

## Moral Aspect of Young People's Subjective Competitiveness\*



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**Abstract.** The issues of competitiveness and competitive relationships are usually considered from an economic point of view, bypassing socio-cultural aspects. The paper presents a sociological analysis of young people's competitive and moral orientations. The consideration of the emphasized problem field allows us to determine the connotation of competitive relationships, from positive ("ethical" competition) to negative ("aggressive", "predatory" competition). The authors assess the format of competitive relationships set up by the younger generation considering themselves competitive, and those young people who reject their own involvement in competition in any form. A new scientific result, the understanding of competitiveness as a subjective phenomenon is obtained. The author's system of empirical indicators for evaluating subjective competitiveness is also an element of scientific novelty. The presented material is aimed at achieving a specific goal to determine the relationship between the young people's subjective

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competitiveness and their desire to adhere to stable value standards and high moral principles in behavior. The following tasks are solved within the framework of the research: the key characteristics of competition as a socio-cultural phenomenon are identified; young people's attitude to competitiveness is studied; the relationship between competitive orientations, individual responsibility for their own actions, locus of control, trust and respect for others, readiness to help others is revealed. The empirical basis of the sociological research was the data from a questionnaire survey of young people in the Tyumen Oblast (2017, 3403 people, including 1087 high school students; 1360 students; 956 working young people under 30). It is found that the respondents not considering themselves competitive characterize competitive interaction with more negative ratings than young people who are actually involved in competition. Young people with low competitive orientations demonstrate a lack of active life position, they are not ready to create their own business and take responsibility for their lives. The highest percentage of competitive respondents is found among working youth. The author analyzes the world outlook, the general culture of high school students, students and working youth, the relationship between their competencies and competitiveness. Worldview attitudes, values, and moral guidelines are identified as the key determinants shaping young people's competitiveness. It is concluded that competitive youth tend to adhere to high moral principles.

**Key words:** high school student, student, student youth, working young people, competition, culture of competitive relationships, competitiveness, morality, value orientations.

### Introduction

At the end of 2017, the President of the Russian Federation signed a decree<sup>1</sup> that prioritized the development of competition in Russia. However, competition in it is treated exclusively from an economic point of view, while its implementation is possible only due to the high level of human capital development in the country, as well as in a specific industry, at the enterprise. Competition is carried out by people who are competitive on a personal level. Investment of resources in the development of individual competitiveness becomes a strategically important task that is solved comprehensively, involving social institutions such as family, education (at all its levels, including informal and self-education), economy, culture, etc. Human capital development not only generates multiple

economic profit (which can be calculated), but also contributes to a significant socio-cultural return (almost immeasurable)<sup>2</sup>.

Competitive relations are manifested in all spheres of life without exception, from biological and social to economic. Competition acquires a special content in each of them, while its key aspect, the struggle for **leadership** in the possession of limited resources, remains unchanged. In the social aspect, competition is understood as *“a contest between one and other agencies – whether people, institutions or nations – for individual advantage”* [1, p. 176].

There are many definitions of the term “competition” and its derivatives. The analysis of the terminology pool was carried out in early publications of our research team [2]. In the process of competitive interactions, individuals enter into social relationships,

<sup>1</sup> Decree of the President of the Russian Federation no. 618 *“On the main directions of state policy of competition development”*, dated 21.12.2017.

<sup>2</sup> *Human development report*. Available at: [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/HDR2016\\_RU\\_Overview\\_Web.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/HDR2016_RU_Overview_Web.pdf)

its effectiveness (along with the availability of knowledge, skills and professional competences) is influenced by past experience of such relationships. The competitiveness of a modern specialist becomes *non-linear* and “implies non-standard thinking and actions, avoiding patterns in solving problems, searching for new algorithms in a crisis situation, etc.”<sup>3</sup>.

In the framework of this research, competitiveness is interpreted as “*a complex property inherent in a person and consisting of psycho-physical resources (health, age, appearance, level of intelligence) and moral aspects (value orientations and their hierarchy, beliefs and their system, personal prohibitions and restrictions). The basis of this property is high professionalism, individual's psychological readiness to compete for one's existence and his or her social characteristics*” [3].

Effective functioning of social institutions and social structures depends on the compliance with a set of **value** norms and rules. Each social community, trying to be equal to the norms and values accepted in a particular society, transforms them in accordance with the peculiarity of its activity, then transmits them to the current generation, which in turn transmits them to the next ones. The relevance of compliance with a set of moral norms in social life is associated with the synchronization of social behavior in a particular society, the definition of acceptable (socially approved) strategies and unacceptable (reprehensible) actions.

