Problems and prospects of the Russian information society

Проблемы и перспективы становления российского информационного общества

Problemas y perspectivas de la sociedad de la información rusa

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Abstract

The information society, to which we have aspired and which we have been building, while being facilitative of extensive technological and economic growth, is also known to entail some social costs, like information inequality, information/psychological warfare, and information deprivation, which are causing declines in people's standard and quality of living, stimulating a social phenomenon such as poverty. The purpose of this empirical study is to explore the key features of poverty in the nation and the nation's administration potential for minimizing and preventing undesirable impacts from social transformations during the making of the information-type society. The study's empirical basis is grounded in the findings from a sociological study on one of the nation's northern regions, which involved interviews with at-risk (disadvantaged) families. The study's practical part includes a secondary analysis of data, based on comparing the findings from a body of fundamental sociological research on the issue. The study has helped identify a set of risk factors linked to social inequality and the formation of the culture and worldview of disadvantagedness by reference to the social and economic characteristics of a specific northern región.

Аннотация

Информационное общество, к которому мы стремились, и которое мы формировали, помимо повсеместного информационно-экономического развития влечет и социальные издержки: информационное неравенство, информационно-психологические войны, информационную депривацию, что становится причинами снижения качества и уровня жизни и стимулирует такой социальный феномен как бедность. Целью эмпирического исследования было изучение специфики бедности и управленческого потенциала, направленного на минимизацию и профилактику последствий социальных трансформаций в процессе становления общества информационного типа. Эмпирическая база исследования представлена результатами социологического исследования, проведенного в северном регионе, основным методом было интервьюирование семей риска (малообеспеченных семей). В практической части исследования был проведен вторичный анализ данных, сопоставление результатов фундаментальных социологических

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исследований по анализируемой проблематике. В результате исследования были выявлены факторы риска, способствующие формированию социального неравенства, культуры и мировоззрения малообеспеченности с учетом социальных и экономических аспектов северного региона.

Ключевые слова: бедность, качество жизни, информационное неравенство, информационно-психологические войны, информационная депривация, информационное общество, малообеспеченность, социальные трансформации.

Resumen

La sociedad de la información a la que aspiramos y que formamos, además de la información ubicua y el desarrollo económico, conlleva costos sociales: desigualdad de la información, información y guerras psicológicas, privación de la información, que provoca un deterioro en la calidad y el nivel de vida y estimula un fenómeno social como la pobreza. El objetivo de la investigación empírica fue estudiar los aspectos específicos de la pobreza y el potencial de gestión para minimizar y prevenir las consecuencias de las transformaciones sociales en el proceso de formación de una sociedad de tipo informativo. La base empírica de la investigación es presentada por los resultados de una investigación sociológica realizada en la región norte, el método principal fue entrevistar a las familias de riesgo (familias de bajos ingresos). En la parte práctica del estudio, se realizó un análisis secundario de los datos, comparando los resultados de la investigación sociológica fundamental sobre los temas que se están analizando. Como resultado del estudio, se identificaron factores de riesgo que contribuyen a la formación de la desigualdad social, la cultura y la cosmovisión de los bajos ingresos, teniendo en cuenta los aspectos sociales y económicos de la región norte.

Palabras clave: pobreza, calidad de vida, desigualdad de información, guerras de información y psicológicas, privación de información, sociedad de la información, pobreza, transformaciones sociales.

Introduction

The concept of the information society

One of the key aspects of globalization is the formation of the information society, which is leading to profound changes across the global information/communications space – the transformation of the communications channels of entire nations. From a civilizational perspective, the process of making of the information society, i.e. the era of information, is currently in the in the initial stages of its development. Lately, there have been numerous claims by philosophers, culturologists, sociologists, and psychologists regarding the ever-increasing challenges and perils posed by widespread computerization and informatization and their impact on the nature of man and sociocultural space (Seksenbaev, Sultanova, & Kisina, 2015, p. 191).

