

## ATTITUDES OF CITIZENS TO THE POLICY OF HOMELESSNESS IN ST. PETERSBURG

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### Abstract

The problem of homelessness in Saint-Petersburg is very acute at the moment. According to statistics, there are estimated 12 000 homeless people in the streets, with that number growing every year. This problem relates to studies in social and political psychology. A psychological research was conducted, aimed at researching socio- psychological characteristics and features of homelessness so that a typology of homeless people can be created in order to socialize them. Preparatory stage of this study was a through observation of homeless people, including an in-depth interview for a better study. At this point, following types of homeless people were proposed: hustlers, vagrants, people ready for change, people not ready for change, escapists using drugs and alcohol, and reasons for losing home were identified as well. Taking results of preparatory stage into account, the design of main study was made, including a scale multi-factor questionnaire. 60 homeless people in Saint- Petersburg were surveyed. They were asked to evaluate the scale of agreement with statements divided into blocks. Blocks were formed from different spheres in order to capture all the psychological reasons for becoming homeless. Among others, there was family block to evaluate the family relationships, block of dependency on alcohol or drugs, block of socialization to evaluate readiness to embrace change, block of mental disorders.

Exploratory factor analysis of questionnaire data united the signs of factors, which we gave following names: factor of readiness/not readiness to accept change, factor of family conflict in childhood, factor of divorce/leaving/isolation from family, factor of forgetfulness or capacity to leave relationships, adventurer factor, vagrancy factor, alcoholism due to post-traumatic disorder. Psychological features of homelessness in the following study are seen in the boundaries of psychological science as evading risk, danger, threat, responsibility, overcoming fear, as a way to escape reality creating personal defense mechanism against internal and external threats and fears. The questionnaire for homelessness helps identify and predict psychological and sociological features which can leave the person on the streets and thrown out of society, which can help create patterns for socializing homeless people and preventing homelessness in Saint-Petersburg.

**Keywords:** *Homeless people types, psychological reasons for homelessness, vagrancy, problem of socializing homeless people.*

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### 1. Introduction

The aim of the study was a development in a typology of homeless citizens based on their socio-political and socio-psychological reasons for disorders in socialization of personality. Objectives of the study: to identify the psychological factors and causes that lead Russian citizens to homelessness; to assess the willingness of homeless people to change their lives; to obtain a deeper psychological portrait of the homeless and to develop a socio-psychological typology of the homeless.

The object of the study was homeless citizens living in St. Petersburg and other regions regardless of age, gender, experience and history of homelessness, social status and subjective income.

The subject was the study of psychological characteristics that affect the formation of homelessness.

The main hypothesis was the assumption that homeless citizens may have different typological psychological characteristics depending on the causes of socialization of personality disorders.

The study period was August-November 2018.

The choice of the place for research was "Maltese help service" as well as urban "night stay social homes" and other places of stay for the homeless.

The design of the questionnaire included statements that took into account the following characteristics and factors of the homeless person:

- the factor of satisfaction with the quality of life and confidence in the future;
- the factor of personality formation in childhood under the influence of negative cases of interaction with family and friends;
- the factor of the individual's propensity to dromomania;
- the factor of willingness of the individual to change.

There were denoted the psychological characteristics of the behavior of homeless citizens, for various reasons, who were homeless and without documents:

- \* factor of willingness of the subject to changes in his life. This possibility indicates the willingness or unwillingness of the subject to change in life, the willingness to take responsibility;
- \* the factor of conflict and destructive relations of the respondent with his / her family in childhood;
- \* the factor of the respondent's willingness for isolation from the family in childhood.
- \* the factor of psychological mobility, the ability to forget/get out of a relationship or some living space, as well as the respondent's propensity to adventurism.
- \* the factor of the respondent's propensity to dromomania, namely the inability and unwillingness of a person to move away from the "dependent" lifestyle;
- \* the factor of avoiding the "hard" reality with the help of alcohol or drugs.

The procedure of final statistical processing and interpretation of the received information was done.

The results of the study made it possible to draw significant conclusions and highlight the typology of homeless citizens

## 2. Homeless questionnaire

According to the results of the research obtained by this questionnaire (O. V. Medyanik, A. D. Zaitsev).

### 2.1. Social disadaptation

The survey participants showed an average degree of agreement that they understand people who run away from home ( $M=3.24$ ,  $\sigma=2.5$ ), about half of the respondents faced a similar situation when there was a good reason to run away from home. Also, almost half of the respondents expressed understanding of people who leave the house and often change their habitat ( $M=3.33$ ,  $\sigma=2.5$ ). One of these reasons may be to draw attention to yourself during a long absence in the house ( $M=3.05$ ,  $\sigma=2.55$ ). Man, running away from home, forced a family to worry about him, thereby attracting attention to himself, which he lacked in the family.