### Literature review

People's worldview is determined by life their values, which are interpreted as stable beliefs about the preferred behavior strategies

or final states in a hierarchical order [4, p. 5]. R. Inglehart identified the level of economic development of the country where a person lives, as well as the prevailing culture in which his or her socialization took place, as the key factors that form individual's values [5].

In general, life values are a basic set of motivations that form a normative series in the minds of various social groups representatives and determine human behavior. The permanent transformation of basic values taking place in society leaves an imprint on behavioral ethics. There are two polar ethics of behavior that can be distinguished: “*within the paradigm of neoliberal globalization, egoistic strategy (competition, efficiency, personal success) prevails; within the paradigm of sustainable development these are solidarity, justice, responsibility for the future*” [6, p. 67].

In the process of socialization, an individual learns certain **cultural codes** that form a system of subjective coordinates, in which the individual's life activity subsequently takes place [7]. As noted by A.M. Klimenkova, “cultural codes are formed on the basis of a system of precedent phenomena that are “rooted” in a certain cultural space, and there are facts of their widespread use in a certain culture” [8, p. 8]. Cultural code is the basis for the emergence of value orientations. Learned and realized values become the basis for the formation of personal culture, a significant aspect of its self-determination. “*The core of the value structure is an ideal, a socio-political and moral image of the desired future. Value orientations, considered by a person as a standard, somehow agree with the ideal, forming their own hierarchy of life goals and values, means or ideas about the norms of behavior*” [9, p. 331].

<sup>3</sup> Goncharova E.P., Krotikova Yu.S. *Graduate students' anxiety*. Available at: [http://elib.bsu.by/bitstream/123456789/192352/1/Гончарова\\_Кротикова\\_ВШ\\_18\\_ч.1-206-210.pdf](http://elib.bsu.by/bitstream/123456789/192352/1/Гончарова_Кротикова_ВШ_18_ч.1-206-210.pdf)

International comparative studies include the *World values survey (R. Inglehart technique)*, *World Values Survey*<sup>4</sup>, *Eurobarometer*<sup>5</sup>, *European Social Survey*<sup>6</sup>, and the *European Social Survey (Sh. Schwartz technique)*.

The basic theory of values is developed by the classics of sociology, E. Durkheim, T. Parsons, M. Weber, W. Thomas and F. Znaniecki. The term “value” is interpreted as a reference point that sets the semantic horizons of a person’s social behavior. Value and moral orientations of competitive relations participants is of particular scientific interest to sociologists, psychologists, teachers and representatives of other social and humanitarian sciences. Success in competition is stereotypically perceived in an individual, unipersonal continuum, but not in terms of the “**win-win**” strategy (where both parts win). This can be partially explained by the fact that the modern person’s values are largely “economized”.

The works of economists A. Marshall, A. Smith, and J. Keynes describe the theory of “economic man” (*Homo Economicus*), whose priority activity is aimed at obtaining income or other benefits [10]. Modern research emphasizes that *Homo Economicus* gives way to *Homo Reciprocans*, a collective being focused on socially significant values and endowed with the idea of responsibility, free will in the conditions of observing the fine line between altruistic and egoistic motivation. Competitive relations are also changing, despite the continued desire for individual profit and the capture of limited resources, the rejection

of aggressive competition, orientation to strategies of long-term interaction and social responsibility are socially encouraged.

In the new paradigm of competitive relations, altruistic values are basic for making economic decisions and performing socially significant interactions. “*Value orientations designed to form a system of economic motivation of individuals as members of society concerned with the idea of justice in relation to all manifestations of life on Earth are brought to the foreground*” [11, p. 82]. The processes of social justice criteria formation within the framework of pro-social behavior are implemented (“*cooperative behavior, ideas about what is good and what is bad, compliance with social norms*” [12, p. 112]). The work of B. Schneider, J. Benenson, M. Fülöp, M. Berkics and M. Sándor [13] is also devoted to the problems of cooperation and competition; it examines the methodological issues of studying cooperation and competition and cultural differences in their implementation.