One of the prominent critics of the information society is American philosopher T. Roszak, who shares his key speculations on the possible risks threatening our civilization in his book 'The Cult of Information' (1978). To the scholar, one of the key issues in the ideology of an information civilization is the relationships among human thinking, people's intellectual activity, and processes taking place within computers (Roszak, 1981, p. 58). T. Roszak notes that, if the cult of information wins over those in charge of educating the young generation, the latter will not be capable, in the future, of resolving most of the social and ethical issues which may face our society in the last stage of the industrial revolution (Sultanova, 2005, p. 36). Without question, computers offer great potential for educating the young generation. Yet, we should not forget that information is just facts, sometimes useful and sometimes trivial, but facts

can never substitute for thought, so it will help to teach youth to approach the role and significance of information in a rational manner, without overstating it too much (Sultanova, 2009, p. 56).

A special role in destroying the foundations of the state and its sovereignty is played today by information/psychological warfare, which is aimed at destroying the nation's culture and its basic values and spiritual/production institutions representing society's principal strategic spheres – education, science, and religion.

In a survey conducted in 2012 by Eurasian Monitor and Global Market Insite (Zadorin & Shubina, 2006), loss of moral values and immorality led the way with Russian respondents as a response to the question 'Which challenges are you concerned about the most?' – 59% (Stepanyants, 2012, p. 3). 39% of Russians were found to be worried about the issue of loss of national originality and traditions (Zadorin, 2006, p. 91). It has been several years since the survey was conducted, and the situation has only become more acute against the backdrop of globalization processes. In the view of scholar A.V. Zakharov, increasingly there is a realization that many recessional phenomena within the global economy are of a non-economic nature. Today, leading scholars and experts exploring the causes of the economic crisis are increasingly talking about a crisis of ideas and value mindsets. Thus, issues of humanitarian knowledge and cultural policy are increasingly gaining in relevance from a practical standpoint. The global environment is, above all, the venue for the competition of ideas and the rivalry for world domination. Today, the way is led by nations dominating the ideological/intellectual sphere (Zakharov, 2015, p. 7).

The issues of cultural security

Research conducted over the last few years indicates that cultural security is an independent area and domain of scientific knowledge within the theory of national security. Scholars have formulated a new paradigm of security which is totally different from those propounded before (Prokhozhev, 2005, p. 13). Scholar S.V. Smulskii (Smulskii, 2009, p. 6) was the first to suggest analyzing within the theory of national security the issue of national interests, which should be predicated on national values and promoting them (Kikot'-Glukhodedova, 2015, p. 178). The focus was shifted not toward counteracting existing challenges but, rather, toward promoting national values. For the first time ever issues of security started to be viewed from the perspective

of the axiological approach and security started to be regarded as the absence of challenges to core values, while national interests started to develop based on national values under the influence of long-term trends in social development (Panarin, 2014, p. 136). Cultural security, as a soft power strategy that helps preserve Russia's state sovereignty and territorial integrity and consolidate its society, may well be entitled to a worthy place within the theory of security.

Information/psychological warfare may have a special effect on the nation's cultural system, as its disruptive impact is directed toward the psychology of groups, people's psyche, mind, and mentality, and culture's symbolic space, when, apart from undermining the credibility of the nation's current government and political parties and the state as a whole, there is the objective to cultivate an atmosphere of godlessness and immorality and foster a negative attitude toward the enemy's cultural heritage; manipulate the public consciousness and the political orientation of social groups within the nation's population with a view to fueling political tensions and causing chaos (Popov, 2003, p. 163). In the crosshairs are the nation's sustainable development and the prosperity of society and the state. Undermining national security starts with destroying society's core values and foundations. Therefore, as it was mentioned above, a priority area for ensuring Russia's national security is ensuring its cultural security. The latest research by philosophers, sociologists, and political scientists is pointing to culture's priority in cultivating a sustainable, comfortable living environment for people and their development.

Present-day Russian society is characterized by the growing role of the information environment, which incorporates the entire aggregate of various sources of information, infrastructure, entities concerned with gathering, putting together, distributing, and utilizing information, as well as the set of systems regulating social relations. Given that the role of information is increasingly growing across nearly all spheres of life in present-day society, there is a pressing need to analyze the degree of its penetration, as well as the degree of its impact with respect to processes (both positive and negative) taking place in society.

Today, Russia is undergoing changes that can radically transform social existence and cause social/economic transformations. Russia's present-day society, which is going through the

process of dispelling the nation's traditional, habitual, and entrenched stereotypes from the public consciousness, is lacking well-formed and universally accepted social interests. Research relates this to the nation's insufficiently developed communications systems, namely information ones, which is greatly affecting people's activity levels and the degree of their participation in political, economic, and social transformations taking place in society, signaling the need for a mechanism that would enable the effective management of social systems based on the use of information technology.

