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## ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN THE BEHAVIOR PATTERNS OF THE RUSSIAN POPULATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC<sup>1</sup>

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**Annotation.** The article examines the changes taking place in Russia in the system of social relations in various fields of activity caused by a number of restrictions due to the pandemic and the spread of COVID-19. The relevance of the study of this problem is due to the fact that this state of affairs has contributed to stimulating the process of digitalization of various spheres of life of Russian society. The widespread use of technical means of remote communication, on the one hand, revealed that part of the transmitted information between interlocutors is lost, and on the other hand served to stimulate the development of many areas of activity. In this regard, this article is aimed at analyzing changes in the behavior of the Russian population in various spheres of life caused by adaptation strategies in changed conditions. The article presents the results of the author's sociological study "The attitude of residents of Ulyanovsk to vaccination against COVID-19", conducted in December 2021, carried out with the financial support of the Ulyanovsk Public Foundation "Regional Analytics. Professional research. Ratings" (RAPIER). To collect sociological information, a method of sociological survey in the form of focused interviews in groups was used, which allowed identifying typical patterns of behavior of the population — from rejection of the fact of the COVID-19 pandemic to following the recommendations of doctors to the smallest detail and to reveal the reasons for the refusal of the population to vaccinate against COVID-19. The results presented in the article allow us to draw the attention of government agencies to more effective measures of interaction with the population during a pandemic to strengthen preventive measures to eliminate the threat of COVID-19 infection.

**Keywords:** pandemic, coronavirus, problems, prognosis, vaccination, adaptation, changes, COVID-19

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## АНАЛИЗ ИЗМЕНЕНИЙ В МОДЕЛЯХ ПОВЕДЕНИЯ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ РОССИИ В ПЕРИОД ПАНДЕМИИ COVID-19

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются изменения, происходящие в России в системе социальных связей в различных областях деятельности, вызванные рядом ограничений в связи с пандемией и распространением COVID-19. Актуальность исследования данной проблемы обусловлена тем, что данное положение дел способствовало стимулированию процесса цифровизации различных сфер жизни российского общества. Широкое применение технических средств дистанционной коммуникации, с одной стороны, выявило, что часть передаваемой информации между собеседниками утрачивается, а с другой — послужило стимулированию развития многих областей деятельности. В связи с этим данная статья направлена на анализ изменений поведения населения России в различных сферах жизнедеятельности, вызванных адаптационными стратегиями в изменившихся условиях. В статье представлены результаты авторского социологического исследования «Отношение жителей города Ульяновска к вакцинации от COVID-19», проведенного в декабре 2021 года при финансовой поддержке Ульяновского общественного фонда «Региональная аналитика. Профессиональные исследования. Рейтинги» (РАПИР). Для сбора социологической информации использовался метод социологического опроса в форме фокусированных интервью в группах, который позволил выявить типичные модели поведения населения — от неприятия факта пандемии COVID-19 до следования рекомендациям врачей до мелочей, и раскрыть причины отказа населения от вакцинации против COVID-19. Представленные в статье результаты позволяют обратить внимание государственных органов на более эффективные меры взаимодействия с населением во время пандемии для усиления профилактических мер по устранению угрозы заражения COVID-19.

**Ключевые слова:** пандемия, коронавирус, проблемы, прогноз, вакцинация, адаптация, изменения, COVID-19

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## Introduction

The situation that has developed in the world during the coronavirus pandemic is of great interest to specialists in various fields of scientific activity. Scientists are currently conducting research to predict various social processes (Yarmak, Strashko, & Shkaiderova, 2020; Sukhanova, 2020). The topic of the pandemic is becoming particularly relevant at the present time, as the changes have affected significant areas of social reality. The measures taken in connection with the spread of the dangerous virus have affected the habitual existence of millions of people on all continents of the planet (Gorshkov, 2020; Sysoev, 2020). A stable system of social ties between individuals, their communities, organizations and entire states has undergone transformation. The harsh conditions of the new reality have influenced various levels of social systems (Flexer, 2020; Ward, 2020). Both global geopolitical strategies for the development of states and transnational associations, as well as everyday behavioral practices of individuals have undergone changes (Volkov, & Kurbatov, 2020). According to scientists R. Dingwall, M. Lily, K. Hoffman, K. Staniland and K. Ruderman, sociology in the study of the pandemic is primarily interested in such questions as the study of society's response to global challenges and the impact of these challenges on various social mechanisms, including how these mechanisms change when the natural biological environment changes (Dingwall et al., 2012; Ruderman et al., 2012).

