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# ИЖТИМОЙ ТАДҚИҚОТЛАР ЖУРНАЛИ

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**YOUTH OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL UNIVERSITIES OF ST. PETERSBURG: A SOCIAL PORTRAIT** <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15528002>**ABSTRACT**

The article presents the results of an analysis of student satisfaction at the Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education “University associated with IA EAEC”. Satisfaction reflects the quality of education, matching the needs for knowledge and development. The study identifies the shortcomings of the learning process and suggests improvements. Satisfaction assessment helps the university management to make informed decisions, improving the quality of education. The purpose is to analyze students' satisfaction and professional aspirations in order to develop proposals for improving the educational process.

**Keywords:** satisfaction, quality of the educational process, motivation, career orientations, professional competencies, sociological research, St. Petersburg, student loyalty, higher education, social portrait.

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## МОЛОДЕЖЬ НЕГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ ВУЗОВ ПЕТЕРБУРГА: СОЦИАЛЬНЫЙ ПОРТРЕТ

### АННОТАЦИЯ

Статья представляет результаты анализа удовлетворённости студентов АНО ВО «Университет при МПА ЕврАзЭС». Удовлетворённость отражает качество образования, соответствуя потребностям в знаниях и развитии. Исследование выявляет недостатки учебного процесса и предлагает улучшения. Оценка удовлетворённости помогает руководству вуза принимать обоснованные решения, улучшая качество образования. Цель – анализ удовлетворённости и профессиональных устремлений студентов для разработки предложений по совершенствованию образовательного процесса.

**Ключевые слова:** удовлетворенность, качество образовательного процесса, мотивация, карьерные ориентации, профессиональные компетенции, социологическое исследование, Санкт-Петербург, лояльность студентов, высшее образование, социальный портрет.

### INTRODUCTION

The processes taking place in society have a direct impact on the professional paths of young people. Professional self-determination is one of the key stages in life that determines an individual's future development. However, today there is a shift in priorities: young people often choose professions not so much for their own sake but as a means to achieve a certain status and material benefits. This leads to undervaluing personal abilities, interest in the profession, and societal needs

for specialists. As President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev notes: «It is necessary to create an environment that actively contributes to the process of learning, spiritual and moral enrichment, and education based on true goals» [1, – P. 95]. Creating a favorable educational environment is the first step towards shaping a generation capable of contributing to societal development, based on spiritual and moral values as well as high professional standards [2]. The formation of future leaders requires an environment where students not only learn to solve professional tasks but also become responsible citizens ready to contribute to their country's prosperity [3].

Professional self-determination among students is linked to the awareness of the reality of the chosen profession. If students' perceptions align with reality, it contributes to their successful social and professional adaptation. Conversely, the lack of clear guidelines in the professional sphere may indicate insufficient readiness for independent work.

In non-state universities, students face particular challenges such as low motivation to study, lack of independence, and weak employment prospects after graduation. These circumstances underscore the importance of developing strategies to support professional self-determination, including forming realistic expectations about future careers.

The issue of professional self-determination has been actively studied in contemporary psychological science. Significant contributions in this field belong to authors such as Zavarova M.G., Pryazhnikov N.S., Tyurin K.G., Gusev A.N., Myasnikov L.A., and others [4-5]. Nevertheless, existing studies are often limited to analyzing state university students, leaving open the question of the specifics of professional self-determination in non-state educational institutions.

Thus, conducting in-depth research aimed at identifying socio-psychological factors influencing the professional self-determination of non-state university students becomes relevant. This includes developing classifications of these factors and determining their role in shaping professional identity. One of the main directions of Russia's social policy at the present stage is the development of the higher education system. Reforming this sector, particularly efforts to implement federal state educational standards and maintain competitiveness on the international arena, require careful analysis of the quality of educational services provided. One important criterion is the level of student satisfaction with the conditions of the educational process, which serves as an indicator of the overall assessment of the institution's quality. Thus, the activities of any university can be viewed as a process aimed at meeting the needs of learners for high-quality education.

Reforming the educational sector, including accreditation procedures for universities, increasingly focuses on assessing the quality of the educational process by the students themselves and their satisfaction with it. Analyzing student satisfaction helps identify problem areas in the educational process and develop optimization strategies to enhance its effectiveness while considering available labor and financial resources. Indicators of student satisfaction also form the basis for creating diagnostic tools for managing the university, facilitating informed managerial decisions based on current data regarding students' needs and demands.

