
ECONOMICS

Sociology

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Introduction

The processes observed today in the Russian society, form an objective need to put the conflicts of social relations in a certain framework. To this end it is necessary to develop an effective methodology and tools of conflict diagnosis, contributing to the prevention of conflicts. The urgent need for conflict diagnosis is determined by the dynamism, transience and interdependence of social, economic and political processes in the modern world and in the Russian society.

In this study to measure conflict potential of the modern Russian society, we turned to the concept of social tension. The novelty of the research project is to develop tools to

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SOCIAL TENSION: THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFLICT DIAGNOSIS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF ST. PETERSBURG)

ABSTRACT. The article examines relevance of conflicts studies through the concept of social tension. There are two main parts in the paper. The first one is devoted to the conceptualization of the problem. It deals with key problems of modern Russia society and the main characteristics of the social tension. The second part consists of the experience of empirical study in which social tension is a central issue.

This paper is based on the empirical study, which was conducted by the authors in St. Petersburg, Russia. In this research the tools designed for measurement of social tension in the urban community were tested. For the analysis of the empirical data authors used such methods as micro-analysis of crosstabs with standardized residuals and chi-square; cluster analysis.

The empirical research indicates an important role of the social tension in conflict analysis and shows some of the main indicators of social tension.

identify key indicators of social tension in the urban community. This was the main purpose of the study. Thus, the research work focused on the social tension. As the objectives of the study were the following:

- to identify the basic characteristics of the concept of social tension;
- to identify the basic indicators of social tensions;
- to measure the values of the main indicators of social tension in different strata of the urban population.

Social tension is quite often seen in connection with conflicts. Meanwhile, it precedes conflicts, but not always turns into a conflict. The social tension is a phenomenon which in one form or another always presents in the society. The certain elements of the concept of social tension are considered in the works of a number of authors (Parsons, 1972; Orru, 1983; Smelser, 1994; Galtung, 1998; Stepanov, 1999; Kukonkov, 2004; Merton, 2006; Nagaytsev, Pustovalova, 2010; Baranov *et al.*, 2011).

In the literature dedicated to the study of conflicts and social tension (Gurr, 1970; Kotkin, 2014; Chakravarty, 2015) a special attention is paid to the concept of relative deprivation. The authors of this approach believe that a social order is stable when different layers of the society maintained a balance between the desired goals and means of its achieving. Gurr considers relative deprivation as a discrepancy between value expectations (goods and conditions of life which, in the opinion of the people, they can rightfully claim for) and value capabilities (goods and conditions that they, in their opinion, can obtain or retain). The deprivation results in: a decrease in capacities with the growth of expectations, a decrease in capacities while maintaining expectations at the same level and the preservation of capacities with the growth of expectations level. The accumulated social tension reveals itself in protest actions (Gurr, 1970).

1. Conceptualization of the problem of social tension

1.1. Some characteristics of the crisis situation in Russia

The current situation in Russia has posed the scientific community the task of studying its conflict potential. It is known that the risk of conflict is that they can lead not only to positive but also to negative consequences, concerning both separate individuals and society as a whole. However, a mandatory escalation in the case of a conflict situation is not the only possible scenario. Conflicts should be prevented, i.e. to forestall it at the generation stage, which will allow avoiding of negative consequences and will reduce the cost of its management. Control over the conflict involves deliberate steps in this regard and includes a number of actions: prevention, or averting, forecasting, settlement, resolution. One of the key concepts used in the study of conflict is the social tension. Below we will return to a more detailed analysis of this concept.

A relevance of attention to the conflict potential of the Russian situation is determined by a structurally new crisis in the Russian history (see *Figure 1*).

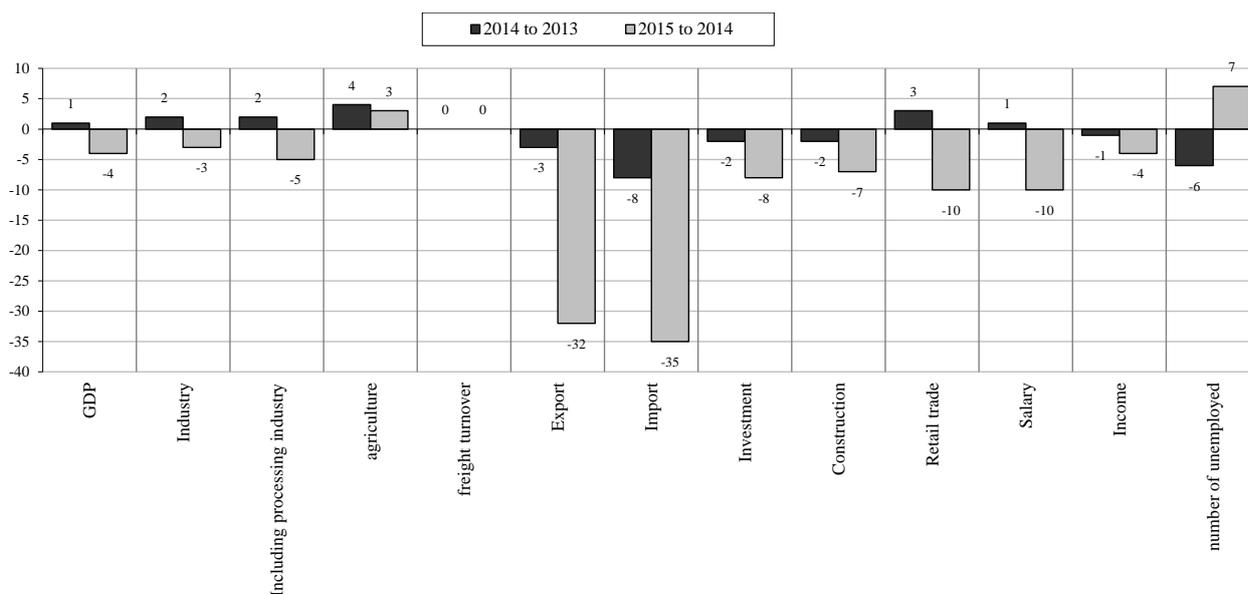


Figure 1. Annual dynamics of the main socio-economic indicators, %

Source: Zubarevich N. *The crisis in Russia – regional aspects: what to expect and what to prepare for*, URL: <https://openrussia.org/post/view/12636>.