At the moment, it is not known exactly what period of time will be covered by the most significant form of restrictions, how significant the economic and demographic losses will be. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the world will not return to its former state. According to Professor D. Black, "a new social ethics is emerging, which will be expressed in the interweaving of maintaining closeness with loved ones (by kinship, partnership, spirit, etc.) and distance with distant ones. This form of organization and self-organization of society requires sociological study as a scenario for formatting the post-coronavirus world" (Black, 2020).

Many people have been convinced by their personal experience of the need to change their own lifestyle. Due to the restrictions imposed, social interactions in their former form become difficult. The system of communication between people is being seriously transformed, the use of electronic devices for communication at a distance is expanding. A few years ago, the top Russian leadership of the country announced a course for the "digitalization" of various spheres of the country's life. Even skeptics have realized the importance of information technology in the life of modern society. The number of services provided remotely has increased dramatically.

Big changes have affected the education system in the country. The transition to distance learning of schoolchildren and students has created certain difficulties for teachers and teachers who are forced to rework the training plans

of trainees, change the forms of presentation of material, use unusual mechanisms of communication with students, students. Since the possibility of personal contact with the audience has been lost, the productivity of training decreases. It becomes difficult for the teacher to control the work of students, to answer their questions. The transition to the widespread use of resources of modern information and communication technologies is accelerating. Despite their rapid development, virtual communication is still not able to fully compensate for direct interaction between people (Romashkina, 2021).

Even if there is a video link through which visual contact with the interlocutor is maintained, part of the transmitted information will be lost during the communication act, not reaching the opposite side. In most cases, only a person's face is in the field of view, less often his hands. It is more difficult to assess the position of the body in space, the surrounding environment for a full understanding of the context of the conversation. It is impossible to carry out tactile interaction with the interlocutor, which most strongly affects communication between people connected by romantic relationships. In this regard, it should be noted that the situation with the aggravation of the epidemiological situation has negatively affected the possibility of interpersonal contacts not only in the business sphere, but also those that were aimed at joint leisure activities. Nevertheless, if there is a strong emotional connection between the partners, the forced separation will not prevent the further successful preservation of close relationships. Overcoming difficulties together can serve as a factor uniting a couple (Kargapolova, & Kappushev, 2021).

The process of adaptation to the need for widespread use of technical means of remote communication in practice is more difficult for representatives of the older generation. In the new reality, they found themselves in a difficult position. It is more difficult for dismissed employees of retirement and pre-retirement age to find a new job. Many people from this category were educated in the Soviet Union and their practical skills in using modern technologies are not enough. The labor productivity of such employees decreases, as the time spent on performing labor operations increases. Employees with a high ability to adapt to new conditions found themselves in an advantageous position. Employers in a difficult financial situation are forced to make staff cuts, first of all they try to get rid of inefficient workers, from people with low qualifications. On the contrary, professionals in their field remain in demand due to their knowledge and experience, and even in case of job loss they will be able to quickly find a new one (Galkina, & Kadnichanskaya, 2021).