An analysis of domestic and foreign literature reveals that student opinions play a crucial role in evaluating the quality of the educational process in universities [6-7]. Student satisfaction with the learning process is an essential indicator reflecting the perception of the university's activities as a cohesive system [8]. In the context of transitioning to a competency-based approach, where emphasis is placed on acquiring knowledge to solve practical problems, and within the framework of perceiving education as a service, student satisfaction emerges as one of the primary criteria for assessing the quality of education, although not the only one [9-10].

Career orientations occupy a significant position in the value system of modern youth. The rapidly changing job market, socio-political transformations in Russian society, and economic instability make it imperative to find effective solutions for the employment of students during their period of study. Changes in the labor market impose heightened requirements on university graduates, who now must possess not only professional competencies but also personal values, attitudes toward the prestige of their profession, and aspirations for creative self-realization.

The study of career orientations among students has become an integral part of the educational system in Russia. Understanding one's professional interests and capabilities helps students select the

most suitable career path and specialization, enhancing their competitiveness in the labor market. Clearly defined career goals promote greater engagement in the learning process, increase satisfaction with the chosen direction, and strengthen self-confidence. An orientation towards specific career objectives encourages conscious choices of disciplines, elective courses, and extracurricular activities, ultimately improving learning outcomes.

The active period of socialization and formation of social attitudes among today's students coincides with the emergence of the phenomenon of a “consumer society” in Russia. This manifests itself in the high consumer orientation of young people, their perception of success through material values, and the choice of professions that ensure high income, prestige, and power. From 2020 to 2022, according to a survey conducted by Future Today, career advancement ranked ninth among applicants' priorities, accounting for 26-28%. However, the situation changed in 2023 when experts noted three significant trends in the labor market: a decrease in unemployment rates, an increase in wages, and increased employer activity. Faced with a shortage of skilled workers, companies began offering candidates more attractive financial terms [11].

In 2024, according to the results of the study «Best Employers 2024» interest in career growth significantly increased, with this criterion rising to fifth place, representing 29%. Experts indicated that the labor market had entered a new phase characterized by intensified competition for talent and growing importance of career prospects for students. Research conducted by Kontakt Intersearch Russia in May 2024 revealed that the majority of young professionals entering the workforce do not aspire to hold leadership positions, preferring instead to focus on developing professional skills and achieving expert-level competence. Only 24% of respondents expressed a desire to attain top management roles, whereas 21% stated plans to start their own business [12]. Recent years' studies also demonstrate that many young Russians are willing to work hard, even without guarantees for the future, as long as it involves high earnings [13-15].

Several studies highlight the difficulties faced by young individuals aged 14-18 in making career-related decisions and understanding their professional needs. To address these issues, various mechanisms have been developed at the federal level. For instance, the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation implements vocational guidance programs as part of the national project «Education» and the federal project «Success of Every Child» Universities organize events designed to assist students in choosing their profession, such as job fairs, competitions, forums, accelerator programs, and hackathons. All these initiatives emphasize the pressing need for effective career guidance and deliberate selection of future professions and fields of study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in St. Petersburg in 2023. To better understand the profile of participating students, we provide the main characteristics of the sample. A total of 1,170 respondents from non-state universities participated in the survey. Of these, 56.3% were full-time students, 27.4% were part-time students, and 16.3% attended both full-time and part-time classes. Students studying in a combined format who previously studied in St. Petersburg made up a significant portion of all participants – 70.2%, exceeding the average percentage across the entire sample (56.6%). Most part-time and combined-format students pay for their education independently. In contrast, full-time students more frequently receive education through grants, use of maternity capital, or parental financial support. Among students enrolled in a combined format (full-time and part-time), cases where the mother is a housewife and does not work, while the father is retired, are more common. Among part-time students, mothers predominantly have either general secondary or specialized secondary education, whereas among full-time students, there are more whose mothers have incomplete higher education. Part-time students tend to have fathers with advanced degrees more often than the average across the sample. Both part-time and combined-format students frequently combine work with their studies, and their jobs are often related to their areas of study. They also more commonly report pursuing education for career advancement or because they feel a lack of knowledge. The hypothesis of the study was as follows: students are generally satisfied with the educational process, yet they experience anxiety concerning factors directly affecting their career strategy. When designing the methodology for the empirical sociological research, the authors relied

on works by domestic sociologists representing the Moscow and St. Petersburg schools of sociological inquiry.