The subjects responded to the remaining statements of this unit with a low degree of agreement. "I believe that real life is only on the street" ( $M=1.38$ ,  $\sigma=1.19$ ). It can be concluded that, despite the current situation of the respondents, they do not agree with this statement, we can even say that the homeless are not satisfied with their current situation. For them, their living on the street is not real life. This is some form of escape from reality, a protective reaction from a homeless existence.

The analysis of the average values of the first block showed that the homeless faced to some extent a situation when they had to leave the house, for example, to attract the missing attention to themselves or as a result of avoiding adverse factors that can negatively affect the emerging psyche. Homeless people also understand that they are in a difficult situation, but they try to abstract from reality.

### 2.2. Mental illness

In this block, subjects expressed low or below-average agreement on all statements. This indicates an adequate perception of the homeless by ordinary citizens. If the subjects answered the statements "I am often told that I am abnormal" ( $M=1.79$ ,  $\sigma=1.52$ ), "People say your head's not right" ( $M=1.79$ ,  $\sigma=1.44$ ), "People are avoiding me, because they think that I am not quite adequate person" ( $M=1.98$ ,  $\sigma=1.81$ ) with a high degree of agreement it could be said that ordinary citizens have a negative attitude to the homeless, as well as the homeless treat themselves to people who are not all right with the head. However, this trend is not observed.

The analysis of the average values of the second block shows that neither the homeless nor ordinary people perceive the homeless as unhealthy and inadequate people. This block is aimed at identifying the attitude of citizens to the homeless and the final values can be argued that ordinary citizens do not consider homeless abnormal and mentally ill people.

### 2.3. Alcoholism and drug addiction

The homeless interviewed responded with a fairly high level of agreement with the statement "I am a non-drinking person" ( $M=4.31$ ,  $\sigma=2.23$ ), as well as with a low level of agreement with the statement "In alcohol I seek my salvation" ( $M=1.55$ ,  $\sigma=1.44$ ). It can be concluded that the majority of the homeless interviewed remain or have already become non-drinking people. Low level of consent is also present in the following statements: "I understand people who cannot live without alcohol" ( $M=2.65$ ,  $\sigma=2.22$ ), "Only with the help of alcohol or drugs people can accept the heavy reality" ( $M=1.72$ ,  $\sigma=1.78$ ). From the above results on this block, we can distinguish the following points: among the homeless more than half are non-drinking people, while almost all respondents agree that alcohol or drugs will not help life to get better, but aggravate their situation.

### 2.4. Family relation

In this block, the respondents showed an average result for the first two statements "I thought there are terrible relationships in my family" ( $M=3.02$ ,  $\sigma=2.26$ ), "I preferred to communicate more with my peers than with my family" ( $M=3.20$ ,  $\sigma=2.24$ ). Such results may indicate that about half of the respondents had unstable or simply bad relations within the family, so it was easier for respondents to keep in touch on the street with those who understand them than to tolerate bad relations at home. This can be a serious psychological reason that led a person to the street. As a result of traumatic events occurring at home, people simply ran away from the influence of harmful factors on the street.

### 2.5. Prospects of socialization

As can be seen from table 1, the majority of respondents are non-drinking people ( $M=4.31$ ,  $\sigma=2.23$ ), but somehow less than half consume alcohol.

Also, based on the results of comparing the averages, we can say that almost all respondents are ready to do anything to change their lives for the better ( $M=5.66$ ,  $\sigma=2.10$ ). These indicators show that the homeless have not lost hope of returning to a normal life, and it is worth noting that the majority of the homeless agree to get a job if they are offered ( $M=4.35$ ,  $\sigma=2.18$ ). It is also worth noting that despite the current state, almost all homeless people believe in tomorrow ( $M=5.50$ ,  $\sigma=2.37$ ) and they are ready to start a new life if they are helped ( $M=5.72$ ,  $\sigma=1.98$ ). Also, most of the homeless want and are willing to work ( $M=5.67$ ,  $\sigma=2.14$ ).

According to the results of this block, the majority of homeless people understand the difficult situation they are in and, nevertheless, almost all of them are ready and want to change their lives for the better, which in the future can significantly help in the process of socialization of homeless people.

