# Attitudess of Pragmatism in the System of Values of Modern Kazakh Youth: On the Results of Data of a Complex Sociological Research

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*Abstract*—**The research group on the basis of studies of attitudes and value orientations of youth compiled a conditional "portrait of a modern young man" with highlighting (emphasizing) his main characteristics in terms of defining his behavior, outlook on life and seeing himself through the prism of the categories of pragmatism. The article presents some fragments of the results of a comprehensive research on the problems of forming the ideas of pragmatism among college students of Karaganda region. The article is also includes live excerpts from focused group interviews. The research used the traditional methodology used in conducting focused group and in-depth interviews. The article based on the original data of a comprehensive research on the problems of forming values of pragmatism among young students of Karaganda region.**

*Keywords—pragmatism, rationality, youth, focused interview, group interview, qualitative methods*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The need of developing of pragmatic attitudes as the basis of the modern type of thinking signed as a problem Nursultan Nazarbayev in his article "Looking into the future: modernization of public consciousness". In particular, he writes: "The ability to live rationally, with an emphasis on achieving real goals, with an emphasis on education, a healthy lifestyle and professional success – this is pragmatism in behavior" [1] and this understanding, from his point of view, is the basis of the culture of rationality – "the only successful model in the modern world" [1].

"Kazakhstan society today deals issues related to the third phase of modernization, and in these conditions ever increasing relevance of pragmatic values" [2].

"Pragmatism is a certain attitude towards the world. It can be defined by the manifestation of such qualities as objectivity, restraint, patience, the ability gradually achieve the set goals [3]. Pragmatists know how to combine a critical attitude towards the world and oneself with a tolerance for a variety of opinions and approaches to solving certain problems...What values, as well as human qualities based on them, do we define as pragmatism? This is rationality, discretion, moderation, thrift, poise, discipline, responsibility [4; 5]. Pragmatists brought up on such values understand that there are no simple and final solutions for life's problems, that any opinion or way of solving a problem cannot be absolutized... The pragmatists do not absolutize any tradition or fashion ideas and concepts. The main thing for them is to follow common sense, critically analyze the facts and gradually achieve the set goals" [1].

Despite a rather ambivalent perception of the cultural studies of the concept of "pragmatism" [5; 6], in today's post-Soviet societies, has received increasing attention on the formation of rational thinking. The new model of identity,

based on positively pragmatic values, presupposing a high level of rationality of the applied models of behavior and realized life goals [5; 7], meets to the requirements of not only an individual person, but also society as a whole. This question is especially relevant in relation to the prospects of legitimizing these values in the systems of interaction of modern youth [7].

In accordance with the identified problem, the research group developed a program for conducting a comprehensive research of the attitudes of modern Kazakhstani youth in the context of the presence and prospects for the formation of their values of pragmatism [8].

As part of a comprehensive research it was conducted a questionnaire survey [9] of college students in Karaganda region to determine the level and nature of the formation of pragmatism values among respondents [8]. In parallel with the questionnaire survey, taking into account the collected primary empirical information, it was maked up a guide for conducting focus group research. This technique of combining quantitative (questionnaire survey) and qualitative (focus group survey) analyzes has long established itself as the most effective [10].

By the results of the survey [8] the research group received digital rates of the main indicators (basic systems of values and attitudes), which made it possible to draw up a primary picture of the structure of thinking of college students in the Karaganda region and determine whether modern students have sufficient prerequisites for the forming of positively pragmatic thinking [9].

Conducting a focus group research [10] made it possible to fill the general scheme of the respondents' basic values with specific semantic (often brightly emotionally colored) content and made it possible for a deeper analysis of existing value-oriented attitudes through the prism of their specific content (based on individual examples).

In addition, provided focus group research gave an additional information on the psycho-emotional characteristics of the respondents [11; 12].

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

As the basic method of the research was defined group focused interview [11], conducted in compliance with all procedures and considering the specific application of the method of qualitative analysis.

Focus group guide [11; 12] included three blocks of questions:

Block 1. Commitment to the basic values of society.