### MAIN PART

Upon analyzing the sampled population, it was found that a significant proportion of students enrolled in the combined format (both full-time and part-time) received their prior education in St. Petersburg, which differs noticeably from other categories. Regarding tuition payment, the majority of part-time and combined-format students cover the costs of their education themselves, while full-time students more often rely on financial support from their parents.

Most part-time and combined-format students work in specialties aligned with their fields of study. For this group of respondents, the primary motivations for obtaining an education include career advancement and filling gaps in professional knowledge.

According to the survey results, 59.9% of respondents reported that their current workplace is unrelated to their area of study. Only 22.4% indicated that their job corresponds to their training profile, while 17.7% were unsure. Despite this, the majority of respondents are confident that they will eventually find employment in a field corresponding to their coursework. The responses of the surveyed students reveal that obtaining an education holds significant value for them. The largest number of students (42.2%) indicated that they pursue education «for themselves» suggesting a predominance of intrinsic motivation. Approximately one-third of the respondents (31.6%) view higher education as a tool for future career advancement, confirming a pragmatic approach to their studies. Only 2.7% believe they enroll in university due to a lack of professional knowledge. Notably, the least popular response – «I hope I'll get promoted»—is primarily characteristic of part-time students. It is important to consider what meaning students attribute to the concept of «higher education» It is best to examine this meaning through the lens of the functions it performs. To determine respondents' views on the functions of modern higher education, the following question was posed: «In contemporary society, higher education fulfills numerous functions. Which functions, in your opinion, are the most important?» Respondents were asked to rate each function on a five-point scale, where 1 corresponded to minimal importance («not important») and 10 denoted maximum importance («very important»). Based on the respondents' answers, the key functions of higher education are seen as preparing highly qualified specialists and providing opportunities for career advancement upon receiving a diploma. These responses garnered the highest positive ratings. At the same time, the belief that the accessibility of education diminishes the value of a degree and does not guarantee social recognition proved to be the least popular among those surveyed. To determine the value orientations of students, the question was posed: «Which concepts, in your opinion, are the most important for a student?» The most significant values for students turned out to be studying (66%), achieving results (64.8%), and socialization (59.2%). Less popular were values like cohesion (14.5%) and honesty (12.4%). These responses clearly reflect the pragmatism of modern youth, where the primary orientation is focused on result-driven achievement without deep reflection and with an emphasis on individualism. Such types of value orientations are typical of capitalist societies.

Modern students exhibit a high degree of pragmatism: they clearly understand why they seek higher education and are prepared to exert effort to achieve their goals. These conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of responses to questions about motivation for study. The majority of respondents claimed that they are driven by internal motivation, relying on personal resources. However, approximately one-third (32.6%) admitted that they study under the influence of their parents. Another 21.6% indicated that they are guided by the example set by friends and acquaintances, while 20.7% stated that they are motivated by their teachers. To identify the primary concerns of students, a question was posed about the issues that worry them the most. The top three problems included dissatisfaction with how some subjects are taught (34.4%), securing postgraduate employment in their field of study (29.9%), and finding a job while still studying (23.9%). Simultaneously, over a third of the respondents (34.9%) stated that they did not have serious problems. The question about plans for continuing education after obtaining a diploma showed that nearly half of the respondents (48.9%) had not thought about it yet. A quarter of the students (25%)

stated that they do not plan to continue their education further. Additionally, 9.7% intend to enter a master's program at their current university in the same field, while 9.4% aim to pursue a master's degree at another university. This distribution of opinions aligns with the current value orientations of students: they believe that basic higher education is sufficient for career advancement, and an advanced degree is not considered mandatory, hence it does not rank among their priorities.