In the current situation, representatives of the younger generation have the opportunity to gain an advantage in the labor market due to the ability to use modern technologies in practice, readiness to introduce innovations. But they also face serious risks associated with a decrease in the number of vacancies. Before the outbreak of the pandemic crisis, they had already experienced problems with employment, and in the current situation their situation will worsen even more. According to Rosstat, the unemployment rate in 2020 was 5,8 % (in 2019 — 4,7 %)

(Exchange portal about the Forex market (Forex), 2022). In 2020, 2,5 million unemployed people were officially registered, which is 3.6 times higher than a year earlier. This is due, among other things, to the simplification of the procedure for obtaining the status of unemployed. But after the easing of restrictions, this indicator began to decline. Youth under 25 years of age accounted for 18,9 % of the unemployed (RIA Novosti, 2021, March 15). As of January 2022, the unemployment rate was 4,4 % (Rosstat, 2022). But already now it is possible to predict that many citizens will be forced to retrain, find a new job profile.

The most important trend of the post-coronavirus world, according to Russian scientists, will be the digital transformation of the labor market, due to the technologies of remote employment, distance learning and education, remote forms of social interaction. This situation can be called “mobilization digitalization” (Dobrov, & Sysoev, 2020).

Active people who in previous years aspired to versatile self-development, acquisition of additional professional skills will receive a significant advantage. The labor invested in the development of one’s cultural capital could have been considered a waste of time in previous years, but during the crisis period, acquired competencies can accelerate the employment process and transform into substantial economic profit (Afanasyev, & Kadnichanskaya, 2020; Galkina, & Kadnichanskaya, 2020).

It is impossible not to note the tendency to increase the prestige of the profession of a doctor. People employed in the field of medicine receive an additional salary increase from the state, enjoy increased attention, their work is appreciated by society. The status of this profession will take a higher position in social stratification. During the acute phase of the crisis, the need for junior medical personnel also increased (the dynamics of vacancies in the field of medicine in January 2021 amounted to 790 %) (Interactive map of Russia, 2022). Couriers delivering parcels to the customer’s home will also be in demand in the labor market.

The scale of purchasing goods and services through specialized Internet resources and mobile device applications is growing. Knowledge in the field of modern technologies allows you to save not only the time spent on moving through urban space to the place of purchase of goods. Now such movements can be associated with a serious threat to health. The reason for this is not only the danger of infection, but also the rapid growth of crime. This problem is especially significant in disadvantaged areas with a large concentration of migrants and representatives of youth criminal groups.

One of the dangerous trends is the general increase in the number of manifestations of deviant behavior of citizens. During the crisis and global social upheavals, due to various social and purely mental reasons, some people show antisocial and anti-government sentiments, which is expressed in practical antisocial actions. This issue also requires sociological analysis, since antisocial behavior in the post-coronavirus world can become a stable trend (Capriano, 2020).

In the conditions of the impossibility of implementing habitual behavioral practices, the weakening of social ties with significant people, the uncertainty of plans for the future, the negative attitude of the individual is more pronounced. Disturbing information coming from the outside contributes to the aggravation of various phobias in people, generates depressive states, obsessive thoughts (Jameson, 2003; Shields et al., 2020). Some individuals partially neutralize the negative external impact by their active involvement in the performance of pleasant and useful activities, which may be related to work, study, personal interests and hobbies. Human activity sometimes manifests itself in the development of plans for the creation of future innovative projects for work. Therefore, if the epidemiological situation improves, a phase of active implementation of new promising ideas may occur. A person can direct his efforts in a crisis period to the improvement of his place of residence, creative activity. Therefore, in particular, we can expect an increase in demand for goods related to the repair of premises (Kadnichanskaya & Galkina, 2021).

Some experts believe that the changes have affected the value system of society. The importance and relevance of the manifestation of such values as altruism, willingness to help others has increased. Volunteer movements have received a new impetus. In the case of systematic awareness-raising activities with the population, it is possible to increase the level of knowledge of citizens about basic measures for the prevention of infectious diseases. For some time, even after the end of the pandemic, there will be an increased attention of people to their own health.

In Russian society, sociologists have recorded an underestimation of the degree of real danger of coronavirus. One of the reasons for this is the spread in the information field of various more or less convincing evidence of manipulation of official statistics. The social institutions responsible for carrying out explanatory work among various categories of citizens are insufficiently developed. In this regard, it is important to study the forms of social transformation, its main scenarios, preventing the spread of false information and false, provocative social rumors (Prince Kennex R. Aldama, 2020).