The purpose of the block: to determine the basic values of the focus group participants.

1. What is the main value for you, what is most important for you?

2. What do you mean, "To be a good person"? Are there people in your life that you think are good?

3. Is it important to you that you thought a good person?

4. How do you usually spend your free time?

5. How do you think, what in the first place, you need to focus on when you get married?

Block 2. Independence.

The purpose of the block: To determine the level of development of the ability and motivation to make independent decisions.

1. When making important decisions who do you rely on first?

2. Do you have to make independent decisions? How difficult is it for you?

3. What qualities do you think a responsible person has? Could you say that you are responsible?

Block 3. Ideas about the values of modern society.

The purpose of the block: To determine the level of development of rationality of thinking (ideas about the level of pragmatism in modern society).

1. What definition (characteristics) would you give to a modern society – characterize a modern society.

2. What do you think it takes to be successful in a modern society?

3. Do you believe that everyone can be successful in life?

4. What you need to do in order to achieve success in your own understanding?

5. What is the purpose of life? Do you think every person should have a purpose in life?

There was applied a target sample model without complying with the clear principles of statistical representativeness in the research [12; 13, pp.114-116]. The main parameters of quotas [12; 13, pp.119-122] were determined: the respondent's age, the respondent's place of residence, the respondent's place of study, and the respondent's gender. According to the sample, there were 12 focus groups of heterogeneous composition. The total sample size was 97 people between the ages of 16 and 19 years.

The research obtained qualitative data, which allowed to characterize the system of values of respondents without their quantitative measurement (quantitative indicators were obtained through a questionnaire survey) [8].

In order to comply with confidentiality [12; 14] requirements, respondents (participants), young men of all focus groups held within the framework of this article coded under the symbol "guy", and girls, respectively, under the symbol "girl". That allows track the gender-based difference in answers.

When evaluating the results of the answers, the following were taken into account: the age group of the respondents, the social status and position of their families, the place of their education and residence [13, pp.432-438; 15, pp.200-219].

## III. RESULTS

A. The questions of the first block of the focus group guide were for determining the basic values of the participants and for forming a general idea of the presence/absence of the foundations of pragmatic, rational thinking of them.

1. In the situation of a guided conversation, the respondents were more "free" in their choices and indicated along with the priorities of family values and health, money, which is, if not the main value, is rather important for the participants. Guys: "Money". Girls: "Family. Friends. Health. Take care of yourself".

In addition to that, there were called work, career and education.

Young men value friends and their hobbies, such as sports. Indicative in this regard is the degree of influence on them by sources of hobbies. In particular, they are influenced by coaches, their views on life are perceived as unconditional and absolute

The respondents' answers suggest that they have not yet thought about these questions. Their priorities, although they exist, are unconscious and therefore difficult for them in oral presentation.

The overall picture of the basic value preferences looks quite traditional for their age and context of socialization.

2. In our opinion, the answers of the participants to the question about the qualities of a good person are of great interest. Here, the opinions of the respondents can be conditionally divided into the concept of what is right and the fact that this is correct is not at all vital.

Calling such qualities as 'reliability", "responsibility", "honesty", "sincerity", "helpfulness", "kindness" teenagers believe that these qualities are now more harmful, they hinder to live. Girl: "They don't like good people". Girl: "Most often good people are led people. Because they agree with everyone in everything. Therefore, it is no longer relevant". Guy: "It's hard for a good person in our difficult time ..." Moderator: "Why is it difficult?" Guy: "Because all people are evil". Kindness is perceived as "ostentatious", the desire to be loved and considered good. Girl: "Most often it is ostentatious in our time".

Such a mismatch between value standards and the practice of their application is typical for modern societies and cultures, since the priority of goals and a rational approach to their implementation "devalues" the qualities that are irrational in the opinion of young people. This position is largely a consequence of youthful maximalism and the absence of the formed complexity of perception of reality (for a given age it is typical to divide everything into "white and black", without intermediate shades).