One of the tasks of the study was to assess the level of student satisfaction with the educational process, equivalent to determining the audience loyalty index (Net Promoter Score, NPS) — a measure of willingness to recommend the university to others. Changes in this index allow for improvements in customer service quality, and in our case, help identify factors that university administration should focus on to attract new applicants and increase the loyalty of current students. To measure the Net Promoter Score (NPS), students were asked the question: «Would you recommend our university to your friends or acquaintances?» using a scale from 1 to 10 points, where 1 indicates «would never recommend», and 10 signifies «definitely would recommend». The obtained scores were divided into three groups: 9-10 points – «advocates» (promoters), 7-8 points – neutral consumers, and 0-6 points – «critics». This index enables university administrators to take steps to improve the quality of educational services and strengthen the reputation of the university.

According to the study findings, the number of «promoters» amounted to 42%, passive consumers accounted for 30%, and critics represented 28%. The resulting NPS score is 15%, indicating a moderate level of student loyalty. This suggests that the university currently does not hold a leading position in the market but possesses potential for growth. To gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing loyalty formation, a multiple regression analysis was performed. As the dependent variable, the question «Would you recommend our university to your friends/acquaintances?» was used. The analysis revealed that the following aspects exert the greatest influence on student satisfaction:

Nature of relationships within the group: The dynamics and interpersonal climate among peers play a critical role in fostering satisfaction.

Group climate: Positive or negative emotional atmosphere within the student cohort impacts overall contentment.

Quality of teaching for specific subjects: Perceived quality of instruction for individual courses heavily influences student satisfaction levels.

Currency of educational programs: Relevance and modernity of curricula contribute significantly to students' perceptions of the university's offerings.

Learning spaces: Physical infrastructure, such as classrooms and facilities, affect the learning environment and, consequently, student satisfaction.

Computer labs: Accessibility and functionality of computer labs are important determinants of student satisfaction.

Assessment via project work: Offering alternative evaluation methods, such as projects, enhances engagement and satisfaction.

Convenience of the electronic information-educational environment (EIES): User-friendliness and ease of navigation within digital platforms strongly correlate with satisfaction levels.

Provision of internship opportunities: Availability of practical experiences, such as internships, positively affects student satisfaction.

Interaction with the dean's office: Effective communication and administrative support from the dean's office foster a sense of institutional responsiveness.

These insights offer actionable recommendations for university administrators aiming to improve student loyalty and enhance the overall educational experience.

These factors have the greatest impact on the overall level of student satisfaction, and it is on these that attention should be focused when developing loyalty enhancement programs.

The quadrant analysis method allowed us to identify the factors that have the greatest influence on overall student satisfaction:

Proficiency of university professors in core subjects (highest satisfaction rating on a 10-point scale);

Proficiency of professors in general professional disciplines;  
Communication between students and faculty leadership;  
Training in the chosen specialty/field of study;  
Proficiency of professors in general humanities disciplines.

These results enable the identification of priority areas for improving the quality of educational services and strengthening student loyalty.

The overall assessment of student satisfaction with the educational process was quite high, however, the quadrant analysis identified several aspects that university administration should pay special attention to.

The first aspect is grant-based education. Given its high significance for student satisfaction and relatively low average ratings, it can be assumed that the grant allocation policy should be reconsidered or improved through better informational campaigns.

The second important point is the provision of places for practice. Low evaluations of this parameter indicate unmet student needs for practical preparation, which is a critical moment given their desire to develop practical skills.

Additionally, the process of informing students about the educational process requires improvement since internal communications are borderline acceptable and need substantial refinement to increase student loyalty.

The main factor influencing satisfaction with the educational process is interest in learning, as evidenced by a strong correlation ( $r = 0.731$ ). Although this aspect received lower ratings, previous research confirmed that interest in learning is one of the key motivators, and instructors can play a vital role in increasing student engagement.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study support the hypothesis of a high level of student satisfaction with the educational process overall. However, areas of discontent were also identified, addressing which would enable the university administration to enhance the overall level of loyalty and improve policies for attracting new students.

The social profile of a non-state university student is characterized by the following features: the majority are women who pay for their education, aged between 18 and 25 years. A substantial proportion of respondents come from regional areas, while many chose the university due to its location in Saint Petersburg. Most students have parents with higher education or academic degrees. Many fund their studies independently and combine their education with employment. Some already work in their field of study, and many are confident that their future job will relate to their chosen major. The study also revealed the goals students pursue through higher education. The most common responses were «for oneself» and «education as a prerequisite for career advancement». Thus, the study confirmed the high level of student satisfaction with the educational process, however, areas of dissatisfaction were identified, such as the quality of teaching and the organization of practices.

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