Consider the basic characteristics, which allow defining the current situation as a crisis. This crisis, unlike previous ones, was developed by peculiarities of the institutional design of modern Russia, its political climate. A new crisis is long-term. Meanwhile, there are no explicit prerequisites to ensure that it will be limited to two years, as the Russian authorities expect. The crisis is on an unusual trajectory: from the destabilization of regional budgets, the downturn in investments and stagnation of industrial production, to the decline of incomes of the population. Since 2013 industry has stopped growing, investments began to fall; the debts of regional budgets started to accumulate and dramatically increased. In the case of prolonged crisis, a strong decline in income and purchasing power will increase the risks of unemployment and protest in the biggest cities with developed market services sector and a significant proportion of the middle class. The decrease in income will lead to loss of modern standards of consumption that had become habitual to educated population with higher incomes. Likewise an orientation of a significant number of households will change from the development strategy to the survival strategy (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. Dynamics of population estimations of the prospects of Russia's development for the coming year, 2011-2015, %

| Assessment | 2011 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| The country will develop successfully | 24 | 26 | 19 |
| The country will face hard times | 39 | 50 | 59 |
| Nothing fundamentally will change | 37 | 24 | 22 |

Source: *Russian society and the challenges of the time. Book two*, Moscow: Publishing House "Whole World", 2015, 432 p., p. 16.

According to sociological research, in March 2015, only 7% of respondents observed no change in the country, while 69% thought that the changes that occurred altered a current situation for the worse. From autumn 2014 until spring 2015, the socio-psychological

condition of the close environment of the surveyed Russians has definitely deteriorated (integral indicator has changed from 42.1 points in October 2014 to 35.9 points in March 2015). The negative personal outlook was predominant (51%). One of the reasons for this situation is the feeling of social discomfort, which feels the person entering a context of crisis. His values, attitudes and life orientation appear to be deeply shaken. Destructured social system, more recently, had to ensure the stability and sustainability of the mechanisms of social order, has become a constant balancing act between risks. Moreover, neither the structure of economic action, nor its result does not guaranteed: 64% of respondents believe that the tension in the society is increasing (Russian society and challenges, 2015, p. 16).

Today's Russia witnesses the formation of new and exacerbation of existing tensions that permeate an entire society. Therefore, the study of social tension performs a variety of tasks. On the one hand, it is development of the theory of conflict, analysis of determinants, stages of their development, and methods of management. On the other hand, the study of social tensions in Russia has a contribution of applied nature. Based on the results of these studies the creation of prevention methods of specific social conflicts; development of algorithms of actions of various social actors; the construction of development forecasts of individual conflict situations become possible. Social tension at the initial stage of its development allows obtaining the empirical material in a relatively stable environment without colliding with specific conflict interaction and reducing the possible impact on the receiving information.

Thus, it seems logical to study current Russian reality through the concept of social tension. Today's crisis condition of the Russian society entails the necessity of a detailed study and description of the procedures for its measurement.

1.2. Defining social tension

In classic sociological literature, the term “social tension” is used in the analysis of the process of disintegration. The latter refers to the rupture of social ties, loss of values, increasing of social anomie (Orru, 1983). T. Parsons defines “tension” as a tendency to disequilibrium in the balance of exchange between two or more components of the system. He introduces the concept of norm into the structure of social action, indicating that the regulatory element, encountering resistance in the implementation of social action, is a source of social tension and potential conflict (Parsons, 1972; Merton, 2006). N. Smelser describes social tensions as a specific condition of social consciousness and social emotions. This condition is characterized by the buildup of mental fatigue and irritability, frustration and deprivation, aggression, and depression of a significant part of society (Smelser, 1994).

L. Coser noting that “Social structures differ as to the degree of conflict which they tolerate” (Coser, 1956) originates from the theory of G. Simmel, who argued that there was no separately taken conflictual attitude, negatively evaluated by the participants. Conflict is always, except complete rupture of relations, shows the existence of hidden positive aspects. It is important to realize that even a prosperous society is not devoid of conflicts – on the contrary, it is entirely stitched from the many intersecting conflicts between its component parts. (Simmel, 1956, pp. 22-23). A conflict performs the function of group preservation to that extent as it regulates the systems of relations. The socially controlled conflict “clears the air”, i.e. removes accumulations of suppressed hostile emotions, giving them free access to the action. The main focus of Coser's study is aimed at identification of the conditions under which the conflict keeps or restores the integration of the system and its adaptability to changing circumstances. Unlike Simmel, he insists on the distinction between feelings of animosity and conflict behavior, emphasizing that it is not conflict that threatens the equilibrium of the system but its inflexibility that suppresses different kinds of tension which

while accumulating, can lead to acute conflict. It is particularly important that in the theory of social tension Coser was the first who pointed out the central role of the problems in the generally available public social institutions functioning that serve as “safety valves” – those that merely serve abreaction of feelings of hostility, thus leaving the terms of the relationship unchanged, may function as lightning rods but they cannot prevent a recurrent gathering of clouds, i.e., a new accumulation of tension” (Coser, 1956, p. 47).