3. As examples of good people, participants mostly bring their parents and relatives. Girl: "Because they take care of us from birth. Provide us".

Not all focus group participants consider themselves a good people, because they tend to deceive, make fun of others.

Bad people also include those who are inclined to deceive, swear, betray

The participants also noted that now there are still a lot of good people, but more than average, "non-standout". This, in our opinion, is also a very interesting remark. The traditional for Soviet culture "to be like everyone else, not to stand out", characteristic of the majority of representatives of the older and middle generations, is apparently perceived as the most "safe", neutral variant of social communication. This does not mean that young people positively perceive this model of behavior. It is a simple statement of fact, but reasonable caution can border on an infantile perception of reality, which, unfortunately, is passed on to the new generation in the process of education.

4. Young people traditionally call walks and the Internet as the main forms of spending their free time. The Internet is combined with spending time on the street and with friends. Some of the participants described reading as the main pastime. Young people help their parents with housework; spend their time in circles and sections.

Some participants referred to the lack of free time, because they have to constantly deal with household chores (garden, farm).

It is noteworthy that only a few people indicated self-education as a form of spending free time.

Traditionally, the participants were keenly interested in the question of the criteria for choosing a future life partner. The main antagonism of opinions was due to gender differences. The boys, unlike the girls, although they called the creation of their own family in the future as a priority in the discussion of the first issue, were quite ironic about this issue and joked about the girls' desire to get married.

Girls, as the main criterion for choosing a future spouse, practically in chorus called the love and qualities of a good person (which, according to their own opinion, are not fashionable now). The girls answer in chorus: "for love, that would be a good person". In addition, the girls noted that their choice should be older, because at elder age, in their opinion, the boys are already know what they want from life and they are more intelligent and responsible.

The young men approached to this issue in more detail and, in addition to love, named such qualities as the ability to provide support, thrift, mutual understanding and moral stability.

There were also young men and women who believe that love is not the main thing, the main thing is mutual understanding, when people are interested in each other. Girl: "The most important thing is comfortable and interesting. Then it was not boring. And then love". Girl: "The most important thing is that even if you love each other, you always have something to talk about". Guy: "... so that the girl is not only a person for you, but also a friend".

This approach is less emotional, typical for a given age and subject matter, it is as close as possible to the criteria of positive rationality.

Also noteworthy is the lack of emphasis on the material viability of the future spouse, even when the moderator tries to set this trajectory in the course of the conversation. According to the participants, money cannot be the main criterion. If people love each other in the future they can do everything together, the girls believe. Girl: "You can achieve together". Girl: "There will be love, there will be everything". Young men, unlike the girls believe that it is necessary to look at the financial situation of the future wife.

B. The questions of the second block had an aim of determining the level of development of the ability and motivation to make independent decisions.

1. Almost everyone relies on their parents to make important decisions. This choice is not voluntary due to age, as the majority of respondents stressed that parents often make decisions themselves and insist on them.

Although their voice as an advisory one also takes place, their opinion is not always the main one in the making of decisions.

2. Most of the research participants never had, in their own opinion, to make important decisions. So the decision regarding the choice of the place of study and specialty, many of them do not consider important. At the same time, the majority of young men, unlike girls, made their own decisions about the place of study and future specialty. True, it should be noted here that the bulk of these choices were made under the influence of circumstances (near the home, it is easier to enroll, a scholarship). As for the girls, the parents made the decision for them. Some of young people consulted with friends and acquaintances.

In general, young people agreed with the assumption that they are not enough independent. However, they believe that their parents raised them like that, because they constantly decide for them and they are used to it.

3. From their point of view, an independent person who knows how to make decisions is a responsible person. Girl: "This is a person who is responsible for his actions and words". In addition, young people named such qualities as "punctuality", "decisiveness".

The participants also noted that an independent person is someone who is trusted. Apparently, it also meant responsibility. In this case, the direct question of whether they are independent, many of respondents kept silent, but almost all of them described themselves as the people responsible. Firstly, in their opinion, this is due to learning and social orders. In this case, meaning not responsibility for decisions and the result of the action but responsibility as an executive.