In situations of moral choice, a person adheres to various behavioral models studied within the framework of game theory. One of the experiments aimed at identifying the priority strategy of an individual (*Homo Economicus* or *Homo Reciprocans*) is “Contribution to the common good” game (a variant of “Social dilemma”): if a person adheres to individual interests in a group interaction, when others indicate the priority of common interests, then his or her benefits will exceed the benefits of other participants; if this strategy (priority of personal interests) is followed by everyone, then everyone’s gain will be less than if everyone were pursuing common interests. The idea of justice as a basis for cooperation was studied in “Ultimatum game” experiment (V. Guto, R. Schmittberg, B. Schwartz, 1982) [14]. To achieve their own goals, the participants of

<sup>4</sup> *World Values Survey*. Available at: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

<sup>5</sup> *EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Public Opinion*. Available at: <http://www.ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm>

<sup>6</sup> *European Social Survey*. Available at: <http://www.ess-ru.ru>

the competitive interactions often use means differentiated “both by the degree of economic rationality for a particular situation, and by the degree of morality and ethical normativity” [15, p. 234].

Let us formulate our research question as concretely as possible: which competitive strategy becomes more profitable – to cooperate and build long-term relationships, or “to stick at nothing” and get short-term gains “burning bridges”. To answer the question, let's turn to the definition of the ideal model of the personality of the XXI century, according to V.I. Andreev, it is a multidimensional personality that absorbs and implements the advantages of a creatively self-developing, self-sufficient and competitive personality. “Self-sufficient” refers to *“a person whose system-forming qualities are autonomy and independence, a high level of moral culture and citizenship, as well as high abilities for self-determination and self-restraint, combined with a sufficiently high level of creative potential and healthy practicality”* [16].

The formation of personality's culture in the context of participation in competitive relations becomes strategically important. Competitive interactions are defined as *“interaction of subjects of economic relations in a competitive market; unity of influences and joint actions of subjects of competition aimed at achieving mutually intersecting goals”*<sup>7</sup>. In turn, the culture of competitive relations is *“a personal quality that integrates value orientations, attitudes, knowledge, ways of behavior, communication and activity of the individual, ensuring effective cooperation and competition in a competitive environment and focused on achieving economic goals by rational and ethically acceptable*

<sup>7</sup> Il'ina V.N. *Konkurencija* [Competition]. Available at: <http://be5.biz/ekonomika/k005/29.htm>

*means”* [17, p. 169]. The culture of competitive relations determines the ability of an individual to participate in competition not only in economically feasible, but also in morally justified ways<sup>8</sup>.

R.D. Hayward and M. Kimmelmeier studied the structural and cultural roots of such relationships in different societies, having proved different views on competition: “it is a basis of social order” or “it destroys positive social connections” [18].

However, “the culture of competitive interactions can be characterized by one of the following types and levels: anti-culture (negative level), cultural vacuum (zero level) and actually, the culture of competitive interactions (low, medium, high level)” [19, p. 226]. The results of the experiment conducted by S.E. Motornaya among the students indicated a high level of competition and proneness to conflict [20, p. 289].

Specialist's competitiveness “depends on both professionalism, competence, and the compliance of personal qualities with the requirements of the profession. These qualities include character traits, abilities, and a number of other person's psychological characteristics” [21, p. 567]. “The ability to acquire competitive advantages is provided by the presence of certain internal resources and potentials: intellectual, operational, moral-volitional, psychological, etc.” [21, p. 568]. “Specialist's competitiveness determinants are not only socially and professionally significant personal qualities, but also competence, personality's orientation, value orientations and target settings, etc.” [22, p. 145].

<sup>8</sup> Hazova S.A. *Razvitie konkurentosposobnoj lichnosti v sisteme obrazovanija: avtoref. dis. ... d-ra ped. nauk.* [Development of a competitive personality in the education system: Doctor of Sciences (Pedagogics) dissertation abstract]. Majkop, 2011. 60 p.

The ideas significant in the context of this paper were expressed at the end of the XIX century by the classic sociologist C.H. Cooley in the book “Personal competition” [23], where the trend of increasing individualism and population’s competitiveness is noted on the example of the US residents. The moral standards that a person applies to his or her behavior are an individualized reflection of the social environment, social community, or group within which they interact. Each social group controls its members and imposes a requirement on them to meet certain standards of behavior, otherwise the subjects are sanctioned or excluded from the group. Achieving success in each career strategy (*vertical, horizontal, or zigzag-shaped*) is associated with certain standards that are specific to a certain practice of social interaction. *“The higher, from a moral point of view, the activity of a social group is, the more moral the conditions for achieving success in it are, and vice versa. In a criminal organization, crime becomes a condition for success; while there are professions where honesty is the best practice for achieving success”* [23]. Dishonesty can become an optimal competitive strategy in the conditions of anomie (E. Durkheim), when there is a demoralization of social interactions, in which there is unfair competition and immoral actions prevail over honest and moral ones. In this context, C.H. Cooley emphasized that *“unstable and dishonest people are like crumbling bricks from which a stable social structure cannot be built <...> A successful person is always moral or fair”* [23].

