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As a manuscript

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**INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN ACADEMIC DEVIATIONS OF
RUSSIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

Abstract to the dissertation for the degree of candidate of sociological sciences

Specialty 5.4.4. – Social structure, institute of social processes

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Relevance of the topic of the dissertation research

Academic deviations in universities are becoming a global problem due to the high prevalence of those types of practices worldwide. The Russian higher education system makes no exception. The demand for institutional research with their analysis of the learning process in higher education institutions is determined by two goals: an external goal which legalize the university's activities before the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation or any other concerned agency, and an internal goal for planning, managing and decision-making in the field of scientific and educational activities. The study of students' academic deviation phenomenon, including the study of differences between generations in those deviations, contributes to the achievement of both goals.

In recent years, the issues of students' academic deviations have become more and more topical. Dishonest practices during the assessment, purchased essays, research papers or thesis, violating the rules and breaking ethical standards, not only distort the real picture of students' knowledge and skills, undermine confidence in young professionals, but also lead to the entire devaluation of higher education. It leads to the situation where students engaged in dishonest and unfair practices during their studies then transfer such practices into their labour activity and work experience. In this regard, comprehension of students' academic deviations phenomenon is becoming a challenge for modern science.

Higher education, in its capacity of a social institution, has a set of norms and rules. Violations of these norms and rules are known as academic deviations. Despite their wide spread in students' environment, they cannot become an actual norm since they destroy the foundations and principles of higher education leading to its dysfunction as a social institution.

Analysis of differences between generations is one of the ways of studying social changes taking place in the student environment where deviations occur. In the 2010s, with the coming "millennials" generation, non-academic actors (business, political organizations) expressed their concern about the ongoing generational shifts. Market

research on consumer demands, young people's values and priorities in life, and their political preferences emerged. However, in the field of social sciences the study of academic environment in general and students' academic deviations in particular, generational shifts were not a prime focus. Meanwhile, students are an integral part of a generation. They are a social group that is united not so much by age as by the commonality of world outlooks, values, perceptions and behavioural practices. Modern social reality is distinguished by transformation of many conceptions of norms and moral principles, emergence of some new deviations, and blurring of boundaries between norms and departures from the norm. Therefore, we can now talk about the complicated process of socialization of young people. Based on the research data, scientific publications and discussions, the conclusion has been made about the occurrence of a specific type of deviations in the student environment which are related to the social role of a learner, i.e. their acquiring knowledge, getting skills and gaining abilities. They are academic deviations. The research of recent years reveals that nowadays the violation of norms for young people is not perceived as deviation, i.e. their attitudes towards deviant behaviour are becoming a norm as it is. Academic deviations are also wide spread in the student environment. However, even if academic deviations are acceptable at the micro-level of the social system, at the macro-level of higher education as a social institution an excuse of academic deviations is clearly dysfunctional.

Institutional and national countermeasures against academic deviations offer some general solutions only concerning mandatory checks of works for borrowings, formulation of internal normative documents regulating norms and rules, some institutional codes, etc. There are currently no sufficient concrete recommendations considering not only individual characteristics of students and the attitude to academic deviations from the side of university administration and teachers, but also particular features of modern students as a community, as a social group. Since the beginning of 2023, studies are mainly focused on the challenges associated with the emergence of generative artificial intelligence services. There is even a neglect of conventional

academic deviations, despite the fact that they have not disappeared and continue to affect the performance of the educational institution's functions.

In connection with the above, the dissertation research of Valeria Alekseevna Vasilyeva seems to be highly relevant.

Degree of development of the topic

Deviant behaviour in the student environment, the degree and factors of spread of plagiarism and other types of academic dishonesty are currently well enough studied both in Russia and in foreign countries. However, all of these works are studies of a relatively short time span varying from one year to five years. In other words, the research target was young people who were students at the time of their study, and the comparative analysis was centred in contextual, regional, gender, psychological and other planes. Such approaches provide an opportunity to study the problem in depth and suggest some solutions, but they do not respond to the question whether there are any differences in the scale, types and forms of academic deviations in today's students compared to the students of previous generations. Meanwhile, it is a matter of concern since methodological approaches and teaching practices in HEIs are still practically the same as they were used 10-20 years. They cannot fully meet the expectations of today's students. Besides, recommendations to reduce the scale of academic deviations of 15, 20 or more years ago are more than likely not suitable for today's higher education since today the higher education system as a social institution, HEIs and particularly students have already changed, which is how the society has changed due to political, socio-cultural, environmental and other processes.