C. The aim of the questions of the third block of the research was to reveal the positions of the focus group participants regarding their contemporary society, the informal "rules" that it dictates and systems of relations and values. In addition, to understand how these attitudes determine the goals of modern young people, their future strategy of life. Are their expectations consistent with modern social standards and do they fit into the value categories of a pragmatic, positively rational approach to life?

In general, views of respondents on contemporary society are not overly optimistic. Young people believe that, despite the growth and development of various technologies and overall progress life become more difficult and that is bad. They believe that people become angrier, more indifferent than they were before. Girl: "People become angrier. Maybe because of a lack of work ... there is not enough money". Girl: "It used to be better anyway. As for the people".

Even in a comparative assessment with their coevals four years ago, they make a choice in a favor of what they think of the previous generation. Guy: "What were our coevals four years ago? They reasoned quite differently. They had other values". Guy: "Yes. Now everyone just wants to dress prettier and have a more fashionable phone. Nothing else matters".

According to teenagers, now it all comes down to money and "ostentatious" and this sets a high bar for demonstrating material well-being among their coevals.

However, they understand that objectively society is not standing still and it develops. Girl: "It's just that no one takes into account the fact that we are not standing still. You need to accept how young people think now". Simply, in the opinion of the participants, it is sometimes difficult to accept, as set higher standards, and it is difficult to match them. Guy: "There is development, but there is no way to accept this development".

Some of teenagers see high development as a boon only for a certain group of people. Guy: "This development is more for the higher ranks". It was raised a question about corruption and its impact on development opportunities for some and the absolute absence of such opportunities for others

Young men noted the absence of concrete prospects for themselves. Guy: "You look out the window: a fence and nothing else". Guy: "You're looking at it, but there's nothing behind the fence. Nowhere to go".

Having the desire and motivation to change something, most of young people do not know how to do it. Noteworthy is the real responsibility and rational approach of teens to the likely prospects. Moderator: "That is, you think that you have no opportunity to escape"? Guy: "Not at the moment". Guy: "Yes. Unpromising time actually. It was in this place, exactly at this time".

The girls were more loyal in their assessments. In their opinion, modern society is neither better nor worse than what it was. They are satisfied with their life and they do not seek to escape from it or radically change anything in it, unlike young men. Girl: "And so life is normal. Everyone is happy with everything".

2. The success of the majority of respondents associated with predictable financial independence. This is something that, in their opinion, people should strive.

As examples of successful people, some participants called their parents. However, none of them would like to repeat the success of their parents. Moderator: "So you will build your life after their example? Or in your own way?" Girl: "... no, a little, a little in my own way".

Teens could not gave any concrete examples of success that were a model for them.

3. Despite abstract ideas about the ideal of success and a pessimistic assessment of the prospects that modern society gives them, most of the respondents believe that it is possible to achieve success. Here we can suggest that the majority, having not defined their own vision of success when assessing the prospects for its achievement, were guided by their attitudes and values – family, love, average well-being, and not by the category of "money".

4. The participants again consider money to be the main tool for achieving success. That is, according to their logic: in order to get money you need money. Girl: "Money is the best friends". We think everything is a little deeper here. It is about social approval, recognition, status, prestige, the consequence of which may be money, but it may not be. The availability of money as a tool for obtaining all of this looks more specific in the context of the answers.

There are respondents who associate success with education and future profession, seeing in it prospects for growth. These are mostly girls.

The guys are very skeptical about the prospects for their future specialty. This indicates their approach to choosing a future specialty simply as a place of study for continuing education, but not real inclinations or calculated prospects.

Beyond money, the respondents as a tool for achieving success called such qualities like: "sociability", "purposefulness", "activity". Among the attributes they called "birth in the right place" and "presence of connections".