Based on the analysis of the works of domestic and foreign scientists, we shall focus the research interest on the value orientations and moral priorities of the youth. Special relevance of considering the system of value coordinates on the example of this socio-

demographic group is explained by several factors. First, the formation of young people’s stable value orientations occurs in the process of primary and secondary socialization, it sets the basic principles making possible further implementation at work and in everyday life. Secondly, young people transmit their priority values and moral attitudes to the next generations, forming the society’s cultural code.

In the world, the number of people aged from 10 to 24 years old is 1.8 billion people (25% of the world’s population)<sup>9</sup>. In Russia, this age group makes up 21.9 million people, or 14.9% of the total population of the country (at the beginning of 2019). Based on the accepted borders of youth age in this country (from 14 to 30 years), 24.2 million people (16.5%) belong to youth<sup>10</sup>.

#### Research materials and methods

The empirical base of the study consists of the data from the fundamental research work *“Formation of young people’s competitive orientation and competitiveness in Russian society in the context of modern socio-cultural dynamics”*, conducted among high school students, students and working youth by the team of the Tyumen State University’s sociological laboratory in April-May 2017. The research method is a questionnaire survey. The sample consisted of 3403 respondents aged from 14 to 30. Sample type is multi-stage, zoned, quota proportional.

The students of grades 10-11 of educational institutions of the Tyumen Oblast were interviewed: Tyumen (N = 607), Tobolsk (N = 158), Ishim (N = 87), rural area (N = 253).

<sup>9</sup> *World population in 2014*. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/RU-SWOP14-Report%20Rev-Web-update%2024%20Nov.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Distribution of the population by age groups. *Official website of the Federal State Statistics Service*. Available at: [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/population/demo/demo14.xls](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/population/demo/demo14.xls)

The field stage of the sociological research among students of higher (N = 1146) and secondary (N = 214) vocational education institutions was conducted in the cities of Tyumen (N = 963), Tobolsk (N = 135), Ishim (N = 98). In addition, the sample included students participating in the all-Russian meeting of the best groups (N = 164).

The survey also involved the working youth from 20 organizations of the main sectors of the economy in the cities of Tyumen, Tobolsk, Ishim and rural areas of the Tyumen Oblast (N = 956). The empirical data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics program (license package, version 23).

The research hypothesis was based on the following assumption, "*competitive youth tend to adhere to stable moral principles in their behavior*", which is revealed in the following: young people who do not consider themselves competitive, characterize competitive relations more critically and biased, providing them with negative connotations, than young people who successfully demonstrate themselves in competition.

### **Research result**

The main idea of the study was to develop *three* forms of questionnaire survey including a set of questions aimed at determining young people's subjective competitiveness (by the example of high school students, students and working youth) and the specifics of competitiveness formation in each of the designated social groups. If at the age high school students this is the establishment of common principles of competition and competitive relations, willingness to be successful (full competitive orientation cannot be yet discussed), the students' readiness for competition (competitiveness) is increasing rapidly, young people aware that a future employer is interested in competent, highly

qualified staff and that they will have to compete for the best place in the labor market. Accordingly, if young people take certain actions to strategically accumulate competitive potential during their training already, they will become more competitive workers at their future work. For the working youth, the priorities of social and professional competitiveness are significantly transformed, the accumulation of competitive potential (professional development, self-education), as well as the further maintenance of competitive stability remains relevant. In modern conditions, it is almost impossible to be competitive at the local level, and competitive standards are becoming global in each profession. A person can function even without being competitive, but the socio-professional success of such functioning is very doubtful.

The structure of the presented analytical material is due to the research logic aimed at assessing the respondents' attitude to competition as it is, and the list of personal qualities of team members and the competitive person in particular; the definition of "taboo" for unethical behavior in competition; the designation of values of public recognition of the achievements for a person and aspirations to be successful; identifying the relationship between openness to the world (in the realm of social environment), the willingness to cooperate and trust to others. Let us consistently reveal the planned research tasks.

