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ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES AND SPECIFIC FEATURES OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION OF BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS

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ABSTRACT

The article presents the results of empirical research on the Russian mentality. A regional sampling (inhabitants of Tomsk region of the Russian Federation) provided the basis for investigating the attitude towards paternalism as concerning the governmental authorities and describing the psychological profiles of its two empirical types, such as "agreement paternalism" and "obedience paternalism". The interconnections of the paternalistic attitude, the Russian self-identity structure, and certain social-demographic characteristics have been analysed. The article describes specific features of the paternalistic attitude and the self-identity structure of the participants of a business support programme in the Russian Federation.

JEL CLASSIFICATION & KEYWORDS

■ I20 ■ I23 ■ Paternalism ■ Attitude towards authorities ■ Mentality ■ Socio-psychological attitudes ■ Identity ■ Entrepreneurs

INTRODUCTION

Business support and development programmes that are implemented in the Russian Federation are considered to be an efficient tool to trigger the social locomotion mechanism and to stimulate the activity progress of the population [11]. The business project competition "The First Step"[1] may serve as one of the examples. The result of the competition is expected to be the revitalization of the small business sector of the economy due to helping unemployed people or job-seekers register a small business enterprise. Each participant of the program who has decided to create and register their own small business faces the task of becoming familiar with a whole new scope of activity that is the complete process of the implementation of a business idea: from its concept and goal setting to the production and realisation of the product or the service (unlike a hired employee who carries out predetermined tasks and fulfils definite functions). In its turn, the fulfilment of such tasks demands that participants not only raise the level of their self-organisation and be ready to changes, but also master the position of personal responsibility and a new self-identity. What are the basic axiological and pragmatic specific features of this group, i.e. people who have decided to acquire a business person status and have addressed the competition to get the governmental educational and financial support for the launching of their own business? Does this group differ from other social categories? Can these people be associated with the future development social layers? The answers to these questions, if found through studying the main specific features of the participants' self-identification and their attitude towards the governmental authorities, allow taking into consideration the particular social-psychological qualities of Russian entrepreneurs in their regional specific circumstances, and understanding the psychological difficulties that Russian entrepreneurs have to face. This knowledge is important from the point of view of evaluation of the development tendencies of the modern Russian society, and it provides an opportunity "for both governmental authorities and small businesses to have a more solid theoretical ground to work on the business activity development in Russia."

Attitudes towards the governmental authorities in the Russian mentality

Today, it is impossible to object to the notion that specific cultural features (the most important values, legal consciousness, social expectations, etc.) are vital factors in the development of the society. According to many Russian experts [1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 12, 14, 17], the Russian contemporary political situation has inherited, to a certain extent, the social-political characteristics traditional for our country, namely, the paternalistic attitude of the population and the actual paternalism of the government. Different studies which are devoted to the analysis of the influence of various aspects of culture on reforms held within the country are "dominated by the point of view, according to which traditional syndromes of characteristics of the Russian culture are widely spread." The basic list of these specific features may vary but only insignificantly. Practically all the authors recognize among them paternalism ("the governmental paternalism", "equalisation coupled with paternalism", and "the governmental-paternalistic complex") [4. 160]. This social and cultural characteristic is widely spread. It is stable to a certain extent and is connected with other cultural dimensions (collectivism, tolerance towards uncertainty, the national self-esteem, the safety and order values, etc.). G.G. Diligenskiy points out the core role of this feature in the Russian mentality and suggests that "the choice between the governmental-paternalistic and the market freedom which implies flexibility, initiative, and legitimate individualism is a choice which, maybe, is not fully conscious and is fuelled by both a rational interest and mythological perceptions, and which is virtually the most essential borderline dividing the Russian society." [6. 40]

Paternalism as a multidiscipline subject is investigated within the limits of sociology, philosophy, history, culture studies, and political science. Many studies are aimed nowadays at the interpretation of modern social consciousness processes and the revelation of the reasons of tense situations in the political sphere of the Russian society; these studies have a tendency to address the matter of basic existential grounds of the Russian political culture. Traditionally, the Russian political culture is interpreted as an archaic one, within which "old customs are repeated in every generation and are still relevant nowadays" (N. G. Scherbinina, A. S. Ahiezer, D. V. Gudimenko, Yu. S. Pivovarov, L. A. Ilyin, and others). N. G. Scherbinina claims in her work [16] that the archaic elements and archetypes transform from the subconsciousness not only as symbols, but also as the basic grounds for human motivations and recurrent impulses, and the stereotype-reflex behaviour. The characteristic features of the Russian political

[1] According to Order region № 42a by the administration of Tomsk, dated 06 March 2009 "On the small business project competition "The First Step" for unemployed people or jobseekers."