R. Dahrendorf believes that when social tensions are recognized and controllable, the change occurs as a gradual development; that the society becomes a "humane" one when it combines incompatible and supports the vitality of contradictions (Dahrendorf, 1961). Dahrendorf emphasizes that human society has always two faces possessing an equal reality: one face is of stability, harmony and consensus and the other is of change, conflict and coercion (Dahrendorf, 1988, p. 403). Dahrendorf identifies three key points in the analysis of social conflict: how does the conflicting groups in the society structures appear; what forms does their struggle take and what is the impact of group conflict on the social changes.

Our analysis of modern scientific literature has shown that social tension is addressed in different areas of scientific knowledge and at different levels of society (Baranova, Frolov, 2012; Borodkin, Volodina, 1997; Bykowski, 2005; Kukonkov, 2004; Nagaytsev, Pustovalova, 2010; Rukavishnikov *et al.*, 1992). Usually it is perceived as a certain state of society, an integral feature of the social system, “the state of individuals and social groups, their dissatisfaction with the existing situation, attitude to what is happening and to other individuals and groups” (Kukonkov, 2004, p. 184). Social tension is accompanied by the spread of negative sentiments among the population and manifests itself in mass actions (Buzovsky, 2008, p. 171).

Social tensions linked to the emergence of conflict, in fact contains the potential for conflict, which develops under certain conditions. “If one side accumulates negative attitudes and aggressive dispositions, in case of some problems all of these are getting activated” (Galtung, 1998, p. 72).

Depending on the stage of development of the social tensions the form of its manifestation in a human behavior could become more aggressive. In the scientific works various stages of development of tension are outlined.

At the initial stage among certain groups dissatisfaction with the situation in important areas of life is formed, pessimism starts to spread. However, at this stage there is lack of active manifestations of discontent or protest. But already at the second stage the attempts are made to find someone to blame, the level of trust in the authorities is decreasing, discontent begins to have more acute form, manifesting itself in various protests, inter-ethnic conflicts. “The prevalence of social unrest under certain conditions, may cause a violation of self-regulation mechanisms and the deterioration of the basic subsystems of society functioning, the spread of violence in solving major social problems” (Social conflicts: expertise, prediction, resolution technology, 2004, p. 11). This is the stage at which social tension becomes a conflict.

Social tension is quite often seen in connection with the conflict, thus, although it predates the conflict, but not necessarily ends up with it. It is recognized as a phenomenon that in one form or another is always present in society. However, to address social tension as purely negative phenomenon is incorrect, because it has positive characteristics as well. “The level of tension in the social sphere of the Russian region in combination with well-functioning social institutions act as necessary conditions for timely and adequate resolution of emerging problems in this field” (Kukonkov, 2004, p. 185).

As has already noted, studies by different Russian sociological centers in recent years show that there remains a relatively high level of social tension in the country (mass dissatisfaction, discontent with the living conditions). According to the Levada center, for

example, from one third to one half of all respondents feels that tension (Monitoring of public opinion about the state of the Russian society, 2016). In all cases, the proportion of Russians who are not satisfied with their living conditions in general, significantly exceeds the number of people who are satisfied. We believe that the most relevant are the studies of social tension in the regional projections. This is due to the deterioration of most socio-economic indicators of the Russian regions.

2. The experience of studying social tensions on the example of St. Petersburg

2.1. Data and methodology

In 2015 a working group comprising the authors of this article, conducted a representative telephone survey of the population of Saint Petersburg devoted to the study of social tension using equipment of the resource center of the St. Petersburg state University (Scientific research were performed at the Center for Sociological and Internet Research of Research park of St. Petersburg State University). The survey was conducted with the purpose of testing the tools designed for measurement of social tensions in the urban community. The number of measuring components of social tension caused by quantitative restrictions related to the use of telephone interviews as a method of data collection. The survey used a random sample of respondents with control quote as for sex, age, education, and employment type. Size of sample is 1218 persons (adult population of St. Petersburg over 18). Sampling error was $\pm 3\%$.

In our study for measurement of social tensions the following indicators were used: attitude to life in general; attitude to political institutions; attitude to participation in mass protests. To study the values of these indicators among different categories of the respondents the following variables were used: changes of the living standards of the respondents; age affiliation of the respondents; assessment of adequacy of income for life; the occupation of the respondents (Pinkevich, 2015, pp. 305-330).

To identify relationship between these indicators of social tension and social characteristics of respondents, we will use the micro-analysis of contingency table, which allows to reveal the prevalence of negative sentiment in various strata of the urban population. Micro-analysis of contingency table based on the calculation of standardized residuals (values that indicate the degree and direction of deviation of observed values from the expected ones) and chi-square, which represents the sum of the squares of the standardized residuals. Indication of the existence of the relationship of two variables is the value of chi-square exceeding the table for the appropriate number of degrees of freedom and significance value. Standardized residuals serve to identify the relationship of alternatives in the studied variables. An absolute magnitude of residual is taken into account in case if it is ≥ 1.65 . It serves as an indicator of the existence of a significant statistical relationship between the studied variables. The plus sign in the standardized residuals suggests that the actual number of observed counts is more than expected, a minus – that it is less than expected. In the analysis we will use mainly the significant positive values of the standardized residuals, indicating that the indicators of social tension within this category of respondents significantly exceed the values of these indicators in other comparable categories. The article will only include the data from contingency tables where the observed value of chi-square is higher than the critical value and significance value not less than 0.05. In such tables in the absence of significant standardized residuals on the crossing alternatives of the analyzing variables one can compare percentages of these alternatives. Differences greater than 3% (the confidence interval in this sample) can be considered significant.

During the selection of the social strata, we have assumed that the negative sentiments are more likely for those whose living standards have fallen under the influence of the crisis; who is experiencing financial difficulties, who is occupied in the public sector of the economy and who has lost its job.

2.2. Descriptive statistics

Let us consider the interconnection of social characteristics of the respondents and their life attitude in general (see *Table 2*).

