efecto del idioma inglés en los jóvenes rusos pueden ayudar a formar una cultura de comunicación e interacción productiva y funcional entre los jóvenes y otros, especialmente en las esferas educativas.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Idioma. Culturas. Idioma inglés. Habilidades de aprendizaje del inglés.*

## Introduction

Forms of youth activity in the modern world are changing rapidly and dramatically. The tenths of the 21st century (the new horizontal mass media - the Internet, mobile phones, as well as color revolutions, massive anti-globalist and environmental protests around the world; the pandemic of the Covid 19 virus that unfolded in 2020 with its yet unforeseen social consequences) are forcing a fresh look at the essence of youth activism. In Russia, the surge period in 2010-2012 was replaced by a relative plateau, a decline in protest sentiment in 2014-2016; a wave of anti-corruption rallies in the spring of 2017 was followed by a new recession (ARALOVA, 2019; SZYDŁOWSKI, 2019; ŠTEFKO *et al.*, 2019; ALAJMI, 2019). It is already obvious that the transition of virtually all of Russia, Europe, the United States to digital mode under the announced quarantine in February-April 2020 will create new accents and greatly modify the entire repertoire of youth protests.

We proceed from the fundamental difference between protest activity and civil activism. Civic activism implies “informed and targeted participation of citizens in socio-political life in order to preserve, understand and extend their social, political, as well as economic interests” (TROFIMOVA, 2015).

The study’s main is to improve the format of youth activism within the framework of a conventional, dialogue culture in its positive (creative) forms, and at the same time to clarify the circumstances in which those forms can thrive and boast themselves, stopping the probability of youth’s natural protest.

## Literature Review

The authorities are undoubtedly interested in the civic activity of young people, that is, in the formation of a generation of socially, economically and politically responsible citizens who can vividly respond to the problems of society. Young people have the right to express their opinion during protests. All of us, and above all young people, should spend energy on processes that lead to creation. When people express their point of view during protests, we believe that they have the right to do so. Sometimes this leads to a positive result because it shakes the authorities.

- The main thing that distinguishes civic activism from protest activity, or protest (our term is auth.) Is, first of all, that a protest can separately create political discourse and plan, proposing a new language and alternative communication tools (PETUKHOV, 2014). A protest is a method of imposing power - “shaking power” - in the concerns of civil society.

- Protest for young people is natural and, in fact, is a way of embedding new generations in society through the denial of adult values. Young people aged 14–25 years are especially keenly aware of the injustice of the social system and express their dissatisfaction with the help of various mechanisms: legal or illegal, radical or moderate, negative (destructive) or positive (constructive).

- Note that in order to understand youth as a subject of protest moods, one should turn to the riskological concept of youth. The conclusion of this concept is the provision on the connection between risk and the uncertainty of the social status of youth with the emergence of extremist forms of protest behavior (CHUPROV 2009; PRODANOVA *et al.*, 2019; 2020). To a certain extent, protest behavior is characteristic of young people by virtue of deprivation - a keen sense of society’s imperfection, characteristic of its excessive claims to others and oneself, which are catalyzed by the inability to satisfy claims. Social uncertainty and loss of meaning are the main factors that contribute to the realization of the protest potential, both in positive and negative manifestations. A new form of collective phobia is developing more and more clearly before our eyes, which is developing among some youth and transforming into protest or emigrant moods, namely, “fear of the future”.

- It seems important to study and analyze the main types of youth protest activity in the tenths of the XXI century:

- manifestation of one's own civil position in digital (virtual) or real (street) format;
- membership in political parties or public organizations, voting in elections, participation in groups of activists, participation in specific actions, flash mobs, concerts, volunteer activities, charity, creating own content on the network, signing petitions, likes, reposts etc.

Youth protest is distinguished by heightened emotionality. The study's problem field involves an examination of the principal triggers of sensations - in other words, issues, incidents, themes, facts that work as signs that arouse the transfer of an interest in emotions, and emotions to actions (POLTARYKHIN; IVANOVA; IVANOV, 2020; IZARD, 2009).

