

What do Teenagers Identify With and What They Value? The Range of Young People's Emotional Experiences: From Consumerism to National Identity

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to identify the emotional experiences of contemporary adolescents, revealing which societal phenomena or processes they value most. The paper presents a quantitative study aimed at identifying the various emotional experiences of Lithuanian adolescents of Lithuanian nationality studying in Lithuanian schools in Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Belarus, both national and non-national - communicative, altruistic, romantic, glorious, hedonistic - experiences. Statistical analysis of the research data showed that contemporary adolescents living both in Lithuania and in neighbouring countries have a very positive attitude towards communicative experiences, while aesthetic and romantic experiences are also important for adolescents. However, experiences related to the nation (mother tongue, history) are not particularly important for contemporary adolescents.

KEYWORDS: adolescents, emotional experiences, consumerism, national identity.

INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that the spectrum of values in modern society is wide and influenced by various challenges (cosmopolitanism, consumerism, etc.), and V. Aramavičiūtė points out that a person's emotional field is wide and the influence of emotions depends on the experiences that most often attract a person, and he/she starts to act in order to achieve the desired experiences, which determines the personality's emotional directionality as a specific need for emotional experiences (V. Aramavičiūtė, 2005). Higher experiences bring a person closer to spiritual values, help to see the value of the world, which a person is not able to experience only through cognitive processes (V. Aramavičiūtė, 2005).

Certainly, some of the most important emotional experiences in contemporary society are nation-centred, where identifying with the nation amidst a variety of shifting, collaged and dynamic identities is seen as an important fundamental knowledge of oneself, of one's origins, and of the importance of remaining oneself in the constant flow of time. It is agreed that national identity is dynamic, fluid and shaped by a person's life history (E. Crocetti, M. Rubini, K. Luyckx, W. Meeus, 2008; E. Crocetti, P. Jahromi, P., W. Meeus, 2012). Depending on the developmental stages of the individual, the sensitivity of the adolescent period in the formation of national identity becomes apparent, when the individual is searching for his or her own identity and developing an individual value system. Identification with the nation is one of the most important phenomena in society, when a person considers himself or herself to be part of the nation, accepts and believes in its established norms and way of life, and is familiar with its cultural, material and spiritual heritage. Of course, other life aspects are also important in modern society. For example, communication has an important role in nowadays society and is seen as a process in which partners with different emotional experiences express themselves. It is also a mutual interaction resulting from the needs of a common activity (J. Pikūnas, A. Palujanskienė, 2001). From a philosophical point of view, a person's being in the world is treated as being with other people. The sociability of an individual is the expression of his/her spirit, which promotes communion, the promotion and preservation of moral and national values. For example, Ch. Taylor points out that an individual's life is only made meaningful by communal existence. The only way to become a moral person is to live in a particular community with its own ingrained and life-affirming moral customs, traditions and language (D. Broniukaitytė, 2002).

Consumer culture and its entrenchment among adolescents is not an inevitable phenomenon in modern society. This is why it is so important to talk about axiomatic experiences, described as the joyful excitement, eagerness to acquire and collect new things, and the satisfaction at the thought that more of them will soon be associated with the consumer culture. Hedonistic experiences, defined as indulgence in pleasure, youthful exuberance, carelessness about one's own well-being and that of others, are also associated with the challenges of the modern world. In today's competitive society, it is also important for every teenager to do things and make efforts that are not just technically feasible, but also provide positive experiences. Practical experiences, defined as the joyful excitement, elation, enthusiasm when the work goes well and when you see that you will achieve good results, are therefore also

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important. At the same time, of course, it is also worth mentioning aesthetic experiences, which are seen as pleasurable experiences that arise from listening to music, reading fiction, looking at paintings.

The aim of the study is to identify the emotional experiences of contemporary adolescents, revealing which societal phenomena or processes they value most.