5. Despite the pessimistic attitude, almost all of respondents have a goal in life, or at least plans for it. In general, the word goal caused a tense reaction, apparently due to its peremptory significance and solidity, while a plan, this concept is less categorical and does not require such a strict commitment to execution. Guy: "Yes. We all have". This statement also testifies to the fact that, in the opinion of this and most other participants, every person has or should have a goal. The goals are different in scope, but everyone has them.

In general, students voiced standard pragmatic schemes - family, own home, work.

The goals and plans of the respondents have much in common in terms of the lack of specificity although they differ by their scope. There are also quite specific statements of the goals. Girl: "My goal is to finish a collection of poems". Guy: "A house in Poland, two red Porsches and more money".

Some of young people voiced a combination of goals with their general principle of attitude towards life.

Some of the participants declined to voice their goals and plans, considering the issue a personal one.

A large number of respondents do not have a goal, but hope to determine it in the future.

## IV. DISCUSSION

The respondents who took part in the qualitative stage of the research were divided into three categories:

A. the first can include respondents with a sufficiently high level of development of goal-oriented consciousness and rationality attitudes with more expressed pragmatism attitudes;

B. the second group "belong" respondents with an expressed eclecticism of attitudes;

C. the third group consisted with an intermediate position – teens with an inert type of thinking, which showed expressed passivity and took little part in the discussions.

According to the data obtained during the research, the respondents:

1. Demonstrate a commitment to the traditional values of society, which are questioning because of their age. Such eclecticism of consciousness does not contradict the rational outlook on life, and the opinions expressed testify to a rather "adult" conscious attitude towards oneself and reality. The apparent discrepancy between the declared social standards and their specific implementation is also associated with the lack of practical experience in their application and the assessments imposed on them by "significant others" – parents, teachers, coaches, friends;

2. Respondents divided the classical definition for our society a good man, but do not consider the quality of his inherent viable and popular in modern society. Such a mismatch between the value standards and practice their use is characteristic for modern societies and cultures, as the priority of goals and the rational approach to their implementation "devalues" irrational qualities according to youth. This attitude is largely a consequence of youthful maximalism and the lack of complexity formed perceptions of reality (for given age is typical to divide everything in "black and white", with no intermediate shades);

3. They consider the "average" (neither good, not bad) model of behavior to be the most typical for their contemporary society. This does not mean that young people are unambiguously positive about this model of behavior; but reasonable caution can border on an infantile perception of reality, which is passed to the new generation in the process of education;

4. The Internet and walking have traditionally been the main forms of spending free time;

5. In matters of starting a family they adhere to "romantic schemes" of love. Young men are more pragmatic about creating a family, considering it necessary for a future wife to be economical, material independence, loyalty and understanding;

6. Due to age and dependent position have not yet developed the ability to make independent decisions;

7. They associate independence with responsibility, but responsibility with diligence. In a more detailed analysis, they characterized themselves as insufficiently independent, but

responsible people. The young men have traditionally shown a greater tendency towards independence than the girls;

8. They are only partially dissatisfied with the fact that all decisions are made for them by their elders (mainly parents). This can indirectly perceive their reluctance and unwillingness to do it themselves;

9. They assess modern society quite pessimistically. They believe that, despite the success of development, reality sets too high bars and standards for success, the achievement of which depends heavily on your starting social status and the opportunities of your family;

10. Success, as the prospects for its achievement are measuring mostly by money. However, respondents high enough assess their prospects of success, it is due to their more specific understanding of success in relation to themselves, not only in the context of the general social standards;

11. They have practically no conscious pragmatic goals and concrete plans for their implementation.

## V. CONCLUSION

In general, college students of the Karaganda region demonstrated typical for their age an eclectic combination of basic assessment standards (probably the opinion of the older and middle generations) of modern society, its requirements, standards and criteria for success and their real opportunities and prospects. From the standpoint of this assumption, the approach of most focus group participants is can be assessed from the standpoint of rationality and pragmatism as quite realistic. Although, it is rather difficult to speak about the positivity of these pragmatic schemes, since the respondents demonstrated the presence of an infantile position regarding their future.

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