STUDENT VIEWS ON DOWNSHIFTER LIFESTYLE IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The relevance of the article is due to the rethinking of employment by students and the emergence of new forms of income, due to the emergence of Internet resources. Today, more and more people are revising their work schedules, switching to freelancing or so-called free employment, reducing working hours. In this regard, this article is aimed at studying students' ideas about the lifestyle of downshifters in an urban environment.

Methodology: As a research methodology, a qualitative approach was applied using ethnographic strategies to dive into the world of everyday practices of informants and better understand how their daily lives are structured, which is especially important when studying ideas about lifestyle. A detailed description of the ideas about individual everyday practices allows us to identify the type in a social phenomenon. Method of information gathering - in-depth interview, which allows determining the main motives and beliefs of informants.

Results: The article revealed that in the view of the majority of students, downshifters are satisfied with their lifestyle; travel a lot; have a low civil position, mainly carry out their household activities in solitude and are not married. It is shown that work for downshifters, in the view of students, should be enjoyable, and if this is not possible for any reason, it is fair for them to do work that does not lead to emotional and physical exhaustion. In the students' views, five groups of downshifters were identified: those who left well paid but stressful work; having the ability to work remotely; devoting more time to personal development; peaked careers and decided to change the profile of activity; transformed their hobby into a profession.

Applications of this study: The data obtained in the work can be used in the field of labor and employment of young people, social psychology, the psychology of education, age psychology, sociology, as well as for further theoretical development of this issue.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Because the phenomenon of downshifting is not sufficiently studied, and the concept has no clear definition, many people in the society can call themselves downshifters who are not really downshifters indeed, and Vice versa, many people do not realize themselves downshifters, being downshifters in fact. This seems to be a certain problem for studying this social group.

Keywords: students, downshifting, lifestyle, ideas about downshifting.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic scientists made a significant contribution to the study of lifestyles (Vozmitel and Osadchaya, 2009; Ovechkina, 2013; Yakovleva, 2011); they considered lifestyle as forms of human activity, typical for historically specific social relations that allow identifying the stable features, signs of life and activities of people, due to their social class affiliation, occupation, regional, cultural and age characteristics.

The way of life, according to scientists, is "sustainable forms of social being, joint activities of people, typical of historically specific social relations, which are formed in accordance with the norms and values that reflect these relations" (Vozmitel and Osadchaya, 2009).

Among domestic authors in the study of downshifting phenomenon, YaV. Ovechkina (2013) made a significant contribution. She views downshifting from the standpoint of social retreatism as a rejection of socially recognized goals in favor of one's own individual interests and an orientation toward inner desires, needs, and *higher* values. From the standpoint of retreatism, A. A. Yakovleva also considers downshifting. She singles out consumer retreatism as an alternative style of everyday life described as downshifting. V. Merzlyakova (2008) defines downshifting as "individual behavior associated with a conscious rejection of successful, but stressful work (with a corresponding decrease in income and social status), in favor of a more peaceful life, allowing you to realize your own dreams." M.A. Popov (2010) gives a

narrow definition to downshifting, meaning by it works according to an individual schedule outside the office (Popov, 2010).

Among Western scientists, K. Hamilton (2003) made a great contribution to the study of downshifting. He interprets downshifting as a voluntary long-term change in the style of everyday life, associated with a significant decrease in income and consumption.

The way of life is understood as a way of organizing people of their life, expressed in certain areas of human activity. In this study, the activity-based approach is used as the main one, since it is the activities of people that determine the life process of individuals, as well as their daily practices. The way of life covers all essential spheres of people's activities: labor, forms of its social organization, way of life, forms of people's use of their free time, their participation in political and public life, forms of satisfying their material and spiritual needs included in everyday practice, norms and rules of conduct.

Domestic scientists showed an interest in lifestyle later, in Soviet times, when a special need was revealed dictated by ideological factors.