Table 2. Attitude to life in general*

| Alternatives | Values | Not satisfied with life in general | Satisfied with life in general |
|--|--------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| "The standard of living dropped" | % | 43.5 | 56.5 |
| | St. residual | +5.9 | -3.9 |
| "The standard of living remains the same" | % | 15.9 | 84.1 |
| | St. residual | -6.1 | +4.1 |
| "The standard of living improved" | % | 5.0 | 95.0 |
| | St. residual | -2.1 | |
| "18 – 29 years" | % | 20.6 | 79.4 |
| | St. residual | -3.0 | +2.0 |
| "30 – 59 years" | % | 32.6 | 67.4 |
| | St. residual | | |
| "60 years and over" | % | 35.6 | 64.4 |
| | St. residual | | |
| "I live on this income without financial difficulties" | % | 3.0 | 97.0 |
| | St. residual | -4.1 | 2.7 |
| "This income is basically sufficient" | % | 12.9 | 87.1 |
| | St. residual | -7.5 | 5.0 |
| "It is quite difficult to live on such income" | % | 44.1 | 55.9 |
| | St. residual | +4.9 | -3.3 |
| "It is very difficult to live on such income" | % | 68.6 | 31.4 |
| | St. residual | +8.6 | -5.7 |
| Worker | % | 27.6 | 72.4 |
| | St. residual | | |
| Businessman | % | 29.1 | 70.9 |
| | St. residual | | |
| Specialist with higher education | % | 25.9 | 74.1 |
| | St. residual | | |
| Employee without higher education | % | 39.2 | 60.8 |
| | St. residual | +1.8 | |
| Unemployed | % | 54.7 | 45.3 |
| | St. residual | +3.8 | -2.5 |
| Student | % | 13.4 | 86.6 |
| | St. residual | -3.4 | +2.2 |
| Retired (unemployed) | % | 35.6 | 64.4 |
| | St. residual | | |
| Average sample | % | 30.5 | 69.5 |

* The table shows only significant standardized residuals

Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 2 shows that in a greater degree not satisfied with life in general are those respondents whose level of life has decreased under the influence of the current crisis. The proportion of respondents dissatisfied with life in general in this category is 43.5% compared with 30.7 percent on average in the sample. In addition, they have a significant positive standardized residual (+5.9) via the alternative "not satisfied". This indicates that respondents whose standard of living has dropped, to a greater extent than those who have it has increased or remained unchanged, tend to feel a sense of dissatisfaction with their life in general. Representatives of the older age groups more than the younger groups are not satisfied with their life in general. The proportion of dissatisfied with life at first category is 35.6%, while the second is 20.6%. To the greatest extent (68.9%) not satisfied with the life are those respondents for whom "it is very difficult to live in this income". They have a significant positive standardized residual (+8.6) concerning this alternative. Adjacent to them are the respondents, for whom "it is quite difficult to live on such income" (44.1%, the standardized residual +4.9). The unemployed and employees without higher education more than all other social groups are not satisfied with life in general. They have the significant positive standardized residuals (+3.8 and +1.8, respectively) concerning the alternative "not satisfied". The relationship between social characteristics of respondents and their relationship to political institutions may be demonstrated based on data in Table 3.

Table 3. Attitudes toward political institutions

| Alternative | Values | President | | Government | | State Duma | | Court | | Police | |
|--|--------------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| | | Do not trust | Trust |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| "The standard of living dropped" | % | 22.7 | 77.3 | 51.7 | 48.3 | 64.8 | 35.2 | 62.4 | 37.6 | 62.5 | 37.5 |
| | St. residual | +3.7 | | +3.8 | -3.3 | +3.1 | -3.4 | +2.7 | -2.9 | +2.4 | -2.7 |
| "The standard of living remains the same" | % | 9.6 | 90.4 | 30.0 | 70.0 | 44.7 | 55.3 | 44.8 | 55.2 | 45.9 | 54.1 |
| | St. residual | -3.9 | +1.8 | -4.1 | +3.4 | -3.2 | +3.6 | -2.6 | +2.9 | -2.8 | +3.1 |
| "The standard of living improved" | % | 10.5 | 89.5 | 26.3 | 73.7 | 38.9 | 61.1 | 18.8 | 81.3 | 62.5 | 37.5 |
| | St. residual | | | | | | | -1.9 | +2.1 | | |
| "18 – 29years" | % | 17.9 | 82.1 | 34.7 | 65.3 | 48.2 | 51.8 | 35.4 | 64.6 | 43.3 | 56.7 |
| | St. residual | | | -1.7 | | | +1.8 | -4.1 | +4.5 | -2.7 | +3.0 |
| "30 – 59 years" | % | 18.0 | 82.0 | 43.6 | 56.4 | 58.1 | 41.9 | 56.4 | 43.6 | 57.2 | 42.8 |
| | St. residual | | | | | | | | | | |
| "60 years and over" | % | 12.3 | 87.7 | 42.7 | 57.3 | 57.8 | 42.2 | 72.1 | 27.9 | 65.2 | 34.8 |
| | St. residual | -1.8 | | | | | | +3.5 | -3.8 | +2.0 | -2.2 |
| "I live on this income without financial difficulties" | % | 8.8 | 91.2 | 24.2 | 75.8 | 43.1 | 56.9 | 39.3 | 60.7 | 41.9 | 58.1 |
| | St. residual | | | -2.2 | +1.8 | | | | | | |
| "This income is basically sufficient" | % | 15.2 | 84.8 | 36.0 | 64.0 | 49.2 | 50.8 | 45.5 | 54.5 | 49.0 | 51.0 |
| | St. residual | | | -1.9 | | -2.0 | +2.2 | -2.4 | +2.6 | -1.9 | +2.1 |
| "It is quite difficult to live on such income" | % | 16.4 | 83.6 | 43.9 | 56.1 | 59.6 | 40.4 | 60.2 | 39.8 | 60.6 | 39.4 |
| | St. residual | | | | | | | -1.8 | | | |
| "It is very difficult to live on such income" | % | 25.6 | 74.4 | 60.5 | 39.5 | 73.2 | 26.8 | 70.3 | 29.7 | 68.0 | 32.0 |
| | St. residual | +2.8 | | +3.7 | -3.1 | +2.9 | -3.3 | +2.7 | -2.9 | +2.1 | -2.3 |
| Worker | % | 17.6 | 82.4 | 44.4 | 55.6 | 55.7 | 44.3 | 57.0 | 43.0 | 53.2 | 46.8 |
| | St. residual | | | | | | | | | | |
| Businessman | % | 29.1 | 70.9 | 47.1 | 52.9 | 63.5 | 36.5 | 57.4 | 42.6 | 61.5 | 38.5 |
| | St. residual | +2.3 | | | | | | | | | |