When analyzing the respondents' answers, we compared the level of subjective competitiveness inherent in the designated youth groups with other aspects studied. The methodological validity of this approach is proved by a research team led by academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences M.K. Gorshkov by means of the self-assessment method as one of the four indicators of a person's position in the social structure [24].

The questionnaire for students and working youth includes a question about self-assessment of competitiveness in the following wording: “Do you consider yourself competitive?” (table 1). Combining polar statements in the dichotomy “I consider myself competitive” (answer options “yes”, “rather yes than no”) and “I do not consider myself competitive” (“rather no than yes” and “no”), it is clear that the minimum level of subjective competitiveness is recorded among schoolchildren (80%, slightly higher among high school students of the elite gymnasium of the Tyumen State University – 87%), while increasing among students (84%). Working youth, who are at the initial stages of their career path, show their own competitive strategies to the maximum extent (90%; among those with higher education – 93%).

The highest percentage of respondents who consider themselves competitive (the answer options are “yes” and “rather yes”) is recorded in the Tyumen State University gymnasium (87%), among students of other schools that we have classified as “elite”, it is 79%, in ordinary comprehensive schools it is 77%.

The distribution of the responses by gender shows that among high school students, boys are more likely to describe themselves

as competitive (86%, only 75% of girls). There are differences in self-assessment of competitiveness depending on the level of academic performance. The respondents were asked the question “How do you do in school?” (answer options were “excellent”, “good and excellent”, “good and satisfactory”, “mostly satisfactory”). Excellent students consider themselves competitive in 94% of cases, those who get As and Bs are 85%, and those who get Cs are 58%. It is difficult to understand the root cause of this without an in-depth analysis; a student does not consider himself or herself competitive, successful, and therefore does not study well, getting low grades, or, being unable / not motivated to learn better, he or she evaluates his or her level of competitiveness as low. This aspect deserves a separate detailed study.

Let us turn to the respondents’ assessment of competition as a socio-cultural phenomenon that is realized in the course of competitive relations. 87% of respondents among the competitive working youth, agreed with the statement “*Competition is good; it encourages people to work hard and develop new ideas*”, and only 71% among the non-competitive youth. Spearman’s correlation coefficient

Table 1. Young people’s self-assessment of their competitiveness, % of the respondents’ number

Do you consider yourself competitive?		Yes	Rather yes than no	Rather no than yes	No
High school students	comprehensive schools (city) (город) (N = 272)	29.5	47.8	18.7	4.1
	comprehensive schools (rural areas) (N = 235)	23.4	53.7	19.9	3.0
	gymnasiums or specialized schools (“elite schools”) (N = 320)	32.5	46.7	17.0	3.8
	Tyumen State University gymnasium (N = 260)	31.1	56.0	12.1	0.8
	average (N = 1087)	29.5	50.7	16.9	3.0
Students	institutions of secondary vocational education (N = 214)	32.7	54.3	10.6	2.4
	institutions of higher education (N = 979)	22.5	61.4	13.1	2.9
	average (N = 1360)	25.7	58.6	13.1	2.6
Working youth	graduated from secondary vocational education institutions (N = 219)	52.8	26.6	12.4	8.3
	graduated from higher education institutions (N = 656)	58.8	34.5	5.1	1.7
	average (N = 956)	57.3	32.5	6.9	3.3
Note: percentages are calculated by line.					

between the variables was 0.110\*\* (very weak, direct correlation; here and further “\*\*\*” means  $p < 0.001$ ). The absolute majority of respondents with higher and postgraduate education have a positive opinion about competition (89%), while there are only three quarters of such respondents among those with incomplete higher or secondary professional education (78%).

To analyze the studied phenomenon, the respondents were asked to evaluate their attitude to competition using the semantic differential method (table 2). The question is included in the questionnaire only for working young people because of their higher subjective competitiveness and intense involvement in competitive relationships within the framework of labor and interpersonal interactions; the formed concept of competition, repeatedly edited by the practice of real interactions.

Competitive respondents more often than their non-competitive colleagues described competition as “effective” (86% vs. 70%), “necessary” (88% and 76%), “fair” (48% and 32%) and “obvious” (62% and 48%). At the same time, there is a more positive attitude to competition among the respondents with higher and postgraduate education (let us remember that they have a higher level of

competitiveness among their peers). In their opinion, competition is “necessary” (90% vs. 80% among young people with incomplete higher or secondary vocational education), “useful” (92% and 85%). The dependence of variables included in the semantic differential (Spearman correlation) is observed between the respondents' competitiveness and the following characteristics that they give to competition: “useful” (0.159\*\*), “effective” (0.169\*\*), “necessary” (0.156\*\*), “moral” (0.116\*\*), “obvious” (0.102\*\*) (very weak, direct correlation).