Summing up the data of descriptive statistics, we can say that even though the homeless are deprived of shelter, support, financial component, they are not deprived of faith in the future and hope for a better life. We can also say that a large number of homeless people had difficult relationships within the family, which is why the person left the house, running away from the negative influence of relatives, perhaps avoiding moral or physical violence. As a result, the man had to run away from home and spend time on the street. This is one of the essential reasons why a person has come to this way of life. The unbearable desire to leave the house and go to another reality in which there is no moral and physical violence is the main reason why the homeless were on the street.

The homeless themselves understand that this way of life does not suit them, but they believe that tomorrow everything can become better. They are ready to take up work, to build their lives in a new way. However, it is worth noting, judging by the results of the questionnaire, the homeless are not able or simply do not want to take responsibility for themselves and are not able to independently correct their current situation. There are paternalistic attitudes towards others, which should help them or give attention and care, which they were deprived, perhaps, in childhood. They have not fully passed the children's socialization, forming the skills of living together in a family with relatives. They expect that help will come to them from the state or from people who care about them.

Almost all homeless people are ready and willing to work, but without help they do not want and are not able to find a job. According to the survey, the homeless do not consider themselves to be sick and abnormal people who should stay away, which is also a positive aspect in the further socialization of the homeless. The homeless also believe that ordinary citizens do not consider them sick or mentally unhealthy people and "healthy" society does not treat them with prejudice or hostility.

Let us also refer to the results of table 2, which describes the reasons why a person was homeless, the distribution by sex, as well as by territorial affiliation.

### 2.6. Causes of homelessness

As a result of the study, men were almost twice as many as women. At the same time on 3 accounts for 2 local homeless. The most common reason why people become homeless is "fraud". Then there are "family reasons", and close the three "judicial reasons". Such factors as: "the problem with

employment", "lack of support from the state", "the presence of addictions" and "problems with documents" distributed between a roughly equal number of votes, about 5 for each category. At the end of the list is the category "Debts".

### 3. Factor analysis of the questionnaire

The first factor by weight was called the *factor of willingness/unwillingness to change*, which combined the characteristics of a person's habituation to his way of life and not seeing the need to change the way of life that a person leads now, namely - the person does not hesitate to borrow money from others (0.291), and also does not want or cannot take responsibility (0.660). At the same time, the homeless person understands that he is avoided because he is considered not quite adequate and normal person (0.798)

We also received a number of categories that can be called "inverse" to the factor. Namely, the homeless are ready to do much to return to normal life (-0.645), they believe in tomorrow (-0.667). If they are helped from outside, they are ready to change (-0.549), and respondents have a desire and willingness to work (-0.595).

The second weight factor was named **the factor of conflict with relatives in childhood**, incorporates the belief that the runaway of the respondents from the house will make them worried (0.331), while homeless seemed to be in their families was a terrible relationship (0.628). They are also sure that their parents were cold to them (0.712), they also think that in childhood they were treated rudely (0.7), and in childhood they were subjected to physical or psychological violence (0.688). Their parents often quarreled (0.830), they also felt that as a child no one loved them (0.799) and they did not feel really needed (0.634). It is also worth noting that the people raised them drank a lot (0.398). The inclusion of the issue of alcohol consumption seems to be due to correlation.

The third *factor by weight is also related to the family sphere*, but it is more indicative of how much the respondent is prone to break/care/isolation from the family. This factor included a number of beliefs, such as understanding of people who run away from home (-0.634), which leave the house without any reason (-0.608), who leaves the house because of the strong anxiety (-0.660), as well as people who cannot live without alcohol (-0.546). Also, everyone was worried about the respondents when they ran away from home (-0.295). The homeless interviewed also noted that they needed constant care and supervision (-0.431), as well as respondents preferred to communicate with peers than with family (-0.416)

Next factor is *the factor of psychological destructive mobility*, the ability to forget/get out of a relationship or some living space, which can be called "street adventurism". A number of homeless respondents are sure that real life is only on the street (0.643). Respondents easily part with relatives (0.407). At the same time, respondents often change their habitat (0.582), and the people around them are convinced of the abnormality of the respondent (0.669) and that they have problems with the head (0.465). Also, respondents tend to avoid problems with alcohol (0.657).

The fifth factor combined the features of the factors, which are called as *the factor of dromomania*. These included the following features of the factor: some respondents like to roam the streets for no reason (0.612), they also feel that the walls are pressing on them (0.571), some of them do not like to think about tomorrow (0.540). Some responders have limitations in mobility (0.410). The respondents also noted that most of the money goes to alcohol (0.628), while they are ready to undergo treatment for addictions (0.582) and work if they receive such an offer (0.533).