Russia has been active in integrating into the global information space. As the nation's own experience of managing the information society being relatively insignificant for now, its governing authorities are currently faced with the objective of reexamining and reconceptualizing most of the classic models of governance. In this regard, domestic researchers have been developing at the government level a set of special indicators of the efficiency of performance by public authorities. Fulfilling these performance indicators requires changing radically the nation's existing ways of managing its social systems (Zatuliveter, 2001, p. 43). The process of implementing these indicators in respect of particular social systems has been quite a painful one, as it has required of its participants profound reconceptualization and transformation of their individual path of development. However, implementing them has clearly signaled the need to put in place a single all-Russian system of monitoring based on indicators of the efficiency of managing social systems.

Social transformations

Social transformation as the process of structural change in the social state is construed by most researchers as a change to the entire social system, inclusive of all its components. To identify specific social groups, researchers have employed variables that would make it possible to identify a particular group most credibly based on a number of attributes. Thus, for instance, the intellectuals' group is identified based on the following attributes: education, qualifications, nature of work, and level of well-being (Lyshova, 2001, p. 71). To avoid overlaps among several groups identified based on different attributes, researchers have employed a set of special indicators to establish a relevant hierarchy, like being involved with a business, doing managerial work, doing physical or intellectual work, being employed within a specific social sector

(administration, industry, agriculture, commerce, social sphere, and services), one's education level, and one's qualifications. This way to identify the indicators is grounded in not only the intention to establish the social status of respondents but also determine the degree of their influence on transformation processes. Scholar T.I. Zaslavskaya's working hypothesis about Russian society's four major strata (upper, middle, basal (below the middle one), and lower) makes it possible to correlate them with specific elements of the establishment: 1) the upper layer with the nation's elites (economic and political), owners of large and medium-sized businesses, upper bureaucracy, military top brass, and executives of large enterprises; 2) the middle layer with owners of small businesses, managers, business staff members, and intellectuals; 3) the basal layer with semi-intellectuals, those employed in commerce and the service sector, high-level workers, and peasants; 4) the lower level with clerks, low-level workers, and lumpens. Researchers have established that neither the upper layer nor the bottom one may feature in surveys (Zaslavskaya, 2003, p. 214).

The above-mentioned factors linked to stratification do not appear today to be of a permanent nature (Lezhnina, 2010, p. 41). The dynamics of development and processes of globalization in today's world are increasingly boosting the impact of information on today's social systems. The role of information in society and the extent of its widespread informatization have grown so much that extrapolating the pace of this growth strongly suggests there are taking place some quite profound changes in the nature of social development. Scholar V.V. Mudrykh, in reference to the high level of development of information/computer technology, suggests we are witnessing the "formation of a real super-intellect". N.N. Moiseev claims that the collective intellect (collective mind) acts as a regulator of society. Further, there is a belief that enables those who support this view to suggest that eventually the laws of social development will be superseded by information laws, which will govern the self-regulation of social systems (Zaslavskaya, 1997, p. 9).

In this paper, the authors undertake to explore the issue of social/economic differentiation among the low-income portion of the population and provide a rationale for a set of measures of social support aimed at improving people's standard of living and reducing their poverty levels. In doing so, they provide an informative insight on the possible ways to overcome poverty in the

Russian town of Noyabrsk and on the changes taking place in the area at the moment.

As the object of this empirical sociological study, Noyabrsk is characterized by quite an extensive economic potential and a well-developed system of assistance for low-income citizens. Thus, Noyabrsk serves as a mini-model to rely on in conducting an empirical research study and determining relevant organizational/administrative mechanisms for overcoming poverty in a northern city.

Based on the strategy for modernizing Russia's system of public administration, the priority for organizing life activity in its northern cities, namely the town of Noyabrsk, has shifted from developing the production sector to resolving social and other issues related to people's life activity (Rodionova, Skok, Molozhavenko, Akvazba, & Ukhabina, 2017, p. 19) . In 2012, Noyabrsk had the second largest population in Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug – 109,200 people (Government of Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 2013). The age structure of the town's population, as pretty much is the case with the rest of the region's towns as well, is currently characterized by the considerable prevalence of residents of employable age – 77,300 people (70.7% of the total population). Those younger than working age total 22,300 people (20.4%), and those older than working age number 9,700 people (8.9%) (Russian Federal State Statistics Service, n.d.).