#### *Assessment of young people's personal characteristics*

In this thematic section, we will consider the significance of such a personal characteristic as “competitiveness” for the respondents, their assessment of classmates, and analyze the qualities inherent in a competitive personality.

Let us reveal the attitude to competitiveness of the youngest cohort of the identified social group, i.e. high school students. 68% of competitive schoolchildren agreed with the statement “*Competitiveness (success) is an important quality of a person in modern Russian society*” (the answer option “yes”), and their non-competitive peers agreed with it one and a half times less often (43%).

Table 2. Distribution of responses of the working youth to the question “Assess the concept of “competition” according to the following criteria”, % of the respondents' number (N = 956 people)

Answer options	Competition		Education level	
	Yes, rather yes, than no	rather no, than yes, no	secondary professional and lower	higher and postgraduate
Useful	90.7	81.5	85.2	91.9
Fair	51.3	41.5	47.4	51.5
Profitable	66.4	63.4	64.1	67.4
Effective	85.8	70.4	79.0	86.5
Necessary	87.8	75.7	80.3	89.6
Pleasant	44.3	43.7	45.0	44.1
Moral	48.4	44.9	47.2	48.3
Comfortable	41.2	41.7	39.8	42.6
Honest	48.3	32.4	44.8	47.7
Obvious	62.1	47.7	59.3	61.7

Priority of competitiveness among personal qualities is recognized by 74% of the students of the TSU gymnasium, 64% of respondents from schools classified as the “elite” ones, and only 56% of respondents in ordinary schools. 66% of tenth grade students agreed with the statement about the priority of competitiveness, and slightly less than 59% among eleventh–graders. The *priority* of competitiveness is recognized by the most successfully studying high school students (79% answered “yes”), 64% of B students, and 54% of C students. The higher one’s own orientation to success in competitive interactions, the higher significance to competitiveness as a characteristic of an individual is assigned. Differences in the responses of respondents by gender are statistically insignificant.

A person sees the world through a certain prism formed as a result of socio-cultural experience, internalized values and norms. The question about the priority qualities that classmates possess is included in the questionnaire form for high school students. On average, personal characteristics with negative connotations (*malevolence, selfishness, passivity and indifference, irresponsibility*) were more often noted by uncompetitive respondents in relation to their classmates (the range between the responses of uncompetitive and

competitive respondents was on average 9%) (*table 3*). Competitive respondents mainly characterized their peers by noting their positive traits (*conscientiousness; hard work; social activity; mutual assistance and supportiveness*) (the range between the responses of competitive and non-competitive respondents was on average 13%).

The student youth questionnaire includes a series of open questions: “*What does it mean to you to be competitive in life in general?*”, “*What does it mean to you to be competitive in the labor market?*” and “*What qualities do people need to be competitive?*”. The analysis revealed some competitive strategies and stereotypes of the respondents’ perception of competitiveness as a social phenomenon. In the first approximation, the respondents (based on their answers) can be divided into those who compete in good faith and those who do not shun unfair competition and, if necessary, are ready for unethical actions, unjustified risk, and even can break the law. Thus, about 7% of students characterized a competitive personality mainly through negative qualities. Among the qualities that are necessary for success in competition, they called ambition, arrogance, stubbornness, cunning and the ability to achieve goals at any cost. At the same time, the respondents admitted the possibility of taking the desired position (even

Table 3. Distribution of high school students’ responses to the question “What qualities do your classmates have?” (the sum of the answer options “very common”, “quite common”) depending on the level of competitiveness, % of the respondents’ number (N = 1087 people)

Answer options		Do you consider yourself competitive?	
		Yes and rather yes	Rather no and no
Negative	Malevolence	12.9	16.8
	Selfishness	28.0	36.9
	Passivity and indifference	27.7	37.6
	Irresponsibility	30.5	43.4
Positive	Conscientiousness	78.4	65.6
	Hard work	72.9	54.2
	Social activity	75.8	65.3
	Mutual assistance and supportiveness	86.1	76.3

resorting to unfair methods), taking it away from the opponent. Those respondents who do not consider themselves competitive were more likely to endow a competitive person with negative traits.