In this article, the chosen method of research is B. Dodonov's (1978) system of categorisation of experiences, which is supplemented (items 12, 13, 14 in Table 1) by the national experiences developed by the author of the article (Table 1).

Table 1. Extraction of emotional experiences based on the methodology of B. Dodonov (1978)

1.	Romantic - admiration, warm feelings arising from what is dear to many people, not just one.
2.	Axiomatic - collecting and preserving objects that symbolise historical meaning.
3.	Aesthetic - pleasurable experiences of listening to music, reading fiction, looking at paintings, observing nature.
4.	Practical - experiences of meaningful and successful activities that lead to human growth.
5.	Glorious - proof of one's worth as a person with a deep family history.
6.	Religious - pleasant feelings, the peace that comes from praying and believing in God.
7.	Hedonistic - pleasure-seeking, youthful exuberance, carefree.
8.	Altruistic - feelings of sincere devotion to other people.
9.	Gnostic - experiences arising from the discovery of new and right things that enable the creation, development and growth of a united society.
10.	Pugnistic - strong experiences arising from the struggle for dear people, for the nation.
11.	Communicative - the satisfaction that comes from interacting with other people.
12.	National (history of the nation) - a sense of unity and personal significance when learning about the painful and joyful pages of Lithuanian history.
13.	National (mother tongue) - joyful mood, admiration at hearing a Lithuanian word.
14.	National (ethnic culture) - uplifting, light-hearted feelings when thinking about the culture of a nation.

It is guided by the fact that emotional experiences express not only personal relationships with familiar reality - objects, phenomena, other people and oneself - but also reveal personality.

METHODOLOGY

The sample for the quantitative study was Lithuanian students of nationality in grades 9 to 10, who study in Lithuanian schools in Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Belarus. According to the data of the Lithuanian Statistical Department, the sample size, i.e. the number of pupils in grades IX to X studying in Lithuanian general education institutions, should be 395 respondents in grade IX and 395 respondents in grade X. It was also decided not to analyse the data provided by pupils of other nationalities in the analysis of the survey data, but to concentrate only on pupils of Lithuanian nationality. As the number of pupils studying in Lithuanian schools in Lithuania's neighbouring countries in grades IX to X is not large, the aim was to analyse the whole general population. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the constructed questionnaire is 0.851, which for a well-constructed questionnaire should be higher than 0.7.

The study explored the importance of experiences by applying the experiences identified by B. Dodonov. The criterion for evaluation was the strength of the experiences. Eight levels were distinguished: the highest level of all, where the ranking of the statements from 1 to 17 resulted in the selection of 1 or 2; very high level, where 3 or 4 were selected; high level, where 5 or 6 were selected; medium level, where 7 to 11 were selected; insufficient level, where 12 or 13 were selected; low level, where 14 or 15 were selected; very low level, where 16 or 17 were selected; and not specified, where no ranking was given.

Statistical analysis of the quantitative study was carried out with the SPSS 22.0 for Windows statistical data processing software.

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Table 2. Emotional experiences of Lithuanian nationality students in grades 9 - 10 studying in Lithuanian schools in Lithuania, according to the level of satisfaction provided (percent)

Ranks	The highest of all	Very high	High	Medium	Insufficient	Low	Very low
Emotional experiences							
Romantic	25,1	13,6	13,6	22,4	8,3	6,1	10,8
Axiomatic	8,1	14,3	11,6	28,9	10,6	9,6	16,7
Aesthetic	16,5	15,1	18,1	26,4	8,3	8,3	7,4
Practical	19,1	16,6	15,8	35	5,3	5,6	2,7
Glorious	8,1	13,9	15,1	39,3	9,6	7,5	6,4
Religious	5,8	6,3	9,3	26	11,7	14	26,9
Hedonistic	14,7	15,7	12,5	27,5	12,8	8,2	8,6
Altruistic	4,8	11,7	14,1	33,6	16,9	10,7	8,1
Gnostic	7,5	11,2	9,7	34,3	12,3	14,8	10,2
Pugnistic	11,8	13,2	10,7	28,5	9,5	11,8	14,5
Communicative	38,2	14,3	8,2	16	5,4	6,6	11,3
National (history of the nation)	9,9	13,3	10,9	23,9	13,8	14,3	14
National (nationality)	14,9	11,5	10,6	25,5	12,5	13,4	11,5
National (Lithuanian prestige)	7,7	9,9	12,3	29,4	14	17,1	9,5
National (Lithuania future)	4,5	8,1	9,2	35,5	15,1	15,8	11,8
National (International recognition of Lithuania)	6,6	9,8	12,3	34,7	13,2	14,8	8,5
National (mother tongue)	5	7,9	9,2	37,1	16,5	14,9	9,4