It is shown that the modern young man, including the student, is less important political activators, and more - non-political: environmental, social, value-ethical. At the same time, engagement in beneficial sorts of activism prevent the general tendency of youth protest (VU, 2019; AKHTARIEVA; IBRAGIMOVA; TARASOVA 2019; KIREEV; ZHUNDIBAYEVA; AKTANOVA, 2019; GAPSALAMOV *et al.*, 2020).

In foreign political science studies, the topic of civic activism has undergone a certain evolution. The theme of the rebellious generation, the main one for the late 1960s, was already replaced in the 1980s by studies of civic activism as democratic participation. In the 2010s Researchers almost completely switched to the phenomenon of civic activism in the digital environment, which is most characteristic of young Internet audiences (J. Cohen, E. Schmidt, M. Xenox, A. Vromen *et al.*). So, the sociologist Ariadne Vromen (Australia) writes about the need to consider the processes of individualization of politics and political actions in the modern era, including digital forms of citizen involvement. "The ubiquity of social networks in the daily lives of citizens contributes to the development of digital citizenship" (VROMEN, 2017; PAVLYSHYN *et al.*, 2019).

Russian researchers currently operate in various categories, reflecting the diversity of forms and directions of civic activity: "civic participation", "network civic activism", "civic activism", "civic infrastructures" (BRODOVSKAYA, 2020).

The need to distinguish between the potential for participation in various forms of grassroots protest activism forced domestic researchers to look for ways to differentiate and classify young audiences. So, N. N. Sedova identifies groups of "activists", "sympathizers" and "estranged" (SEDOVA, 2014).

A. Yu. Dombrowskaya in her study identifies the following clusters of Russian youth by the nature of the manifestation of the protest potential. The first cluster: "leaders"

(approximately 5%) are characterized by their readiness to lead and ideologically accompany civil and political protests. The second cluster: “activists” (7.0%), the right hand of leaders, are distinguished by the ability to organizationally support civil and political actions. Third: “those involved” (37.0%), who are characterized by the attitude toward external observation of the country's political and social life. Despite the name, those “involved” are only slightly involved in activity practices. And finally, the fourth cluster - “spectators”, in fact, absenteeists (50.8%) occasionally demonstrate a passive interest in the civil and political agenda of the state (DOMBROWSKAYA, 2020; TSVETKOVA *et al.*, 2019; POLTARYKHIN, 2020; AJINA, 2019; KUZMIN *et al.*, 2020; MAGSUMOV, 2019; AKIM *et al.*, 2019; KUDRYAVTSEVA *et al.*, 2020).

Thus, involvement in civic participation and in various forms of protest activism is neither a constant number nor an all-encompassing mode of behavior for young Russians. The level of engagement ranges from active participants acting on a regular basis, to groups and individuals with little or no interest in demonstrating protest. Between these poles, resource layers are located that can either remain indefinitely in an uninterested state of lazy activity with a smartphone in their hands, or they can be set in motion under the influence of emotional activators - something that hurts a living thing - be it a real event or a response to friends behavior in online communities.

To understand the “natural” nature of youth protest, the concept of relative deprivation is important, explaining “why people rebel” in that when correlating an ideal and an existing situation, a subjective feeling of dissatisfaction arises and strengthens in relation to one’s present, which is given to different objects: parents, state, power, bosses, “enemies”. The deprivation subject is involved in a special kind of protest action, striving to eliminate barriers to realize original anticipations. The concept of relative deprivation was developed by Garr (2005).

## **Research Methodology**

The authors in this study relied upon a collection of methodological strategies and analysis techniques: a conceptual strategy that commences with the expansion of a research concept and incorporates its fundamental characteristics; the behaviorist strategy is revealed in the research of protest, activism as well as other sorts of youth behavior as the effects of subjects that separately define their life situation and approach; the socio-cultural strategy concentrates upon the growth of a form of youth activism within the framework

of a general, dialogue culture, considering the socio-cultural and ethical-value nature of triggers of behavior; a network strategy intended to understand the fundamental constructs of the digital era and digital communications as a brand-new social presence.