Methods

The subject of this study is social transformations within present-day Russian society in relation to disadvantagedness, and its object is managing the negative effects of present-day transformations in a climate of the information society.

The study's empirical basis is grounded in a sociological investigation into one of the social strata of present-day society which, based on the concept of the information society discussed by A. Toffler and other sociologist futurologists, is eventually expected to shrink – more specifically, the disadvantaged of the nation's northern areas (through the example of the town of Noyabrsk). The study involved interviews with representatives of low-income families. The sample frame consisted of 844 individuals, i.e. 16.7% of the parent population (4,400 people). Out of Noyabrsk's 110,000 residents, 4.6% were officially recognized as poor in 2011. And, since the norms established in sociological practice required that a representative sample featured 3–

5% of the parent population, it was more than enough to survey just 16.7% of the parent population to substantiate representativeness (Rodionova & Bogdanova, 2014, p. 7).

The purpose of the authors' sociological study was to determine the effect of social transformations with respect to disadvantagedness, explore some of the key features of poverty in a northern region, and identify some of the major issues facing those in want with a view to developing an organizational/administrative mechanism for resolving those issues.

The study's units were families which at the time of the survey were regarded as low-income, i.e. earning below the per-capita living wage established in Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug. These respondents had an official status of the needy (low-income), had acknowledged their neediness, had applied for state assistance, had provided sufficient reasons for getting it, and had been approved for it.

The other method for exploring the issue under consideration is carrying out a secondary analysis of data featured in research by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) aimed at investigating the social structure underlying the transformation process. Notice that much attention was devoted to not just exploring a particular category of citizens but investigating the stratum's impact on transformation processes as a whole and their role in institutional transformations. The first category of citizens is characterized by the ability to better adapt to a continually changing environment, influence changes, and adjust changes, while the second category is represented by citizens who are unable to influence unfolding processes (specifically because they are not subjects but objects) of radical change in society. To be able to see all relevant dynamics and trace all relevant transformations taking place within the social environment of our society, as well as identify some of the underlying causes impacting processes of change in social stratification, it may be logical to draw upon some academic research by modern-day sociologists.

Results

Postindustrial society

Today, the postindustrial society is getting superseded by the information society, which appears to be a naturally determined stage in the

technogenic history of social development. Its essence lies in that any subject of that society can at any time and in any place obtain most of the information they need (personal or socially significant information). This implies the availability of a wide infrastructure of information systems which are ensuring the development of society. This system, in turn, is capable of producing scientific information, forming an environment where there freely develop communications networks and information technology, thus steering society toward a single information space. Under these circumstances, scholars are talking about the emergence of new intellectual technology. Notice that not every subject from the same generation will have similar access to information, which gives rise to a social phenomenon such as information inequality. The emergence of this phenomenon in Russia is quite explicable, given the wide territorial spread of areas across the country, the geographic remoteness of particular areas from its administrative, economic, and political centers and trunks, and people's varying financial capacity. Since the resolution of this issue directly depends on the economic component – most importantly, people's purchasing power in rural areas – even if most projects are feasible technically, the issue is not likely to be resolved any time soon. Here, it is especially worth noting the conservativeness of the older generation, with most of its representatives lacking the motivation to get a handle on computer technology. And, despite the commitment of certain regions to remediate this gap, many citizens are just unable to overcome their sloth or their fear of something new. An example of an effort to improve on this area is Tyumen Oblast's gubernatorial computer literacy improvement program 'Expanding the Horizons', which has already helped as many as 50,000 retired citizens become computer literate.

The other side of social inequality, caused by the emergence of new and supersession of old value orientations, is the erasing of the boundaries of the middle class, which is happening due to the insufficient qualifications of most representatives of this stratum (one's insufficient levels of education; one's education getting depreciated). And, concurrently with this, there is emerging the "ruling class" – those who possess the knowledge and technology which make up the basis of the information environment. It is worth noting here that there is a category of people who are staunchly rejecting everything new, considering innovations a harmful phenomenon a priori, one that is corrupting the nation's youth and vitiating the public consciousness, which is impacting on the social structure and social stratification.