The understanding of the way of life by Soviet researchers was conditioned by the Marxist ideology. Therefore, the way of life in the Soviet period was considered as a certain way of activity of individuals, because for the classics of Marxism, the way of life was determined by the nature of social relations. Therefore, I. V. Bestuzhev-Lada T .I. Zaslavskaya considered lifestyle as forms of human activity typical of historically specific social relations, which make it possible to identify stable features, signs of life and activities of people, due to their social and class affiliation, occupation, regional, cultural and age characteristics.

It is interesting that in domestic practice it is customary to distinguish between the way of life and lifestyle, whereas for Western scholars these concepts are equivalent.

The sociologists L. V. Sokhan, E .I. Golovakha and V. A. Tikhonovich made significant contributions to the understanding of lifestyle as a subcategory of a way of life, its embodiment at the individual level. In many respects thanks to them, domestic scientists consider the lifestyle as a socio-psychological category expressing a certain type of human behavior. Thus, the main difference between the concepts of the way of life and lifestyle, in the understanding of domestic authors, is the degree of expression of the individual in them.

M.A. Popov (2010) in the article "Conditions for the Development of Supply Chains as a New Form of Economic Ties of Entrepreneurial Structures" gives a narrow definition to downshifting, meaning by it the work according to an individual schedule outside the office. This definition cannot be considered exhaustive one, however, it rather accurately characterizes one of the main features of downshifters' lifestyle.

Among the types of downshifting: career, geographical and value-based ones can be distinguished.

Career downshifting is a voluntary demotion, switching to freelancing or another field of activity.

Geographical downshifting implies a cardinal change of place of residence, as a rule, these are remote, quiet places suitable for a measured lifestyle.

Value-based downshifting is based on the balance of spiritual and vital needs, on the change of certain everyday practices. Individuals make a spiritual revolution, first, in their consciousness and do not radically change their way of life, but only correct the culture of consumption.

Thus, after analyzing the positions of the listed authors, we can say that downshifting implies, first, a rejection of conventional goods, a change in lifestyle, which consists of changing the type of activity, focusing on one's own interests or *life for oneself*. The way of life of downshifters is determined by the method of organizing their life activity by this group. Many well-known personalities are considered the representatives of downshifting. One of them is Sidskharta Gautama, also known as the Buddha. Having abandoned the throne, family and carefree life, the young prince devoted himself to the search for truth through long meditations and wandering around the country.

As a result, they distinguish three lifestyles that are most often followed by the middle class in the United Kingdom: ascetic, postmodern, and neutral (that is, not having distinctive features). Each of these types has its own social base - these are people with a certain set of specific features (professional status, income, marital status, etc.) (Bolshakova, 2004; Cherdymova et al., 2018; Alisov and Cherdymova, 2018; Solodnikova and Ermakova, 2013; Bicer et al., 2018). There are three main forms of downshifting: the reduction of employment time; Dismissal or transition to a lower position with a decrease in income; return to learning activities - continued study.

Among the reasons for downshifting in this study, the informants identified the following: the desire to spend more time with the family; the desire to control their own life; the possibility of self-realization; desire to live a healthy lifestyle. More than 90% of respondents - downshifters say that they are happy (Ovechkina, 2013; Cherdymova et al., 2019; Taubaye et al, 2018).

At the same time, 40% of the respondents do not regret about the decrease in the level of earnings, and almost as much regret it. Among these downshifters, only 15% say that they are very happy with the changes that have occurred, but they are very worried about the decline in income. 6% of downshifters admit that they are not happy. In general, all the informants note that the pursuit of material benefits is given to them and their loved ones by too much cost.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methods of the Study

Problem situation: The emergence of downshifting phenomenon and its subsequent distribution is largely due to the rethinking of employment as it is under the influence of technical progress and as a result of new forms of life activity. Understanding of downshifting is always associated with the attitude of the representatives of this group to work since the main factor encouraging an individual to become a downshifter is dissatisfaction with his/her work activity. Moreover, although working conditions have undergone great changes since the beginning of the 20th century, the problem of dissatisfaction with work is still relevant. Every year more and more people are moving to self-employment: they reduce working time, earn freelancing. Today, thanks to the Internet, it has become possible to create a workplace for you and more and more people resort to this method of making money.