The emotional experiences distinguished by B. Dodonov (1978) are not meant to be contrasted with national experiences, because the holistic personality is important for the formation of national identity, without denying its altruistic aspirations, its pugnacious and other manifestations. Therefore, the aim here is more to compare whether national or other experiences dominate in this context. The high evaluation of communicative experiences may be related to the characteristic features of adolescence, when the value of relationships with other people, especially with peers, is already understood (E. Martišauskienė, 2004). Altruistic experiences, which are associated with devotion and good deeds for others, are also positively valued in national terms, but unfortunately, the research data do not show high or even low percentage estimates.

The data analysis revealed that respondents have the strongest experience and rank the highest of all communicative experiences (38.2%), which are understood as joy, good mood, sympathy, gratitude, when you communicate with people you respect and love, when you experience friendliness and mutual understanding. This category also highlights the communication component, which, as already mentioned, is important for the expression and formation of national identity. The category of strongly experienced responses also includes a fifth (25.1%) of the pupils' responses related to romantic experiences, i.e. an unusual, mysterious, unexperienced feeling that arises in dreaming.

It is worth noting the responses in the middle level. For example, more than a third (35%) of respondents consider glorious experiences to be in the neutral, middle position. The same applies to gnostic experiences (34.3%), altruistic experiences (33.6%) and practical experiences (35%).

Religious experiences were again prominent in the category of very low level answers, with 26.9% of students considering the feelings that arise when praying and believing in God as irrelevant to their personal experiences and feelings.

Among the experiences constructed according to Dodonov (1978), a group of statements related to the person's nationality and specifically to Lithuania was included. The highest level of all the data reaches the 15% threshold where Lithuanians are proud of their nationality. Particularly few students identify the future of Lithuania (4.5%) and hearing the Lithuanian word (5%) as the strongest experiences. The situation is similar between the very high and high answers, where the 15% threshold is not reached. The category of medium-level responses was the most prominent, comprising between a fifth and a third of the respondents' answers in all groups of statements.

Correlations were also explored at the emotional- evaluative level, i.e. the block of statements related to experiences is mainly characterised by a weak positive correlation or, otherwise, a very weak correlation. The same strength of correlation is also found with the components of the experience level. One of the strongest coefficients is observed between the experiences induced by

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reading fiction and folklore ($r=0.437^{**}$; $p=0.000$). In terms of significance, the highest weak positive correlations among the components of the experience level were found between symbols of the homeland and the relationship with the homeland ($r=0.489^{**}$; $p=0.000$); between the experiences caused by public holidays ($r=0.456^{**}$; $p=0.000$); and events in Lithuanian history ($r=0.385^{**}$; $p=0.000$). Relations with the homeland and communication in Lithuanian also show a weak positive correlation ($r=0.394^{**}$; $p=0.000$); studying in a Lithuanian school and communication with teachers also show a significant correlation ($r=0.382^{**}$; $p=0.000$), etc.

There are also negative but statistically significant correlations between sense of unity and communicative experiences ($r = -0.414^{**}$; $p=0.000$); hedonistic experiences ($r = -0.374^{**}$; $p=0.000$).