This kind of information inequality is reflecting most negatively on the interrelationships of different generations, exacerbating social tensions, and is one of the key factors influencing social stratification and transformation. Information inequality is also emerging based on the existence of different entitlements for access to information (e.g., the entitlements of resource owners, administrators, and network moderators), as well as based on the cognitive/semantic aspect of commanding various types of information technology which is associated with one's capacity for abstract thinking. Most low-income families end up with no access to the latest information technology and no chance to use it due to their tough financial situation and poor information culture.

Low-income families: A social portrait

The causes of the miserable status of low-income families include material problems (low wages; increased strains of caring for dependents; unemployment) – and, as a consequence, social problems (not being able-bodied; having many children; being disabled; being sick).

As a rule, most working single mothers get to work low-paid jobs due to their insignificant levels of education. Without a prestigious profession and an appropriate education, adult family members are forced to do low-paid work and, consequently, earn low wages.

Most single mother families are represented by women who have never worked before, have no employment history, and are oriented toward assistance from their relatives in the form of food products or small amounts of money. Notably, many single mother families are represented by mothers with children who are wholly dependent on their parents, with the income of many solely constituted by a child allowance. Families with working single mothers often do not get enough money to cover food, other essentials, utilities, summer recreation for the children, medical treatment, and other needs.

The situation is no better when it comes to incomplete (divorced) families. Pursuant to the nation's family-related legislation, children are a joint obligation for both parents, regardless of whether or not they live together or separately. After the dissolution of the marriage, most mothers end up alone with underage children, getting little to no child support from their father.

There are a number of ways for ex-husbands to shirk child support. While employed on paper at a job that officially pays low and paying little child support, in reality many tend to work in a sector that pays well unofficially and pay no child support from that income. A more stable contribution to the family budget is the pension of a senior parent. Some of the respondents included young mothers staying home to care for a newborn child who, along with their child, were dependent on their retired parents, as they had never worked before and had no education (Table 1).

Table 1. Sources of income for respondent families (% of respondents)

	Family composition	Wage	Compensation	Pension	Subsidiary farming	Entrepreneurial activity	Stipend	Other income
1	Widow (widower), multichild	0.5	0.6	0.6			0.2	
2	Widow (widower), 1-2 children	6.0	7.0	8.0		0.6	1.0	0.1
3	Multigenealogical	0.4	0.4	0.1			0.1	
4	Single mother (father), multichild	1.0	2.0	0.6				
5	Single mother (father), 1-2 children	14.0	16.0	2.0			0.8	2.0
6	Full family, multichild	17.0	16.0	2.0		2.0	0.7	0.1
7	Full family, 1-2 children	8.0	8.0	1.0	0.1	0.5	0.4	0.4
8	Divorced mother (father), multichild	3.0	5.0	0.4		0.2	0.4	
9	Divorced mother (father), 1-2 children	22.0	18.0	3.0		0.1	0.5	0.2
10	Family with no children		0.1					
	Total:	71.9	73.1	17.7	0.1	3.4	4.1	2.8

Thus, the issue of combating real poverty – not just income-based poverty – requires taking account of the characteristics of people's expenditure, on the one hand, and the characteristics of the resources they possess, on the other hand. This signals the need to gain an in-depth insight into the actual causes of poverty, which by no means are homogeneous and are known to entail totally diverse effects.

3.3. Low-income families' consumer expenditure

Of interest is the fact that most of the expenditure of respondent families is on housing and communal services, most of the low-income families having outstanding utility bills, with some owing as much as 100,000 to 300,000 rubles. This is preventing them from getting a rent subsidy, pushing many into a state of extreme poverty which they are unable overcome for many years (Table 2).