The writers applied the discursive analysis method to show the dependency of protest activism upon quickly evolving circumstances. The research merges the youth protest's theoretical analysis as an extraordinary social event and the consequences of an empirical study carried in the 2019/20 academic year amongst students of the Moscow State University of Technology and Management K.G. Razumovsky (First Cossack University) (Moscow) and its branches. The method of data collection is an individual questionnaire in the area of educational frameworks of named universities. The study was carried anonymously. Processing of data: the preliminary outcomes were inserted into the Excel program and prepared in a standard form.

## Result

To study the correlation of the forms of political activity of student youth and the options for participation levels, to describe the rate of student content with Russian politics and assess the willingness of student participation in different forms of protest activity, an empirical study was conducted in the 2019/20 academic year - a sociological survey among students of Moscow State Technical University named after K.G. Razumovsky (PKU).

The study design included the following measurable features:

- attitude to events in the political, economic life of Russia;
- degree of political activity;
- incentives for student youth participating or not participating in politics;
- attitude to politics and satisfaction level with the policy of the Russian Federation;
- approach to pressing Russian society problems;
- the attitude of student youth to demonstrations and protests against the policies of the prevailing authorities;
- willingness of student participation in various protest activities' forms.

It should be noted that in the conditions of the youth lumpenization dynamics, the ground remains for the deterioration of social well-being and growth of social tension in the youth environment, and this should be considered as one of the prerequisites for the formation of protest. The conditions for the occurrence of deprivation as a mismatch

between the increased social expectations of young people and the real opportunities for their realization continue to remain, which means that conditions for the intensification and actualization of social actions remain (SYCHEVA *et al.*, 2019; HUSNUTDINOV *et al.*, 2019; GABIDULLINA *et al.*, 2019).

In this situation, the transformation of deprivation into a street rally activity is likely. According to the Center for Economic and Political Reforms, in 2013, only a quarter of young people in Russia at that time were interested in politics. On the contrary, the massive anti-corruption rallies held on March 26, 2017 in 82 cities of Russia showed that their audience is “getting younger”: according to various observers, there were much more students and even teenage high school students at rallies than at similar events in previous years. A new protest wave gave rise to a hypothesis about the emergence of a fundamentally new “youth protest” in Russia (SEDOVA, 2014).

However, in a society of digital communications, other forms of discontent, which are mostly non-political in nature, are much more often realized.

**Table 1** – Number of Students (as of January 2020) at the University, Structure and Sample Size of the Study

№	City, educational institution / structural unit	Level of education	Number of students	Minimum sample	Sample size
1	MOSCOW:		6075	361	365
	SAITP	Higher education	1140		
	Ggt	Higher education	1342		
	BIRCH	Higher education	810		
	TMiPP	Higher education	1620		
	EMIP	Higher education	1163		
2	BRANCHES:		5871	361	370
	Kaliningrad	Secondary vocational education	258		
	Meleuz	Higher education + Secondary vocational education	1830		
		Higher education	1743		
		Secondary vocational education	87		
	Rostov-on-Don	Higher education	1476		
	Penza	BO + Secondary vocational education	829		
		Higher education	779		
		Secondary vocational education	50		
	Omsk	Higher education + Secondary vocational education	1478		
		Higher education	530		
		Secondary vocational education	948		

Source: Data from “K.G. Moscow State University of Technology and Management Razumovsky (First Cossack University)”

Manifestations of youth protest in modern conditions are increasingly acquiring a network structure of interaction. Among the new forms of protest movement are game types (flash mobs), with virtual methods of mobilizing, gathering participants and implementing active actions.

Under these conditions, ideas about the carriers of social action change: the definition of an activist is blurry, the criteria for the degree of involvement in collective actions are unclear. Now it is less important whether a person is a member of a trade union or party, whether he is a strong media character or opinion leader. Certain activators - events, facts, stories that have spread on the network - can change the usual mode of behavior, shake socially passive citizens until recently, and put them in a mode of “soft” protest (likes, comments, petitions, fundraising for charity, network flash mobs). Such “soft” protest may be the desire of young people to surround themselves with meanings: to preserve human rights, make the world a better place to live, and protect animals and nature (POLTARYKHIN, 2020).

Particular attention should be drawn to the thin line separating political protest and political extremism as the most severe manifestation of protest.