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consciousness are considered to be the mythologizing and the idealizing of authorities, the archaic feature of personification being “the state is the Leader, the Leader is the Power” (N. G. Scherbinina, K. G. Gadzhiev). Regarding paternalism as an archetype deeply rooted into the Russian mentality and as an indigenous Russian tradition, the researchers address the issue of the Russian peasant culture as its grounds. They note that in Russia, "the idea of authority, i.e. the traditional government, is loosely based on the image of Ancestry" (I. G. Yakovenko). Many contemporary research works provide strong evidence that, alongside with the process of the system of values and the political affiliation transformation, a definite image of the governmental authority and power still dominates the Russian mentality: "the people does not as much charge the authorities with some functions or other as entrusts it with its own fate" (G. G. Diligenskiy, E. B. Shestopal).

Interpreting paternalism as a social-psychological attitude towards the gevernmental authority, we have used the pattern suggested by E. Belinskaya and O. A. Tikhomandritskaya[2], which describes the following structural elements of paternalism:

1. Personification and mythologization of the authorities;
2. taking the responsibility off oneself and handing it over to the authorities;
3. wishing to be protected and taken care of by the authorities;
4. attitude to the law, reflected in rule scepticism [3].

The previous research works[3] allowed the analysis of the particularities of the paternalism attitude based on the regional sampling: the levels of direction, intensity, and expression, according to the four indicated scales. It has been concluded that the social-psychological, culturally integrated attitude towards paternalism as concerning the authorities is rooted into the modern Russian mentality and is revealed in certain denotational characteristics of the world view. The paternalism attitude is mainly characterized by the issues of imperative care on the part of the authorities, and also of the mythologization of the authorities: a tendency to overestimate their potential and to create the so-called halo of groundless hopes and ideas around the authorities.

The specific features of the interconnections and the functioning of the paternalistic attitude in the Russian mentality have been established by way of finding answers to the problem of differences in the level of expression of the given attitude and the meaningful features of its empirical types. Cluster analysis of the data allowed pointing out two empirical types of the paternalistic attitude shared by the respondents. The types were classified as "agreement paternalism" and "obedience paternalism". The respondents of the "agreement paternalism" cluster regard the authorities more rationally and understand that the authorities' potential is limited; these respondents display a greater responsibility and independence and realize the importance of abiding by the law on condition that the authorities abide by the law as well. The respondents of the "obedience paternalism" cluster noticeably display the expectation of a constant help from the authorities in the matter of solving both their vital and their personal problems. They hand the responsibility for their fate over to the authorities and attribute unrealistic potential to them. The respondents of the "obedience paternalism" cluster base their attitude on the traditional point of view at the law according to which the law is a product of the governmental will; it is the dictation of the authorities. That is why they are ready to acknowledge any rule issued by the government (even if it does not correspond to the current legal system). In the meanwhile, they often "relieve" the authorities of the responsibility against the law, convinced that the authorities should act according to consciousness and justice, and not according to the law. Table 1 summarizes and presents specific features of the clusters.

Table 1: Characteristics of the clusters according to paternalism scales

The paternalism scales	The "agreement paternalism" cluster	The "obedience paternalism" cluster
Wish to be taken care of	An expressed wish to be taken care of	A expressed wish to be taken care of
Mythologization of the authorities	Regard the authorities in a more realistic way	More inclined to mythologize the authorities, regard them in an unrealistic way, attribute with superpower and super-potential to them
Obscuration of responsibility	Less inclined to hand the responsibility for the situation in the country over to the authorities	Inclined to hand the responsibility over to the authorities
Attitude towards the law	More inclined to acknowledge the power of law and the equality of all people against the law	Give the priority in regulating the social life not to the law, but to other concepts or social structures, such as consciousness, the authorities, etc.

Source: own calculations

Thus, summarizing the characteristics of the clusters, we can state that the "agreement paternalism" cluster generally consists of respondents with a less expressed attitude towards paternalism as concerning the authorities, and the "obedience paternalism" cluster includes the respondents with a more expressed attitude.