Table 2. Respondent families' consumer expenditure (% of respondents)

	Consumer expenditure	Full family, 1-2 children	Full family, multichild	Multigenealogical	Divorced mother (father), multichild	Divorced mother (father), 1-2 children	Single mother (father), multichild	Single mother (father), 1-2 children	Family with no children	Widow (widower), 1-2 children	Widow (widower), multichild
1	Other	5	9		2	27		15		3	
	0–15%					4		2			
	16–30%	5	9		1	20		12		3	
	31–50%				1	2		1			
	51–70%					1					
	71–100%										
2	Alcohol	2	3			3		3		1	
	0–15%	2	3			2		3			
	16–30%									1	
	31–50%					1					
	51–70%										
	71–100%										
3	Services	75	147	3	41	201	16	152		65	7
	0–15%	22	15	3	4	76	2	42		24	1
	16–30%	39	107		31	98	8	82		29	4
	31–50%	14	22		6	25	5	24		12	1
	51–70%		2			2	1	4			
	71–100%		1								1
4	Food	83	157	3	43	244	19	180	1	75	7
	0–15%		1			1					
	16–30%	10	59	1	23	21	8	28		18	3
	31–50%	55	74	1	14	125	3	95		51	3
	51–70%	16	17	1	6	88	7	49	1	5	1
	71–100%	2	6			10	1	8		1	
5	Loans		4		1	7		2			
	0–15%		2			4		1			
	16–30%		2		1	3		1			
	31–50%										
	51–70%										
	71–100%										
6	Non-food products	68	128	3	35	135	16	139	1	61	6
	0–15%	33	44	1	14	91	6	64		16	
	16–30%	33	81	2	21	39	8	59		38	5
	31–50%	2	3			5	2	14	1	7	1
	51–70%							1			

71–100%	1

Low-income families' lifestyle and expenditure patterns are governed by their real income. Many low-income families do not use costly healthcare services and do not provide their children with higher education (Table 3).

Table 3. Respondent families' expenditure on various services (% of respondents)

	Consumer expenditure	Full family, 1-2 children	Full family, multi child	Multigenealogical	Divorced mother (father), multi child	Divorced mother (father), 1-2 children	Single mother (father), multi child	Single mother (father), 1-2 children	Family with no children	Widow (widower), 1-2 children	Widow (widower), multichild
1	Other	9	11			5	10	1	20		9	
	0–15%		2		1	2		2		2	
	16–30%	3	4			3		4		2	
	31–50%	4	2		3	3	1	8		5	
	51–70%	1	1			1		3			
	71–100%	1	2		1	1		3			
2	Housing and communal services; public transportation	54	102	3	29	173	9	119		61	2
	0–15%	29	69	3	19	114	5	59		46	2
	16–30%	17	26		8	38	2	38		10	
	31–50%	8	5		2	15	1	16		4	
	51–70%		1			5		6		1	
	71–100%		1			1	1				
3	Healthcare	60	120	2	31	180	11	127		59	4
	0–15%	36	69	2	14	117	6	58		46	1
	16–30%	15	42		15	39	3	39		11	3
	31–50%	7	8		2	18	1	25		2	
	51–70%	2	1			3	1	1			
	71–100%					3		4			
4	Education	14	51	2	12	68	4	38		39	1
	0–15%	7	35	2	8	43	1	20		37	
	16–30%	4	13		2	11		13			

#	Category									
	31–50%	1	1		2	11	1	3		1
	51–70%	1	2				2	1	1	
	71–100%	1				3		1	1	
5	Services offered by culture/leisure institutions	10	35	1	6	23	2	20	22	1
	0–15%	7	23	1	6	17	2	13	18	
	16–30%	1	10			2		4	1	1
	31–50%	2	2			4		3	3	
	51–70%									
	71–100%									
6	Services related to sanatorium/resort treatment, recreation, and wellness	6	18	1	4	8	3	14	3	1
	0–15%	3	6			1	2	3	1	1
	16–30%	1	6	1		4		3		
	31–50%	2	5		2	1		2	1	
	51–70%		1		1	2		3	1	
	71–100%				1		1	3		

Thus, low-income families are unable to resolve most of their problems on their own.

3.4. The need of low-income families for social assistance

On their own, without the state's assistance, most representatives of low-income families are not likely to make it into the upper ranks of society. Such families are rarely encountered in societies with a well-developed economy. Many respondents did not deny they needed assistance from the state (Table 4).