| <i>I</i> | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Specialist with higher education | % | 22.4 | 77.6 | 44.3 | 55.7 | 59.8 | 40.2 | 55.9 | 44.1 | 53.5 | 46.5 |
| | St. residual | +2.0 | | | | | | | | | |
| Employee without higher education | % | 18.5 | 81.5 | 43.1 | 56.9 | 67.2 | 32.8 | 62.0 | 38.0 | 64.0 | 36.0 |
| | St. residual | | | | | +1.7 | -1.9 | | | | |
| Unemployed | % | 18.4 | 81.6 | 43.1 | 56.9 | 56.9 | 43.1 | 48.6 | 51.4 | 54.8 | 45.2 |
| | St. residual | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student | % | 11.5 | 88.5 | 26.1 | 73.9 | 42.0 | 58.0 | 28.8 | 71.2 | 41.0 | 59.0 |
| | St. residual | | | -2.5 | +2.1 | -1.9 | +2.2 | -3.6 | +3.9 | -2.1 | +2.3 |
| Retired (unemployed) | % | 12.2 | 87.8 | 43.7 | 56.3 | 55.1 | 44.9 | 66.3 | 33.7 | 61.6 | 38.4 |
| | St. residual | -1.8 | | | | | | +2.4 | -2.6 | | |
| Average sample | % | 16.7 | 83.3 | 41.4 | 58.6 | 55.7 | 44.3 | 53.7 | 46.3 | 55.2 | 44.8 |

Source: compiled by the authors.

Comparison of mean values under both alternatives indicates that only the President and the government have the proportion of those who trust higher than the proportion of those who don't trust. Analysis of the standardized residuals leads to the conclusion that the respondents more inclined not to trust all observing political institutions are those whose living standard has dropped and for whom "it is very difficult" to live on their income. Among both categories of respondents in all institutions according to the alternative "don't trust" can be observed significant positive values of the standardized residuals. Among age groups there is no such unequivocal relationship to the institutions. Only the representatives of older generation more than the younger and middle generations tend not to trust the court and the police. They have a proportion of those who don't trust significantly higher than those who trust (72.1% and 65.2%, respectively). In addition, concerning the older generation significant positive values of the standardized residuals in both cases can be observed. The only institution to which an older generation feels less distrust in comparison with a younger one is the President. The older and middle generations shows a higher level of distrust in almost all institutions (except the President) than that of the younger generation. Among younger generation the percentage of those who trust is higher than the proportion of those who don't concerning all observing institutions. Given the fact that the middle and older generations make up a large part of the respondents, we can maintain a quite high degree of tension in relations between citizens and public servants represented in the State Duma, the judiciary and the police and low level of trust in the officials as defenders of the conflicting interests of citizens (Sunami, 2013).

The dependence of the social characteristics of the respondents and their relationship to participation in mass protests against decline in living standards can be traced on the basis of the following data (see *Table 4*).

Table 4. Attitude to participation in mass protests against decreasing living standards

| Alternatives | Values | Not intend to participate | Intend to participate |
|---|--------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>I</i> | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| "The standard of living dropped" | % | 72.1 | 27.9 |
| | St. residual | | +2.6 |
| "The standard of living remains the same" | % | 83.1 | 16.9 |
| | St. residual | | -2.8 |
| "The standard of living improved" | % | 80.0 | 20.0 |
| | St. residual | | |
| "18 – 29 years" | % | 72.9 | 27.1 |
| | St. residual | | |

| <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> |
|--|--------------|----------|----------|
| "30 – 59 years" | % | 75.9 | 24.1 |
| | St. residual | | |
| "60 years and over" | % | 84.3 | 15.7 |
| | St. residual | | -2.5 |
| "I live on this income without financial difficulties" | % | 84.8 | 15.2 |
| | St. residual | | |
| "This income is basically sufficient" | % | 83.5 | 16.5 |
| | St. residual | 1.7 | -3.1 |
| "It is quite difficult to live on such income" | % | 70.4 | 29.6 |
| | St. residual | | +2.7 |
| "It is very difficult to live on such income" | % | 67.5 | 32.5 |
| | St. residual | | +2.4 |
| Worker | % | 69.0 | 31.0 |
| | St. residual | | +2.4 |
| Businessman | % | 67.3 | 32.7 |
| | St. residual | | |
| Specialist with higher education | % | 80.0 | 20.0 |
| | St. residual | | |
| Employee without higher education | % | 73.1 | 26.9 |
| | St. residual | | |
| Unemployed | % | 71.8 | 28.2 |
| | St. residual | | |
| Student | % | 79.5 | 20.5 |
| | St. residual | | |
| Retired (unemployed) | % | 83.6 | 16.4 |
| | St. residual | | -2.2 |
| Average sample | % | 77.2 | 22.8 |

Source: compiled by the authors.