If the list of a person's competitive qualities is formed on a stable value basis, it is highly likely that the subject displays ethical behavior in competitive interaction. Let us consider the value orientations associated with competitive relations (*quite real in the case of working youth, and planned in the case of students*). Let us start the analysis in order of increasing intensity of competition orientation, considering the assessment of high school students and students, moving on to the implementation of the formed competitiveness of the working youth in the workplace and in life in general.

Let us analyze the formation and stability of value orientations of the working youth. The questionnaire includes the following statement *"In our time, funds do not matter to win over competitors, the result is important"*. Every third respondent found it difficult to answer the proposed question (33%), and 32% of the competitive respondents and 25% of the non-competitive ones expressed their disagreement with the statement. Among young people with incomplete higher, secondary professional and lower levels of education, a quarter of respondents (25%) expressed disagreement with the proposed statement, and one in three with higher and postgraduate education (34%). Accordingly, being "strong" in a specific social and labor sphere, they are aware of social and moral responsibility for their actions and their consequences.

The conclusion is confirmed by the following results: 42% of competitive working young people and 50% of the non-competitive ones agreed with the statement *"The modern*

*world is cruel, you need to fight for your place in it, and even go over some norms of morality, in order to survive and succeed"*. The statement *"We live in a different world today; many moral norms are outdated already"* is most closely related to the uncompetitive working youth (64% vs. 43% of competitive respondents).

It is the competitive working youth who in 33% of cases agreed with the statement *"People can only get rich at the expense of others"* (23% of non-competitive). After examining the responses in this category related to the questionnaire, we believe that it is not about a "parasitical" strategy and selfish use of other people for own benefit, but about their involvement in the implementation of the project or solving a common problem, the manifestation of leadership for the association of "isolated" people into a single team to develop each in a good cause.

#### ***Responsibility and locus of control***

The process of social and professional competitiveness formation is quite long. It can be assumed that the respondents focused on getting a social "win" in the short term have less strict moral standards than their peers who are focused on long-term competitive strategies. Are the representatives of the younger generation willing to invest time and effort in a long and patient work on a task, or would they prefer a short-term win? 77% of competitive respondents among the working youth agree with the statement *"At the end of the day, hard work is rewarded"* (59% of non-competitive respondents share a similar view), which shows their desire for long-term goal setting.

However, competitive respondents are more likely to demonstrate an external locus of control. 20% of competitive and 36% of non-competitive respondents agreed with the statement *"Person's life is much more determined*

*by circumstances than by their own efforts*”, which indicates their active life position and lack of desire to shift the blame for possible failure to other people or social institutions.

***Trusting other people and expecting support from family and friends***

Competitive respondents are more likely to demonstrate their capabilities to others: 52% of high school students (and 37% of their uncompetitive peers), 47% of students (37%). There is a very weak direct correlation between the indicated variables among high school students (Spearman = 0.194\*\*) and students (Spearman = 0.118\*\*). Among high school students who consider themselves competitive, the desire to be successful and get recognition of their achievements by others is much higher (60% vs. 40% of non-competitive students); only 8% of competitive and 20% of non-competitive respondents are not focused on this goal. There was a weak direct correlation (Spearman = 0.251\*\*). In schools classified as “elite” ones, this desire is relatively higher (63%) than in ordinary comprehensive schools (47%). Among tenth grade students it is 10-60%, by the eleventh grade there is a decrease to 52%. Success and recognition are more valuable for successful students (62%) than for C students (43%).

Competitive high school students demonstrate a higher level of trust to other people. When answering the question “*Do you think most people around you can be trusted or should you be careful with them?*” the vast majority of respondents (among all categories) adhere to the “*be careful*” strategy. Despite the widespread attitude of distrust, it is high school students who show the highest degree of trust, 17% of competitive and 10% of non-competitive respondents tend to trust people. The trend persists among the students (19% and 13%, respectively), but it fades away among

the working youth (10% and 8%). Thus, we see two different strategies, students who consider themselves competitive are more likely to show confidence in others than their non-competitive peers. The share of those who are pre-oriented to distrust others is higher among the working youth (61% of competitive young people and 56% of non-competitive ones), and the maximum number of respondents who do not have a standard strategy when making a decision to “trust” or “not to trust”, they act depending on the specific situation.