The given research has also revealed interconnections between the attitude towards paternalism and such social-demographic characteristics as gender, age, the level of education, marriage status, and absence or presence of children. It has been found out that young people (below the age of 30) corresponded to the "low" paternalism cluster, and the older respondents (over the age of 30) corresponded to the "high" paternalism cluster, i.e. young people are less inclined to display the paternalistic attitude towards political authorities (with the exception of the wish to be taken care of which is expressed by all the groups of the respondents equally strongly).

Also, an interconnection has been revealed between the "obscuration of responsibility" scale of the "Paternalism" method and such characteristics as the marriage status and absence or presence of children. In comparison to single respondents, married respondents are more inclined to hand the responsibility for the situation in the country over to the authorities. The same correlation has been revealed for

[2] The «Paternalism» method has been developed by E. Belinskaya and O. A. Tikhomandritskaya within the limits of the project, implemented by the Social Education Centre of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in cooperation with “INO-Centre” using the funds of Ford Foundation.

[3] See: C. A. Litvina. Attitudes to paternalism as concerning the political power as transcommunicative entities, and their interconnection with the elements of the social world image in the mentality of the Russian: Master's thesis: 19.00.05, Tomsk, 2005. – 177 p.

respondents who have children and those who do not. The presence of children stimulates the enhancement of values according to the "obscuration of responsibility" scale. However, the analysis of the results above does not allow any straightforward conclusion that both of these criteria – marriage and the presence of children – stimulate the rise of the paternalistic tendencies since they are closely interconnected. Therefore, the question as to which of them actually determines the observed changes and which is just a co-current one is left open. Nevertheless, the dependence of paternalism as an attitude towards the authorities on such characteristics as marriage and the number of children demonstrates the situation that the tradition of regarding the government as a family and the head of the state as "the father" is still relevant. Consequently, the functions of a family are passed onto the government. The future is often regarded as uncertain, unstable, and sometimes dangerous, especially in the situations of swift, abrupt, and complicated, from the point of view of a person, social changes which are a dominating feature of the current state of Russia. An additional point is that the commercialization of life and reforming the vital spheres of life result in many problems, such as accommodation, education, job search, etc., becoming the responsibility of the citizens themselves, which is often regarded as a "difficult" and occasionally an "impossible" task. This factor seems to be the reason of the enhancement of demands to the government on the issue of sharing the responsibility for the consequences of the carried out changes and for the safety and well-being of citizens in Russia.

In its turn, the interdependence of the aforementioned attitude with the specific characteristics of the nowadays Russian people's self-identity has been investigated to reveal the specifics of functioning and the nature of the paternalistic attitude in the modern Russian mentality by means of the standardized technique by M. Kuhn "Who Am I?" (the structure of identity)) [7]. We were particularly interested in the following problems: firstly, whether there are any differences in the self-identification categories of the representatives of the paternalistic attitude in its various manifestations and, secondly, how often the respondents identify themselves with large social groups.

The analysis of the data showed that the most important features for self-characterization (and, respectively, the characterization of other people) are the universal qualities which characterize interpersonal relationships and describe a person through their integrity in close relationships with other people. Such formal signs as the status and the relation to some or other group (professional or social) have proved to constitute the least significant ones. The respondents of the "agreement paternalism" cluster have first and foremost identified themselves through humanistic characteristics, that is through the relationships with other people. The examples of such self-identifications are "indifference", "kindness, placability", "tenderness", "respect to other people", etc. Quite often, the respondents described themselves through their attitude towards labour ("hard-working", "ambitious", "diligent", etc). The least popular categories that served as the basis for self-identification were a negative attitude towards labour and the connection to large social groups. The "obedience paternalism" cluster has displayed a similar balance among the signs.

The answer to the question of how often the respondents identify themselves with large social groups, such as "the country", "the state", "the Russians", etc, confirms that these categories occupy one of the last places in the common hierarchy of the categories.

Some data extracted from the empirical observation of social attitudes which manifest within the groups of the participants of the business support programme[4] allow concluding that all the tendencies that were revealed in the earlier research displayed above are clearly seen here as well. The entrepreneurs-to-be share the paternalistic attitude: the average value according to the "wish to be taken care of"[5] scale (26.8 points) is close to the maximum value (35 points), which demonstrates that all the participants wish to be protected and taken care of by the government. The second most strongly expressed attitude in the sampling has turned out to be the attitude towards mythologizing the image of the authorities (24.9 points). The results by the "obscuration of responsibility" scale (the average value is 20.1 point) demonstrate the respondents' tendency to hand the responsibility for their own well-being over to the government and the authorities. These results show that the respondents (the participants of the programme) display the tendency to overestimate the potential of the authorities, as they are inclined to believe that the authorities must take care of the well-being of citizens and provide them with a certain social and financial stability. The consequences of such an attitude are the reduction in the desire of a personal fulfilment and the deformation of the common values of life ("full life", "spirituality", "creativity", etc) and its meaningfulness. Also, people who have a strongly expressed attitude towards paternalism are more inclined to perceive situations of uncertainty as anxious, unpleasant, and threatening [Op. cit.].