In *Table 4* we see that respondents whose living standards have decreased to a larger extent than those whose living standard remained the same or increased, tend to participate in protests (they have positive standardized residual). Respondents for whom it is "quite difficult" or "very difficult" to live on their income, more than those who have sufficient income or do not have financial difficulties, tend to participate in mass protests. Workers and businessmen to a greater extent than other social groups are ready to join the protests. The first category has a significant positive standardized residual, and among the second group the proportion intending to participate in such demonstrations is 1.4 times higher than among all respondents. Among less inclined to participate in mass rallies are the students, professionals with higher education and the retirees.

The structure of a potential political activity of various categories of respondents is presented in *Table 5*.

Table 5. Degree of potential political activity

| Alternatives | Values | The collection of signatures under the appeal to the authorities | | Rallies, pickets, demonstration permitted by the authorities | | Boycotts to the authorities (refusal to pay taxes, rent) | |
|--|-------------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|
| | | Allow | Do not allow | Allow | Do not allow | Allow | Do not allow |
| "The standard of living dropped" | % St. residual | 75.6 | 24.4 | 48.1 | 51.9 | | |
| "The standard of living remains the same" | % St. residual | 69.9 | 30.1 | 39.0 | 61.0 | Asymp. Sig. less than 0.05 | |
| "The standard of living improved" | % St. residual | 61.9 | 38.1 | 40.0 | 60.0 | | |
| "18 – 29years" | % St. residual | 76.2 | 23.8 | 45.8 | 54.2 | 18.0 | 82.0 |
| "30 – 59 years" | % St. residual | 76.4 | 23.6 | 46.7 | 53.3 | 11.0 | 89.0 |
| "60 years and over" | % St. residual | 60.9 | 39.1 | 34.5 | 65.5 | 6.0 | 94.0 |
| "I live on this income without financial difficulties" | % St. residual | | | | | 8.8 | 91.2 |
| "This income is basically sufficient" | % St. residual | Asymp. Sig. less than 0.05 | | Asymp. sig. less than 0.05 | | 9.3 | 90.7 |
| "It is quite difficult to live on such income" | % St. residual | | | | | 11.9 | 88.1 |
| "It is very difficult to live on such income" | % St. residual | | | | | 19.6 | 80.4 |
| Worker | % St. residual | 74.9 | 25.1 | | | 13.9 | 86.1 |
| Businessman | % St. residual | 61.8 | 38.2 | | | 15.1 | 84.9 |
| Specialist with higher education | % St. residual | 76.1 | 23.9 | | | 11.8 | 88.2 |
| Employee without higher education | % St. residual | 77.2 | 22.8 | | | 13.3 | 86.7 |
| Unemployed | % St. residual | 79.7 | 20.3 | | | 18.7 | 81.3 |
| Student | % St. residual | 73.5 | 26.5 | | | 16.1 | 83.9 |
| Retired (unemployed) | % St. residual | 62.6 | 37.4 | | | 4.5 | 95.5 |
| Average sample | % | 69.8 | 26.1 | 42.6 | 54.9 | 11.2 | 85.5 |

Source: compiled by the authors.

The analysis of *Table 5* shows that the strongest inclination to participate in the collection of signatures under petitions to the authorities, demonstrate the respondents who are unemployed, but also professionals and employees of the younger and average age, whose level of life decreased due to the crisis. Among all these categories the proportion of respondents seeking to engage in these activities is significantly higher than an average value on this indicator. In part of the table labeled "Significance below 0.05" data are not available because there is nothing we can say about the relationship between the assessment of the adequacy of income for life and attitude to participate in the collection of signatures under the

appeal to the authorities because of the impossibility of applying the criterion of Chi-square. Almost the same situation is could be observed for participation in authorized rallies, pickets and demonstrations. The respondents, whose life has worsened under the impact of the crisis, tend to engage in these activities to a greater extent than respondents of the older age, whose life has not changed or improved. In this case, an attitude to the activities listed above depends on neither the assessment of an adequacy of income for life, nor of a social belonging. Concerning the boycotts to the authorities a slightly different picture can be observed. The participation in these activities is allowed to a greater extent by younger respondents (standardized residual +3.2), respondents, for whom it is "very difficult" to live on their income (standardized residual +2.9) and the unemployed (standardized residual +1.8).

For identifying the relationship between all the above mentioned variables it is advisable to use cluster analysis. This procedure is based on calculating joint frequencies of the variables mentioned by the respondents. The more variables are mentioned together, the closer they are on the chart (*see Figure 2*).

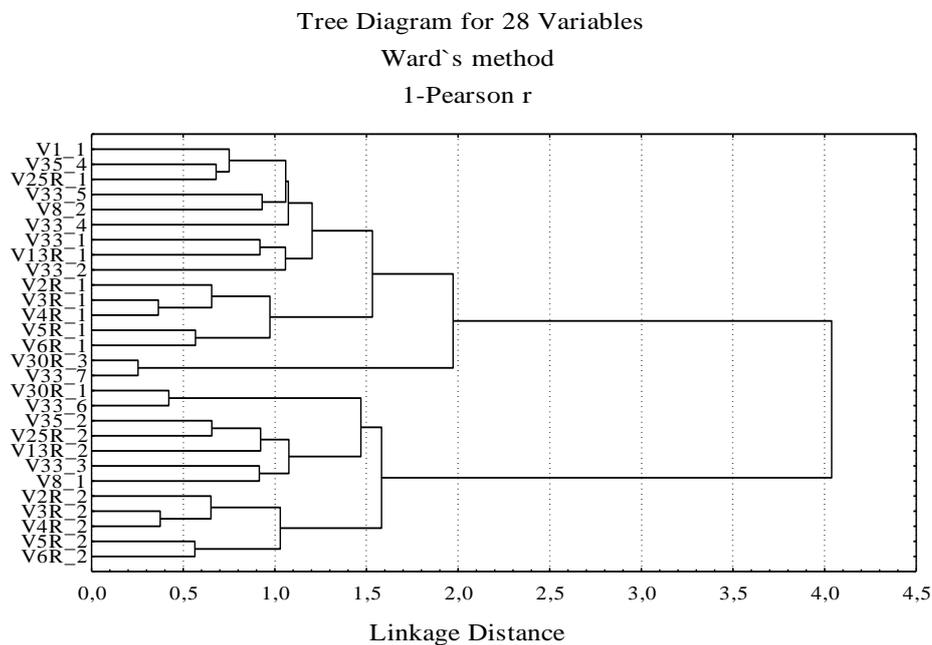


Figure 2. The interconnection of social characteristics of the respondents and indicators of social tension (Figure 2).