The last factor reveals alcohol addiction as a result of children's reaction to psychological traumas and is named by us *as a factor of alcoholization as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder*. A number of respondents who grew up without parents (0.467) believes that children can run away from home if they are already independent (0.427). Also, some respondents admit that they see their salvation in alcohol (0.571) and this is the only way to come to terms with the hard reality (0.592). At the same time, they do not believe that they will ever be able to stop drinking (0.357) and overcome their addiction on their own (0.724).

The factor analysis allowed us to determine a number of significant psychological reasons why a person was on the street. These reasons include: conflicts with family, as a result of which a person simply could not be in a traumatic situation and left home; alcoholism and drug addiction, as a result of which spheres of human life one after another are destroyed and in the result a person is on the street without everything; children's psychological trauma, which caused a significant devastating effect on the psyche of the child, as a result of which the person is not able to continue to maintain a normal lifestyle.

As a result, the above reasons can develop a person dromomania, it leads to the fact that a person will not be able to take responsibility for his/ her life. There is a great chance for starting alcohol or drug addiction as a way to "escape" from reality. A person develops adventurism, a tendency to a dependent lifestyle, resentment and distrust of the rest of the world.

Exploratory factor analysis of the questionnaire data combined the features of the factors that we gave the following names: the factor of willingness/unwillingness to change, the factor of conflict with

family in childhood, the factor of breaking/leaving/ isolation with the family, the factor of the ability to forget or get out of a relationship, the factor of adventurism, the factor of dromomania, the factor of alcoholism as a consequence of post-traumatic stress disorder. These factors made it possible to distinguish the typology of the homeless.

#### 4. Summary

The results of our study can be used in social policy to work with homeless citizens. Firstly, we have established objective reasons why a person was on the street. The most common reasons were: "fraud", "problems with relatives" and "judicial reasons", "alcoholism". Male homeless were almost twice as many as female, and two-thirds of the homeless were "local" who were born in St. Petersburg.

Secondly, we are able to identify the psychological characteristics of homelessness, i.e. the psychological reasons why a person became homeless. Among such causes can be distinguished a runaway from home as a consequence of the traumatic psyche of the situation. The potential homeless in the family had a bad relationship, where the child witnessed beatings, quarrels, alcohol or drug using. Also, a person could become homeless if he was subjected to mental or physical violence in childhood. For the reasons listed above, the person was not able to be in the house and preferred to spend time on the street, where he/she got used to interact with their peers and where there was a high risk to fall into the wrong company. Also, many homeless people have signs of alcohol and drug addiction, which developed as a result of "escaping from reality". However, there is a positive change: the homeless, who have this addiction, were ready to undergo treatment for alcoholism and drug addiction.

Among the homeless were the people with dromomania. The percentage of such people is very small, but it cannot be excluded. People with dromomania do not think their lives are bad, and they are not willing to work or change their lives in any way. As a rule, these are people with a very long experience of homelessness. At the same time, the vast majority of homeless people understand that their life situation can be better and they are not satisfied with the current state. Almost all homeless people are ready and willing to work, they also believe in tomorrow and do not lose optimism. The majority of homeless people answered the question about their dreams and desires that they want to have their own roof over their heads.

As a result, we can also make a small conclusion that the homeless are not able to change their lives on their own. In their failures homeless blame the state, once close people, the system, etc., but in rare cases themselves. They are afraid or unwilling to take responsibility for their lives. In fact, they let it take its course on the principle of "come what may." Most of the homeless can be helped to socialize, as they are marked by a high degree of willingness to change for the better, and most importantly, they have hope for the best, but it is necessary to overcome a number of complex psychological barriers.

The observation process shown that the homeless are extremely distrustful. Most of them repeatedly betrayed and deceived close and unfamiliar people. Many were left without a home because of black realtors and deception from close relatives. Once on the street from a high degree of credulity and naivety, they were disappointed in people and in life, and they may first need psychological help and support from society and the state.

The second point is, as described above, the inability to take responsibility. For a long time living on the principle of "be that it will be" a person loses ability to make serious decisions, to make any efforts aimed at change. In this case, you need to provide a person with support in the face of the same people as he or competent professionals who will be able to gradually teach a person to independence and step by step independently move to the intended goals.

In order to help the homeless return to normal life, it is necessary to build a complex and gradual system that the homeless will have to go through. In order to reduce the number of homeless people in St. Petersburg in the future, it is necessary to focus on the maintenance of friendly relations in the family, the creation of special rehabilitation centers where the homeless could receive medical, psychological and legal assistance, the creation of hostels for the homeless and also need to find an opportunity to provide them with jobs, including them in the society with help of these measures.

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