An empirical study was conducted to study the willingness of student youth to take part in several kinds of protest activities and the correlation of forms of political activity and options for participation levels, the results of which are presented below.

## Discussion

In the course of the survey, firstly, the natural protest potential of MSUTU students was revealed and the students’ readiness to participate in various forms of protest activity was diagnosed, which were arranged according to the principle - conditionally - of increasing the “degree of protest” from the mildest to extremist:

- voting against all or based on protest;
- signing of collective protest appeals, petitions;
- thematic concerts, exhibitions, performances, installations, flash mobs;
- permitted protests: rallies, demonstrations, pickets;
- open criticism of the authorities in the media, the Internet; agitation against the current government;
- strikes;



- unauthorized protests (rallies, demonstrations, pickets);
- road blocking, occupation of buildings;
- change of power through mass non-violent protest, peacefully;
- rebellion (violent spontaneous protests against the government);
- rebellion (planned mass protests against the existing government with the aim of overthrowing it).

Analyzing the distribution profile of assessments (percentage of willingness to take part in various forms of protest activity), we can state that the most acceptable forms of protest activity in the representation of student youth are: a) the signing of collective protest appeals and petitions (when the degree of personal participation is eroded) and b) thematic concerts, exhibitions, performances, installations, flash mobs. It is with respect to these forms of activity that respondents expressed their maximum willingness to participate.

Thus, nearly 16% of participants are “surely ready” to sign collective demonstration requests and petitions, and roughly 18.2% are “surely ready” to participate in thematic performances, shows, concerts. The whole percentage of people, to differing levels, enthusiastic about joining the signing of collective protest appeals and petitions is 30.8%; the entire rate of individuals prepared to engage in thematic shows, demonstrations, concerts, installations, and flash mobs to differing rates is close to 47.1%. Nevertheless, the respondents' evaluations of those two kinds of activity are defined by a minimum percentage of the option of the answer “categorically not ready to participate” (about 26%).

This study showed that about 70% of respondents are categorically not ready to participate in the two extreme forms of protest activity (rebellions).

Secondly, the authors make the readiness of students to participate in the protest movement dependent on the presence of pressing problems of society, causing deprivation as a discrepancy in the consciousness of the individual between the desired and the actual state of things. It is significant that actualization is noted at the stage at which it is still possible to correct something and make adjustments that allow solving the social problem or weaken its severity. This is the creative effect of protest activism.

Thus, the protest activity of students should be considered not only as a negative, destructive process that violates stability in social and political life, but also as actualization of a serious problem that has matured in society. Involvement in positive forms of activism stops the natural potential of youth protest.

A sociological survey showed which problems of today's Russia cause the greatest emotional response among students:

- problems in the economy (crisis, low living standards, technological lag);
- problems in the social sphere (weakening of the education function as a social elevator, low scholarships, non-payment of salaries, poverty etc.);
- security problems (crime, terrorist attacks etc.);
- environmental problems (protection of nature, preservation of a safe environment for life);
- problems in the legal sphere (corruption, infringement of rights etc.);
- problems in law enforcement agencies (bullying in the army, police arbitrariness etc.);
- problems in the political sphere (crisis of power, miscalculations of politicians);
- problems in the national and religious sphere (protection of one's nation etc.);
- problems of their city (poor development, roads, medicine etc.).

The degree of preparedness for protests in this regard is a kind of index of the subjective significance of each of the issues assessed, which is extremely crucial when determining by the governing bodies the priorities of the socio-economic policy of the Russian Federation at this stage and in the near future. In the first rank in significance (the highest percentage of respondents who, to differing rates, are prepared to take part in protests in connection with this issues) were issues in the social sphere (non-payment of salaries, scholarships etc.). It is precisely in connection with problems in the social sphere that 61.5% of respondents are willing to take part in demonstrations with different levels of severity.

Further, the problems in the overall rating list are as follows:

- problems in the legal sphere (corruption, infringement of rights etc.) - 56%,
- local problems of "their city" (poor development, roads, medicine etc.) - 55.5%,
- environmental problems (environmental protection, preservation of a safe environment for life) - 53.5%,
- problems in the economic sphere (crisis, low standard of living) - 50.4%;
- security problems (crime, terrorist attacks etc.) - 49.6%.