Table 6. The designation of variables

| | |
|--------|---|
| V1.1 | The living standards have dropped |
| v2r.1 | Do not trust the President |
| v2r.2 | Trust the President |
| v3r.1 | Do not trust the government |
| v3r.2 | Trust the government |
| v4r.1 | Do not trust the state Duma |
| v4r.2 | Trust the State Duma |
| v5r.1 | Do not trust the court |
| v5r.2 | Trust the court |
| v6r.1 | Do not trust the police |
| v6r.2 | Trust the police |
| v8.1 | Most people can be trusted |
| v8.2 | Even excessive caution in dealing with people cannot hurt |
| v13r.1 | Do not intend to participate in protests |

| | |
|--------|---|
| v13r.2 | Intend to participate in protests |
| v25r.1 | Not satisfied with life in general |
| v25r.2 | Satisfied with life in general |
| v30r.1 | Junior group |
| v30r.3 | Senior group |
| v33.1 | Workers |
| v33.2 | Businessmen |
| v33.3 | Specialists |
| v33.4 | Employees |
| v33.5 | Unemployed |
| v33.6 | Students |
| v33.7 | Retired |
| v35.2 | This income is quite sufficient |
| v35.4 | It is very difficult to live on such income |

Cluster analysis was performed using the package Statistica 6.0. "Pruning" the dendrogram is recommended at the level of 2.0.

The analysis has selected two clusters (groups of variables). The upper cluster consists of variables (top to bottom): "the living standards have dropped", "Not satisfied with life as a whole", "it is very difficult to live on such income", "Unemployed", "Workers", "Intend to participate in protests", "Businessmen", "Employees", "Do not trust the President", "Do not trust the government", "Do not trust the State Duma", "Do not trust the court," "Do not trust the police", "Senior", "Retired".

The bottom cluster includes the variables: "Junior group", "Students", "This income is quite sufficient", "Satisfied with life in general," "Do not intend to participate in protests", "Specialists", "Trust the President", "Trust the government", "Trust the State Duma", "Trust the court", "Trust the police".

The analysis of the obtained data allows concluding that the dissatisfaction with the current situation and relationship between people prevailed among the social strata, which have great life difficulties and are dominated by negative attitudes. They have less trust in political institutions and are more inclined to protest against governmental policy. The social strata that have less financial difficulties and are dominated by positive attitudes are less prone to negative moods. They have more trust in political institutions and less likely to participate in protests.

Note that the cluster analysis combines the variables based on the maximum common frequency reference in the respondents' answers. This means that, for example, not all retired have negative attitudes to the political institutions, but their prevailing part has. Among them there are people with positive attitudes to the most others, political institutions and immigrants, but they constitute a minority. Similarly, not all students have positive attitudes to the political institutions. Among them there are people with a negative attitude, but they are a minority.

Comparison of the results of micro-analysis of contingency tables and results of the cluster analysis allows concluding that, in general, they correspond to each other. This means that we have succeeded to reproduce to some extent a real structure of mass consciousness of the different categories of population and identify the sources of social tension which are reflected in it.

Conclusions

Data obtained by the group of authors, help to characterize the current state of the Russian society as a crisis. This crisis can be defined as a system one, as it encompasses socio-economic, political and ideological levels.

The study showed that the decline in living standards caused by economic instability, aggravated by global economic problems, has a significant impact on public attitudes, increasing the level of social tension. Discontent rooted in the public consciousness, generates a fairly high level of negative sentiments, which in turn also affect the willingness to participate in the protest action. It can be argued that the dissatisfaction with the situation and negative social attitudes are more characteristic of socially vulnerable strata of the population with incomes which do not provide the basic living needs in the conditions of crisis. They have less trust in political institutions and are more inclined to participate in mass actions.

Indicators of social tension used in our study (such as, satisfaction with life in general; the relation to the political institutions; attitude to participation in mass protests; and attitude to participation in different types of political actions) provide important information about the main types of negative social attitudes and the degree of their spread in different population groups.

One of the key problems, is the attitude towards the power institutions. The prevalence of distrust over the trust to the majority of these institutions doesn't allow creating and debugging of institutional mechanisms for the expression of discontent. This disrupts the interaction of government and society and exacerbates negative sentiments.

Timely identification of sources of mass dissatisfaction with the existing situation and the level of potential protest activity of different segments of the population enable to overcome spontaneity in decision making and increase management efficiency. Management impacts based on this approach, could contribute to the easing of social tension, to prevent mass protest activity and potentially destructive conflicts.

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Appendix to Section 2.2. Descriptive statistics

To Table 2. Attitude to life in general (pers.)*

| Alternatives | Not satisfied with life in general | Satisfied with life in general |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| "The standard of living dropped" | 43.5 | 56.5 |
| "The standard of living remains the same" | 15.9 | 84.1 |
| "The standard of living improved" | 5.0 | 95.0 |
| "18 – 29 years" | 20.6 | 79.4 |
| "30 – 59 years" | 32.6 | 67.4 |
| "60 years and over" | 35.6 | 64.4 |
| "I live on this income without financial difficulties" | 3.0 | 97.0 |
| "This income is basically sufficient" | 12.9 | 87.1 |
| "It is quite difficult to live on such income" | 44.1 | 55.9 |
| "It is very difficult to live on such income" | 68.6 | 31.4 |
| Worker | 27.6 | 72.4 |
| Businessman | 29.1 | 70.9 |
| Specialist with higher education | 25.9 | 74.1 |
| Employee without higher education | 39.2 | 60.8 |
| Unemployed | 54.7 | 45.3 |
| Student | 13.4 | 86.6 |
| Retired (unemployed) | 35.6 | 64.4 |
| Total | 30.5 | 69.5 |

* N=1218, ** The table does not include data on alternatives: "Difficult to answer", "Other", "Refuse to answer"

Source: compiled by the authors.