According to the "attitude towards the law" scale, the average value in the sampling (12.3 points) is close to the minimum (5 points). I.e. we can conclude that the respondents' position is a wish to qualify the law as the main regulator of social life.

The investigation of the social identity[6] of participants of the programme has revealed that the respondents first and foremost define the image of "I" through humanistic characteristics, such as being honest, patient, benevolent, etc., and also through the description of their family roles (father, wife, the head of the family, etc.).

Quite often the respondents describe themselves through their attitude to labour ("hard-working", "ambitious", "diligent", etc). The least popular categories that served as the basis for self-identification are, on the contrary, a negative attitude towards labour and the relation to large social groups[7] . The general results of the research allow suggesting that the respondents (the participants of the competition) do not connect their life to any significant social groups (professional, social, etc) and do not associate themselves with any social institutions. We have confirmed the research conclusions that state that "in the present

[4] The statistical sampling included 123 people, all of them the inhabitants of Tomsk region, men and women from 25 to 69 years old, who applied to participate in the business support programme (the business project competition "The First Step"). The data represented were received in 2010-2011.

[5] The value and the level of expression according to the four paternalism scales in the sampling have been compared using Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

[6] The method by M. Kuhn «Who Am I? Twenty sentences», adopted by G. U. Soldatova [13], has been used.

[7] The hierarchical levels have been defined as the result of the statistical analysis of the dependant variable pairs according to Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The average values of the scales of the same level are statistically equal according to Wilcoxon signed-rank test ($p>0.05$); the average values of the scales of different levels are statistically different ($p<0.05$).

circumstances people much more often point out their belonging to their "small motherland", not to the "big motherland", i.e. they identify themselves more with the local community than with the societal one. N.M. Lebedeva explains the reasons of such changes, stating that "in the conditions of transformation of the basic social categories system, people want to identify themselves with such groups the membership of which would let each of them solve the problem of conceptual certainty and would help to answer the question of "Who am I?" in the way that is most correspondent to the changed reality. Through searching for the answer to this question, a person actualizes not so much the basal need for respect, as the basal need for meaning and understanding. The sphere of their social identity covers only certain groups. Membership in these groups would allow them to solve the problem of conceptual certainty." [8, 48]. As research works show, such tendencies in the processes of self-identification do not neutralize but rather actualize the need and demand for social care [9].

Conclusion

The observed characteristics of the entrepreneurs-to-be who are participants of the competition allow revealing the socio-psychological factors which restrict the possibility for them to achieve success in business. Nowadays, the Russian and the foreign studies provide strong evidence that the success of an entrepreneur depends not only on the pragmatic project component (marketing, financial forecasting, planning skills, etc.), but also, to a great extent, on the person being eager to show initiative, to take the responsibility for the results, and to act even when there are no solid grounds to expect any success, and also on the person's ability to predict possible ways of the development of a situation and to elaborate respective courses of action, using his or her internal resources to solve the problems that may arise [17]. The wish to be taken care of and supported, the eagerness to hand the responsibility for risks over to the authorities, and the unrealistic expectations towards the government, all of which the respondents displayed, evidently contradict the requirements that an entrepreneur should meet. At the same time, summing up the data received from participants of a competition by means of the "Paternalism" method and correlating them to the results received earlier, we can conclude that the entrepreneurs-to-be demonstrate an attitude towards the governmental authority which can be classified as "agreement paternalism". Regarding this result from the point of view of evaluation of development tendencies in the modern Russian society, we can claim that, while preserving the perception of the governmental authority as a paternal authority, attitudes of nowadays Russians demonstrate a meaningful transformation of paternalism and show the transition from "obedience paternalism" to "agreement paternalism". We have revealed the tendency of people to share the responsibility for the situation in the country and to affirm the principles of everybody's equality before the law and the priority of the law in matters of regulating social life.

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