Continuing to study trust, it is important to consider the aspect of mutual assistance expected by the respondents (the question “*How many friends and acquaintances of yours are ready to provide you with urgent assistance if necessary?*”). Undoubtedly, mutual assistance is possible only in the case of pre-established favorable relationships, also based on trust between actors. Strong social ties that a person has established and maintains give him or her social stability and the ability to rely on the help of certain people if necessary. Competitive respondents generally noted a larger number of people whose support and assistance they can count on if necessary: 25% of competitive high school students and 22% of competitive students named from four to six people. W.O. Busse and J.M. Birk found a similar relationship between competitiveness, trust to others and the closeness of friendship in 1993 already [25].

Competitive respondents are also more likely to rely on help and assistance from seven or more people in a difficult life situation – 18% of school children and 12% of students, which is on average twice as high as the share of their non-competitive peers’ similar responses. The respondents who are not involved in competitive interactions are mainly focused on maintaining relationships with a narrow circle of selected people (usually family members),

and 67% of them expect help from no more than three people, and in 7% of cases they have no one to rely on. The respondents focused on success and competition are relatively less likely to value friendship and do not often expect it to last a lifetime. 49% of competitive respondents and 64% of the uncompetitive ones agree with the phrase *"Friends are spiritually close people, faithful to each other forever"*.

Respect for others and willingness to come to rescue can be assessed through the following statements: *"Every person should be treated with respect, his or her opinion should be listen to"* (91% of competitive working young people and 75% of the uncompetitive ones agreed with the statement) and *"A moral, conscientious person should help people, even if he or she has to sacrifice his or her comfort"* (46 and 41%).

### Conclusion

The authors of the paper analyzed competitiveness as a subjective phenomenon that is reflected in a person's consciousness in the form of ideas about his or her own success in the modern world. We should note that subjective competitiveness is based primarily on a person's perception of certain competitive advantages he or she has, which is important for self-esteem formation, and therefore the realization of the internal potential. Competition becomes a significant characteristic for successful modern social interactions.

On the basis of the conducted analysis it is possible to make **five conclusions**:

- *first*, young people who feel their own competitiveness are less likely to give up generally accepted moral norms in favor of spontaneous benefits compared to their non-competitive peers and are willing to invest time and effort in a long and patient work on a task, giving up the momentary gain of an unclear moral etiology. Achieving competitiveness is

a very long process, and the respondents who have already had experience of long-term investment of time and effort in planning (career and other areas of life) do not aim for a short-term success at the expense of the established values and reputation;

- *secondly*, non-competitive respondents generally have a stereotypical view on the phenomenon of competition and are more critical to the individuals involved in competitive interactions, enduing them with negative qualities and attributing them to socially disapproving behavior, less likely to notice their positive qualities. In particular, non-competitive respondents are more likely to describe competition as "immoral", "inefficient" and "dishonest";

- *third*, the young people's competitiveness correlates with the manifestation of their active life position and unwillingness to shift responsibility for a possible failure to others, demonstrating an internal locus of control;

- *fourth*, among the age cohorts of the younger generation, it is the working youth who are at the initial stages of their career path, and who show their own competitive strategies to the maximum extent (especially those with higher and postgraduate education). Among the high school students, the priority of competitiveness is recognized by excellent students. Accordingly, the higher the individual's focus on success in competitive relationships, the more importance is assigned to competitiveness as a personal characteristic;

- *fifth*, young people involved in competitive interactions are more likely to show trust in people and are ready to establish and maintain social ties with others. However, competitive respondents are relatively less likely to invest resources in strong social connections (such as friendships) and do not often expect them to last a lifetime. This may indicate their

confidence in their own social “strength” and that, if necessary, there will be people from the immediate environment who are ready to help (M. Granovetter’s strength of weak connections).

The obtained data indicate the desire of the most competitive youth representatives to adhere to social norms. Feeling their own priority in a particular social and labor sphere, they are aware of social and moral responsibility for the actions taken and their consequences. However, it is necessary to note the individual’s need for self-restraint, when the desire to win in competitive interactions can move to the category of the unethical (“*sticking at nothing*”).

The practical significance of the obtained theoretical and empirical data is determined by the possibility of using them by administrative structures in education. Educational organizations are encouraged to form ideas about ethical, correct competition, to correct semantic distortions and stereotypes about winning “at any cost” that are imposed by popular culture. The implementation of the task set is impossible without combining the social institution of the family and the mass media. Beyond that, the results of the research may be useful for educational institutions when conducting extracurricular educational work (in accordance with the young people’s age).

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