The individual corrects his behavior, correlating it with the demands of his social environment. The factor pushing a citizen to violate restrictive measures during a pandemic is the absence of cases among a narrow circle of his acquaintances. People do not realize the degree of danger and try not to change their usual lifestyle. The social environment significantly affects a person's willingness and desire to comply with the norms accepted in this group. If the majority of people with whom an individual comes into contact use personal protective equipment, it is more likely that he will also wear a mask and gloves. Approval from others is very important for people. To get it, a person adjusts his daily behavior, sometimes even to the detriment of personal desires and interests.

Thus, several typical behavioral models can be distinguished. The first of them is represented by citizens who fully comply with the instructions of state authorities and medical specialists. They consistently fulfill all the requirements, carefully

correlate their behavior with the new legislative norms, and this happens even if their personal interests are infringed. These people have to spend extra time, physical strength, and material resources. Responsible citizens do not copy the behavioral practices of people from their social environment who neglect elementary precautions, but try to limit the number of contacts with them. Regardless of their personal judgments about the danger of a new disease, they observe the established norms so as not to jeopardize the safety of others, their own physical health, psychological peace and material well-being.

At the same time, there is another category of citizens who only partially comply with the instructions of the authorities. First of all, they follow the norms in public places where law enforcement officers are present, or other persons who can openly point out to them the inadmissibility of careless behavior. Since the level of trust in law enforcement agencies and information from official sources is low in Russian society, people are guided by their own personal interests in terms of spending their free time. Due to the abundance of cases of violations of established norms by civil servants, the desire of people to strictly observe strict restrictions is even more reduced.

The economic factor cannot be excluded. Citizens are forced, even with the threat of infection, to leave their homes in order to get to work and contact people. The value of financial well-being is a priority for them even in relation to health. In a separate group, you can select citizens who do not have family and close friends. Such people, presenting themselves as a sick person, do not experience strong emotional experiences, as they do not feel a sense of their own importance, importance to others, believe that others will not notice their passing away. Therefore, they are also prone to an irresponsible attitude to their health, they can commit irrational acts. Unfortunately, Russia does not have a sufficiently developed system of psychological assistance for this category of citizens, which would allow them to re-socialize in society, find motivation for further activities.

In any state, there are individuals who, either because of mental abnormalities or because of the presence of internal protest behavioral attitudes, try to resist generally accepted norms. During the period of self-isolation, such citizens defiantly take to the streets without protective equipment. Some try to convince their relatives and friends that there is no danger and that there is a need to change behavioral practices. The greatest danger is borne by public figures who spread such destructive messages in the information field. Unfortunately, legislation is not able to effectively restrict the activities of such elements.

The low level of trust in the government among the population is provoked by its non-compliance with established legal norms. The information field created by official sources of power does not coincide with the surrounding picture of the reality of citizens. The author's sociological study "The attitude of residents of the city of Ulyanovsk to vaccination against COVID-19", carried out with the financial support of the Ulyanovsk Public Foundation "Regional Analytics.

Professional research. Ratings” (“RAPIER”) in December 2021, by the method of a sociological survey in the form of focused interviews in groups, revealed these contradictions. Residents of the city of Ulyanovsk who have not been vaccinated participated in the survey. Respondents noted that, in general, they are positive about the vaccination process. This primarily concerns the vaccination of children and vaccines that have been used in our country for a long time. The participants of the focus groups noted the inconsistency and inconsistency of information coming from government agencies. It was especially highlighted that the President of the Russian Federation spoke about the inadmissibility of forcing the population to vaccinate, and tough measures were introduced on the ground to increase the pace of vaccination. The lack of sufficient official information about the pandemic, except for the number of cases and deaths, was also emphasized. And even these figures caused a certain kind of distrust. Many conclusions about the course of the pandemic and the ongoing vaccination process were made by respondents on the basis of indirect data, which did not lead to an increase in confidence in the authorities.