To Table 3. Attitudes toward political institutions (pers.)*

| Alternatives | President | | Government | | State Duma | | Court | | Police | |
|--|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| | Do not trust | Trust |
| "The standard of living dropped" | 142 | 483 | 318 | 297 | 390 | 212 | 349 | 210 | 379 | 227 |
| "The standard of living remains the same" | 49 | 461 | 151 | 352 | 219 | 271 | 194 | 239 | 217 | 256 |
| "The standard of living improved" | 2 | 17 | 5 | 14 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 13 | 10 | 6 |
| "18 – 29 years" | 49 | 225 | 94 | 177 | 131 | 141 | 95 | 173 | 122 | 160 |
| "30 – 59 years" | 112 | 510 | 268 | 346 | 346 | 250 | 314 | 243 | 342 | 256 |
| "60 years and over" | 34 | 242 | 114 | 153 | 148 | 108 | 142 | 55 | 150 | 80 |
| "I live on this income without financial difficulties" | 6 | 62 | 16 | 50 | 28 | 37 | 22 | 34 | 26 | 36 |
| "This income is basically sufficient" | 81 | 451 | 189 | 336 | 252 | 260 | 211 | 253 | 247 | 257 |
| "It is quite difficult to live on such income" | 66 | 337 | 174 | 222 | 227 | 154 | 207 | 137 | 231 | 150 |
| "It is very difficult to live on such income" | 40 | 116 | 92 | 60 | 112 | 41 | 102 | 43 | 102 | 48 |
| Worker | 36 | 169 | 91 | 114 | 108 | 86 | 102 | 77 | 108 | 95 |
| Businessman | 16 | 39 | 24 | 27 | 33 | 19 | 27 | 20 | 32 | 20 |
| Specialist with higher education | 47 | 163 | 93 | 117 | 122 | 82 | 105 | 83 | 106 | 92 |
| Employee without higher education | 23 | 101 | 53 | 70 | 82 | 40 | 75 | 46 | 80 | 45 |
| Unemployed | 14 | 62 | 31 | 41 | 41 | 31 | 34 | 36 | 40 | 33 |
| Student | 13 | 100 | 29 | 82 | 47 | 65 | 32 | 79 | 48 | 69 |
| Retired (unemployed) | 33 | 238 | 114 | 147 | 140 | 114 | 130 | 66 | 141 | 88 |
| Total | 195 | 977 | 476 | 676 | 625 | 499 | 551 | 471 | 614 | 496 |

* N=1218, ** The table does not include data on alternatives: "Difficult to answer", "Other", "Refuse to answer"

Source: compiled by the authors.

To Table 4. Attitude to participation in mass protests against decreasing living standards and Table 5. Degree of potential political activity (pers.)**

| Alternatives | Participation in political actions | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-------|--|-------|--|-------|
| | Mass actions | | The collection of signatures under the appeal to the authorities | | Rallies, pickets, demonstration permitted by the authorities | | Boycotts to the authorities (refusal to pay taxes, rent) | |
| | Not intend to participate | Intend to participate | Do not allow | Allow | Do not allow | Allow | Do not allow | Allow |
| "The standard of living dropped" | 173 | 448 | 154 | 476 | 330 | 306 | 544 | 82 |
| "The standard of living remains the same" | 86 | 424 | 152 | 353 | 315 | 201 | 464 | 50 |
| "The standard of living improved" | 4 | 16 | 8 | 13 | 12 | 8 | 17 | 3 |
| "18 – 29 years" | 76 | 204 | 67 | 214 | 154 | 130 | 233 | 51 |
| "30 – 59 years" | 148 | 467 | 147 | 475 | 335 | 294 | 557 | 69 |
| "60 years and over" | 43 | 231 | 104 | 162 | 180 | 95 | 251 | 16 |
| "I live on this income without financial difficulties" | 10 | 56 | 24 | 43 | 40 | 27 | 62 | 6 |
| "This income is basically sufficient" | 89 | 449 | 142 | 393 | 322 | 225 | 487 | 50 |
| "It is quite difficult to live on such income" | 118 | 281 | 110 | 291 | 214 | 191 | 357 | 48 |
| "It is very difficult to live on such income" | 49 | 102 | 39 | 115 | 82 | 73 | 123 | 30 |
| Worker | 62 | 138 | 51 | 152 | 103 | 105 | 179 | 29 |
| Businessman | 18 | 37 | 21 | 34 | 21 | 33 | 45 | 8 |
| Specialist with higher education | 42 | 168 | 51 | 162 | 101 | 111 | 187 | 25 |
| Employee without higher education | 35 | 95 | 29 | 98 | 58 | 72 | 111 | 17 |
| Unemployed | 20 | 51 | 15 | 59 | 34 | 39 | 61 | 14 |
| Student | 24 | 93 | 31 | 86 | 49 | 69 | 99 | 19 |
| Retired (unemployed) | 44 | 225 | 98 | 164 | 106 | 168 | 252 | 12 |
| Total | 267 | 902 | 318 | 851 | 669 | 519 | 136 | 1041 |

* N=1218, ** The table does not include data on alternatives: "Difficult to answer", "Other", "Refuse to answer"

Source: compiled by the authors.