Table 4. Respondent Families' Needs for Social Assistance (%)

	Family composition	Social/pedagogical	Social/psychological	Social/economic	Social/legal
1	Widow (widower), multichild			0.1	
2	Widow (widower), 1-2 children		0.1		
3	Multigenealogical			0.1	
4	Single mother (father),			0.1	

	multichild				
5	Single mother (father), 1-2 children	0.5	0.5	2.0	0.4
6	Full family, multichild	0.1	0.4	1.0	0.2
7	Full family, 1-2 children	0.1		0.6	0.1
8	Divorced mother (father), multichild			0.4	
9	Divorced mother (father), 1-2 children		0.6	3.0	0.2
10	Family with no children				
	Total:	0.7	11.6	77.3	0.9

Low-income families are characterized by low pay and considerable strains of caring for dependents, which, going forward, may lead to further declines in their per capita income. When it comes to the economic status of the citizen categories under consideration, they differ, first of all, in income and, second of all, in standard and quality of living. Low-income families do not own much, which is testimony to their poor standard and quality of living and their lack of sufficient resources for improving these indicators in the future. Over the past few years, many families have had to gradually sell their property, like an apartment or a garage, in order to be able to make ends meet.

Discussion

Investigating poverty at the level of social groups is today one of the more significant focus areas of sociological analysis of society's social structure. The authors' attempt to substantiate the above approach to exploring poverty has provided the basis for drawing upon the sociological theory of poverty, thus leading them to stake out the theoretical boundaries of discussion of the nature of poverty within Russia's transforming society, conduct an analysis of various approaches to exploring poverty at the level of social groups and identify some of the key strengths and weaknesses thereof, and bring to light some of the major methodological approaches to construing the concept in question in sociology.

The findings from the authors' theoretical/methodological analysis of the evolution of the concept of poverty are pointing to its equivocalness and multifacetedness in modern science, which has provided the basis for the authors to fine-tune the concept as a social/economic category, leading them to construe poverty as the lack of equal chances and opportunities not only at the initial stages of one's life (at birth) but long into the future as well, with one being forced to live with lack of the funds and resources to meet one's basic needs for food, clothing, and housing. The paper provides an insight into the essence and nature of poverty, identifies some of the key criteria for poverty, and defines and draws a line between such concepts as disadvantagedness, poverty, and inequality, which helps avoid equivocation and concretize the study's conceptual framework.

Analyzing the concept of poverty in present-day conditions and developing the theoretical/methodological foundations for remediating it requires taking account of such social/economic indicators linked to the essence of this phenomenon as standard of living, property-owning potential, poverty incidence, and size of the nation's poverty subculture, which are in a logical relationship with each other. The authors establish that the standard of living, as a crucial social category, characterizes people's income producing and property owning potential which ensures the satisfaction of their material and spiritual needs in the face of restrictions imposed by the cost of living.

As part of their analysis of the concept of poverty, the authors zoom in on and examine some of the key characteristics of the phenomenon of poverty in present-day Russia, with the focus being on the causes of Russian poverty and the extent to which these causes are still at play at this time in Russian society, the outcomes of the nation's social reforms which have led to changes in people's spending patterns, as well as the gist of and the key

differences between the terms 'old poverty' and 'new poverty'.

The authors come to the essential conclusion that in developing relevant measures aimed at combating poverty in Russia in present-day conditions, it will help to consider each region separately, as the causes of poverty vary from region to region.

Conclusion

The findings from the authors' analysis of theoretical and empirical research indicate that most members of poor families are characterized by propensity to develop socially passive attitude toward life, which becomes a worldview barrier to shifting from socially passive to socially active life psychology, complicating the full participation of these individuals in society's life.

To conclude, it is worth noting that overcoming poverty requires having in place an extensive restoration program that would involve transforming all major systems of people's life order, which, above all, requires restoring rational consciousness and mobilizing the nation's material/technical and labor resources. This kind of poverty reduction program ought to have the status of a national one and incorporate various methods and means in alignment with the causes of poverty in particular regions and its implications for the poor and society as a whole.

The findings from the authors' study suggest that the poverty of low-income families is a consequence of the effect of the following set of interrelated factors: economic (low pay and high levels of its differentiation; unemployment); social (disabilities; old age; marginalization; child neglect); demographic (incomplete families; families with great strains of caring for dependents; being a representative of youth; being a representative of the older generation); political (ruptured traditional entrenched interregional relationships; forced migration).

It is apparent that there are more similarities, than differences, among the life attitudes of low-income families, which may serve as testimony to persisting internal worldview unity amongst most of the families within the category.

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