In the modern information society, labor is perceived as a form of leisure, as something that should bring, if not pleasure, then at least satisfaction. Therefore, the old standardized work schedules, monotonous actions of shifting papers, the constant tension in the relationship between management and subordinates all this is a big problem of discrepancy between the desired and the actual in the minds of people.

Research questions:

1. What is the view of students about the attitude of downshifters to work?

2. What do students know about the living conditions of downshifters' life-activity?

3. What is known about the leisure of downshifters?

4. Do downshifters take part in political and public life?

5. What is the circle of communication of downshifters?

6. What is the degree of satisfaction of downshifters with the current situation?

The research strategy is ethnographic.

Within the framework of the qualitative paradigm, the ethnographic strategy is used in this study. This strategy allows you to immerse yourself in the world of everyday practices of informants and better understand how their daily lives are built, which is especially important in the study of lifestyle.

A detailed description of individual everyday practices reveals the typical entity in the social phenomenon.

The method of collecting information is an in-depth interview.

In-depth interview - unstructured personal interview with an informant to determine his/her main motives and beliefs.

The Experimental Stages

The ethnographic strategy is represented by the following stages:

− Formulation of a research question or hypothesis;

− Making a decision who will be studied and where;

− Access to the *field* of study;

− Choice of research role;

− Entering into communication with informants;

− Conducting ethnographic interviews

Special importance in ethnographic research is given to the role of the researcher. He should have a high level of reflexive abilities that allow him/her to form his/her own view of the phenomenon under study and interpret the results. In addition, the researcher should have certain communication, organizational and information skills to be able to find common points for keeping in touch with informants, to respond quickly to changing conditions, to be able to competently enter the field.

RESULTS

Not all informants surveyed are aware of what downshifter is. Some even consider themselves to belong to this group or believe that in order to be downshifter it is necessary to hold the position of top Manager at least. "I think to be a *true*

downshifter you need to give up something. Preferably, the position of the top Manager's salary which is 300 thousand per second." It is also widely believed that downshifter is the one who always makes geographical movement, leaving the previous job and earnings. "Well, in my understanding downshifter is a person who has achieved certain (relatively high) performance in business or in the profession and then *spits* on everything and went to Thailand or to the village."

In the course of the study, it is possible to dispel these myths in the minds of informants and talk about the main types of downshifting.

Studying the attitude of downshifters (in the representation of informants) to work, it is found that 13% of the respondents believe that downshifters refuse high positions of top banana and chief in favor of a less paid position with a more free schedule for the following reasons: work took most of the time in life that they would like to devote to the family, work led to emotional burnout and the achievement of the *ceiling*, which did not allow to develop further. One informant said that his friend downshifter told him the following: "... First, I built a career... I joined the company in 2003 as a customer support officer. Then I became the head of the Department engaged in the development and implementation of software in the industrial enterprise. Then, at some point, I reached against the ceiling so that I realized that I do not see myself further within the personal development, I was at the limit of my capabilities... stopped straining, instead of it, in parallel was engaged in business. Now I teach to create one's own Internet business for a fee, conduct training and seminars...»

Many informants (86.6%) believe that some of the downshifters made a choice in favor of a more creative and diverse profession: "Engaged in technical support of cultural events, performances, concerts. These are rental companies, theaters and so on... There is always something new and a relatively large springboard for creativity and self-realization and more free time."

Some informants believe that downshifters chose the quietest work: "Engaged in repairing mobile phones and work as security guards in the Parking lot…"

Studying the views of students about the life of downshifters, it is found that among all the informants interviewed, the majority (73.3%) suggests that the bulk of downshifters are not in marital relations and carry out household activities alone or share household duties with their parents. "People do not always realize that the family is a much greater responsibility than they can imagine. There are those who have already given birth and divorced, there is already a third innocent party through their fault, lives without mom or dad. I saw many couples who created a family in order to assert themselves in the eyes of others, and when there was *common family life*, and then everything fell into place. The ideology of downshifting is therefore close to me because there is no such thing there."