Table 3. Emotional experiences of Lithuanian nationality students living in Belarus, Latvia and Poland in grades IX - X, according to the level of satisfaction (percent)

Ranks	The highest of all	Very high	High	Medium	Insufficient	Low	Very low
Emotional experiences							
Romantic	19,4	16,7	11,1	30,6	8,3	8,3	5,6
Axiomatic	5,1	7,7	12,8	35,9	7,7	5,1	25,6
Aesthetic	19,4	19,4	11,1	27,8	13,9	2,8	5,6
Practical	22	31,7	14,6	9,8	9,8	4,9	7,3
Glorious	7,7	10,3	7,7	30,8	20,5	20,5	2,6
Religious	11,9	7,1	4,8	31	19	4,8	21,4
Hedonistic	8,1	10,8	27	21,6	13,5	13,5	5,4
Altruistic	5	17,5	12,5	32,5	10	15	7,5
Gnostic	7,5	17,5	7,5	37,5	17,5	10	2,5
Pugnistic	7,5	7,5	27,5	30	12,5	2,5	12,5
Communicative	60	7,5	7,5	15	2,5	2,5	5
National (history of the nation)	7,7	7,7	10,3	28,2	5,1	15,4	25,6
National (nationality)	11,9	16,7	9,5	40,5	11,9	4,8	4,8
National (Lithuanian prestige)	7,9	5,3	21,1	31,6	5,3	21,1	7,9
National (Lithuania future)	2,6	7,7	2,6	28,2	17,9	23,1	17,9
National (International recognition of Lithuania)	0	5	12,5	45	7,5	20	10
National (mother tongue)	7,9	7,9	13,2	28,9	18,4	13,2	10,5

It is acknowledged that communicative experiences are significant for the expression and formation of national identity, which is in the interpersonal domain, but the research concern is about students' weak relationship with national experiences, which fill and create the personality - the intrapersonal domain. In order for effective communication to take place in relation to national identity, it is necessary to develop the interpersonal sphere.

The data analysis revealed that the respondents ranked communicative experiences (60%) as the highest. Close to fifty per cent of the top experiences are aesthetic experiences (49.9 per cent); romantic experiences (47.2 per cent); hedonistic experiences (45.9 per cent); and pugnacious experiences (42.5 per cent). Focusing specifically on national experiences, it can be seen that Lithuania's prestige is attributed to the highest ranked experiences, with 34.3% of respondents emphasising this. Other national experiences are more prevalent among the lowest ranked experiences: the native language does not cause strong experiences for 42.1% of respondents; international recognition of Lithuania (37.5%); the future of Lithuania (34.3%); and prestige of Lithuania (34.3%). In the category of very low level answers, the most prominent were the experiences of akasitivity (25.6%) and the feeling of unity in Lithuania's history (25.6%). Again, religious experiences were classified as very low for 21.4% of respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

The research focused on adolescents' spiritual values and the dynamics of their feelings revealed that national experiences in the context of other experiences (altruistic, communicative, gnostic, etc.) occupy one of the lowest thresholds, and it is confirmed by the fact that in the responses of Lithuanian and diaspora pupils, the most dominant ones are communicative and practical, and the national ones are not given any particular significance.

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Based on the quantitative study, it emerged that those living in Lithuania and in neighbouring countries have quite similar experiences (romantic, aesthetic, acquisitive, aesthetic, practical, glorious, religious, hedonistic, altruistic, gnostic, pugnastic), although there is a clear difference in terms of communicative experiences, with diaspora pupils almost twice as likely to be ahead of their Lithuanian peers. It can be seen that the distribution of national experiences related to the mother tongue and the history of the nation is particularly different between Lithuanian and neighbouring countries, with a higher proportion (13.1-13.3% difference between all the highest levels) of neighbouring countries' pupils experiencing the strongest experiences. Ethnic culture triggers similarly strong experiences for pupils in both contexts.

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