An empirical analysis showed that the protest consciousness of student youth demonstrates a commitment to democratic values and the rule of law. The interviewed students believe that market transformations and high technologies will positively affect

the socio-economic development of Russia. Respondents express their commitment to the traditional basic values of Russian culture.

The obtained results provide a basis for the conclusion about the positive opportunities of youth protest activism in the framework of the conventional, dialogue culture, in its creative forms.

## **Results**

Based on a theoretical analysis of the protest behavior of student youth in modern Russia and a sociological study conducted at Moscow State University of Technology and Management K. G. Razumovsky (PKU), we can draw the following conclusions.

1. Student youth is the most prepared and educated part of the modern young generation. Youth protest activity is reproduced by society due to objective factors and the presence of subjective characteristics of the personal development of youth as a social phenomenon (natural protest). In the 2010s, the conditions for the occurrence of deprivation as a mismatch between the increased social expectations of young people and the real possibilities for their realization continue to remain, which means that the conditions for the intensification and actualization of social actions remain.

2. The protest activity of young Russians at present should be seen as a consequence of a change in the civilizational paradigm, global crisis, and the most important problems of Russian society. At the same time, it must be considered not only as a negative destructive process that violates stability in social and political life, but also as an actualization of serious problems that have matured in society. It is significant that such actualization, identified during the protest activity, is “grabbed” and “extracted” at the stage at which it is still possible to fix something and make adjustments to solve the social problem or at least ease its severity.

3. The protest mood of students can form a new discourse. Young people set the socio-political agenda related both to claims against the authorities and to value, general sense orientations. The protest consciousness of students demonstrates adherence to democratic values and the rule of law, while not abandoning the traditional basic values of Russian culture. Young people believe that market transformations and high technologies can positively affect the socio-economic development of Russia. However, it is now obvious that the main driver of the growth of protest moods is the deterioration of the social well-being of young people, a negative perception of the future against the backdrop of the

unresolved critical social problems.

4. The protest moods of students are mostly characterized by their commitment to soft forms of protest activity (signing of collective protest appeals and petitions, thematic concerts, exhibitions, performances, installations, flash mobs etc.). Whereas harsh, extremist forms (violent spontaneous protests against the government - riots), participation in planned mass protests against the existing government with the aim of overthrowing it (uprisings) is not accepted by the majority of respondents.

5. The development of a format of youth activism within the framework of conventional culture provides for freedom of expression; involving students in various forms of designing their future; expanding the repertoire of creative activity, subject to initiative and independence; the gradual involvement in the format of creative activity of a significant layer of “spectators” and absenteeism; affirmation of the value altruistic foundations of life.

6. In most cases, the protesting student youth does not trust the authorities, therefore, their weak interaction with officials is noted. This reduces the likelihood of a functional solution to the problem through negotiation and incites discontent.

7. In the protest activity of students, network communications are playing an increasingly important role. Young online users are almost all involved in the digital consensus process.

8. The survey data and their analysis indicate the need to strengthen the national youth policy and provide additional opportunities for Russian students to realize their interests and rights. When developing youth policy, state structures need to consider the opinion of young people about the desirable role of the state as a social regulator. It is also necessary to consider the identified factors and forms of protest behavior of students.

At present, a new ideological and political identity of the protesting youth is being formed, strategies for collective action are being developed, including on digital platforms. Whether this will lead to the fact that this community will become a full-fledged political entity and begin to influence political processes is not yet clear. In this situation, it is imperative to monitor values, expectations, moods; put forward and support conventional positive forms of student activity.

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### How to reference this article

WITDARMONO, G. The protest activity of Russian youth: The tenth years of the 21st century (based on empirical research). **Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional**, Araraquara, v. 25, n. esp. 6, p. 3834-3849, Dec. 2021. e-ISSN:1519-9029. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22633/rpge.v25iesp.6.16141>

**Submitted:** 18/04/2021

**Required revisions:** 27/08/2021

**Approved:** 29/11/2021

**Published:** 30/12/2021

**Processing and publication by the Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.**  
Correction, formatting, standardization and translation.