Some (40%) indicate that they are just downshifters and are not ready for the family. "There are things that probably people cannot change. It is like a congenital defect, for example. Here's a hole in personal life — it's about"...some informants suggest that marriage for downshifters is not a purpose in itself, and the attitude towards it is extremely simple.

Some students (80%) believe that downshifters are fond of a variety of Hobbie's - reading books, meditative practices, hunting, writing poems, sports, computer games, knitting, cooking, esoteric teachings, practical chemistry, history and more. The circle of communication of downshifters should be wide enough. Almost all informants (93.3%) indicate that they have many friends with whom they try to spend more time.

"They spend their free time, if not with their friends, then with their own family: make trips, go to visit, go to the movies, to the theaters, and just go walking." Only a few (13.3%) informants indicate that the social circle of downshifters probably consists of several closest friends.

Interviewed informants believe that downshifters travel at least once a year, but mostly in Russia. In connection with the latest economic events in the country, to rest abroad has become more difficult. Nevertheless, downshifters successfully satisfy their travel needs by moving around the country or going to quite poor countries with a rich level of spiritual culture, for example, to India. Two informants also suggested that downshifters could spend quite a long time in other countries, but only if they were young. The desire to move to another country may be indirectly related to the attitude to social and political activities carried out in the country.

DISCUSSIONS

Sociological science uses a significant number of terms and approaches to the study of society and the description of its internal processes, as each sociologist contributes to the development of sociological thought through his/her research. The extensive theoretical base created in this way allows researchers to apply already existing concepts and approaches to the studied phenomenon that promotes an increase in knowledge of the studied phenomenon and theoretical and methodological study of the studied subject. Thus, in this paper, referring to the main sociological approaches and concepts presented in an extensive theoretical framework, two basic concepts are considered - lifestyle and downshifting.

Based on a different understandings of lifestyle (or way of life) by Western sociologists a classification of the main approaches can be made.

Table 1: Basic sociological approaches to understanding lifestyles

Name of approaches	Definition	Authors
Activity-based	Lifestyle as a way of activity of individuals	M. Weber (1992), L. Warner (1997)
Marxist	Lifestyle as a result of class struggle	K. Marx and E. Engels,
Structural functionalism	Way of life as a function characterizing and defining the society	T. Parsons (1992), R. Merton (2006)
Postmodernism	Lifestyle as individual daily practices	P. Bourdieu (1998), E. Giddens (2003)

Based on theoretical understanding and practical research, the following groups of downshifters should be distinguished:

The first group includes those who left their former high-payed, but stressful work and began to travel freely, receiving income from the delivery of their housing.

The second group of downshifters has the ability to work remotely or seasonally. They live permanently or temporarily in countries with warm climates. They can obtain income from their core operations and the annuity for the surrender of the property.

The third group includes those people who have moved to a less paid position, sometimes by changing the working schedule, and thus reduced their psychological burden and found more time for themselves. This group is not characterized by geographical mobility.

People who have reached a certain level in their career, but decided to try themselves either in a related or in a fundamentally different profession characterize the fourth group. In order to be realized in another field, they usually receive additional education. This group does not perform geographical movements.

The fifth group includes those who have achieved high social status and realized in a career, but decided to turn their hobby into a new professional activity, maintaining the same standard of living.

CONCLUSION

In the classical sense, downshifters are considered those who consciously abandoned the *rat race*, which consists of the pursuit of the benefits promoted, in favor of peace of mind and life for themselves. Thus, downshifting largely intersects with the popular ethical doctrine – hedonism.

Because the phenomenon of downshifting is not sufficiently studied, and the concept has no clear definition, many people in the society can call themselves downshifters who are not really downshifters indeed, and Vice versa, many people do not realize themselves downshifters, being downshifters in fact. This seems to be a certain problem for studying this social group.

In Russia, the term *downshifting* appeared in 2004. In 2006, it was used mainly in highly specialized circles, but a year later, in 2007, this concept gained mass popularity. Since then, various sociologists, cultural scientists have begun to actively study the phenomenon of downshifting. Among these scientists are many researchers. Based on their works, as well as the works of some Western scientists, and their interpretation of downshifting, we can get closer to understanding this difficult term.

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