The results of the focus groups confirm these conclusions.

– *If the authorities had voiced a firm position, I think most people would have been vaccinated. And, probably, we still live in Russia, and no matter how strange it may sound, we need to be persuaded to some extent...* (Natalia, 38 years old).

– *It is not known how many vaccinated people got sick. There are rumors, but there is no information. There are no official statistics* (Irina, 42 years old).

– *For example, at the factories, everyone was forced to get vaccinated on pain of dismissal. And although we are told on TV that we do not have the right to force and that we have the right to choose, but in fact we are deprived of it. And since we are Russians, and very stubborn, and when they begin to force us, we categorically will not do it* (Alexander, 32 years old).

According to the official version, vaccinated people do not get sick, and if they get sick, they easily carry the disease. However, many respondents in real life faced the opposite facts, up to fatal cases.

– *I have concrete examples when people were vaccinated and got sick with covid after 2–3 months. Therefore, to be honest, I very much doubt the effectiveness of the vaccine. Accordingly, I'm not going to inject myself with unknown thing.* (Dmitry, 36 years old).

– *Those who have not been vaccinated have been ill, those who have been vaccinated have also been ill. Nothing has changed...* (Olga, 42 years old).

– *...I have information, a close friend works in a medical preventive in the red zone, that the doctors who vaccinated all got sick. And some of them are very hard. And some have already been repeated* (Irina, 52 years old).

– *My friend says I won't do it, my nephew was sitting in line for vaccination in the pavilion. Previously, there was a feature, if they do mass vaccination, there must be an intensive care unit nearby. It's not in the mall right now. He saw the guy*



*being carried out feet first...And when he saw it, he thought, I'll probably look again. One word shock* (Mikhail, 36 years old).

Respondents noted that vaccination is, among other things, a commercial project.

– *I believe that the virus was created artificially for enrichment* (Oleg, 48 years old).

– *This is a commercial benefit, human control, we do not know what is included in this vaccine, what is being injected into us. And also coercion... This is alarming* (Maria, 35 years old).

– *The vaccine is a commercial component. After all, these are state contracts and so on.... All major pharmaceutical companies in Russia belong to the wives of officials* (Alexander, 32 years old).

Thus, respondents have a generally positive attitude towards vaccination. The main reasons for refusing vaccination against COVID-19 are divided into three groups: informational, medical, and political. Information reasons include: the lack of truthful official statistics on the main indicators of the pandemic and vaccination; contradictory opinions of doctors on the topic of vaccination and the absence of virologists' opinions in the information field; contradictory statements of politicians and officials from federal to regional and local levels of government. Medical reasons include: there is no reflection of all stages of the vaccine study in the information field; the vaccine does not perform the main function of preventing the disease (vaccinated people get sick with negative consequences, die, etc.); vaccination during the epidemic, which increases the number of cases; those who have been ill have developed natural immunity. The political reasons include: a low level of trust in the authorities; the use of violent methods of vaccination in the regions; the development of mechanisms of coercion, restriction and surveillance of citizens; the commercial nature of vaccination.

The main reasons for the presence of a large number of citizens who do not comply with the self-isolation regime are as follows. Fines for violating the self-isolation regime are currently quite low, there are very few employees of controlling structures capable of issuing them on the streets of cities. The legislation is insufficiently elaborated, and some innovations are absurd. It can be concluded that only the threat of serious financial costs can reduce the number of violations of the self-isolation regime, increase the security of the country in the face of a pandemic and the spread of COVID-19.

Thus, the pandemic has become a catalyst for serious processes. The changes associated with the spread of the new coronavirus infection have affected all social processes taking place in the world. The population is forced to revise their behavior patterns and adapt to new conditions of interaction. On the one hand, the pandemic stimulated some of the social processes in society that were already technically possible, but were not of a mass nature. On the other hand, the models of adaptive behavior of the population in the changed situation correspond to the developed theoretical concepts.

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