However, the phenomena of academic deviations through the lens of generational theory have not been practically found in the scientific literature, although intergenerational differences in the scale, forms, causes and factors of academic deviations in the student environment can clarify today's urgent problem of declining quality of higher education. The results of studies of a number of scholars reveal an increase in the scale of academic deviations. They also indicate that academic deviations are frequently not perceived by modern students as deviations, i.e. cheating

becomes acceptable for students. It happens due to the conditions of socialisation changing from one generation to another, forming norms and values that determine individual human behaviour. The conditions of socialisation, as stated above, are influenced by historical events, social conditions, cultural trends of society, and all these factors will be different for different generations.

That is why the issue of intergenerational differences in students' academic deviance has sparked our interest and generational theory has become the theoretical/underlying/thematic framework of this study/research.

This study is the first empirical research that examines academic deviations in the student environment with regard to intergenerational differences. It allows not only to assess the present-day student environment and compare it with the situation in the past, but also to explain these changes from a generational perspective. The dissertation makes a significant contribution to the scientific discussion on academic deviations in the student environment as it enhances not only the insight into the causes and factors of academic deviations, but also makes it possible to develop more effective strategies for their prevention.

The aim of the thesis research is to identify and evaluate intergenerational differences in academic deviance.

In order to achieve **the goal of the work** the following objectives of the study were set up:

1. To systematise and summarise theoretical approaches to the study of deviant behaviour.
2. To describe the research field and classify studies of students' academic deviations.
3. To substantiate the Strauss- Howe generation theory as a theoretical framework for analysing changes in academic deviations of Russian university students.
4. To investigate intergenerational differences in academic deviations of Russian university students.

5. To investigate intergenerational differences in types of plagiarism, their causes, spreading factors and measures to reduce plagiarism as the most prevalent form of academic deviations.

6. To develop recommendations to reduce academic deviations that belong to generation Z.

The object of the study is Russian university students of four generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z.

The subject of the study is academic deviations of Russian university students of different generations.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the work. The theory of Strauss-Howe generations adjusted to the Russian society by V.V.Radaev was used as a theoretical framework to analyse changes in academic deviations of Russian university students. This is determined by the fact that the characteristic of a generation as a social group is not merely age, but also the common experiencing of the same historical and political events. In Russian history, the milestones that make it possible to distinguish generations differ from European or North American ones, while the boundaries of generations are not critically shifted. The theory of generations has made it possible to consider academic deviations in the context of values of individuals who are changing under the influence of social processes occurring in the society during the maturing period of each generation, having formed, among other things, their level of tolerance to academic deviations. The application of this theory enabled us to analyse the processes occurring between students, teachers and other participants of the educational process, to identify the causes of the emergence and development of academic deviations, and also to trace their transformations in view of generational change.

The theoretical and methodological basis for the research of academic deviations is the theory of anomie (E. Durkheim, R. Merton, T. Parsons), the theory of crime (M. Gottfredson and T. Hirschi) and the theory of neutralisation (G. Sykes and D. Matz).

The empirical base is the data from two independently administered online surveys, conducted via Google forms over the Internet. The first survey involved bachelor students currently studying at Russian universities. To a lesser extent, it included students of secondary vocational education, master's students, and postgraduate students (the total surveyed 879). The second survey involved a group of three previous generations, "former students" who studied in different periods of time (totally 358 participants). Also the base for the research was four focus groups on the subject of academic deviations. Two focus groups were made up of students, and two were made up of professors of RANEPa St. Petersburg. The total number of participants made up 25 people.

Online survey data were analysed using MSExcel software and SPSS 26 statistical analysis tools. Focus group materials were analysed using the contents analysis method, which revealed semantic structures, evaluative judgments, ideas and suggestions. The discourse context was also considered, and group dynamics was recorded.

Provisions submitted to the thesis that have scientific novelty.

1. A promising theoretical framework for analysing the differences in academic deviations of Russian university students is defined - the theory of generations developed by U. Strauss and N. Howe. It proves that the nature of academic deviations in a particular generation is determined by the peculiarities of social processes in the society at this or that historical period. For Generation Z, as the results of focus groups show, violations of intellectual rights and copyrights are not perceived by students as a deviation since this generation is being brought up in the digital age, when "everything that lies open on the Internet" is used. The uncertain economic conditions under which Generation Z socialisation is taking place also affects the level of students' academic deviations upwards, as the representatives of this generation are more concerned about their future and are willing to secure it by any means.

2. It is revealed that the overall amounts of deviance are increasing from generation to generation, with the most common types of academic deviance being

different across generations. Two online surveys (N= 879 for generation Z and N= 358 for the three previous generations) showed that the averages of all the variables rank scales increase from baby boomers (2.60) to generation Z (3.34.) Regression analysis results demonstrated that cheating on homework, producing cheat sheets and cheating on exams are more likely to be typical for older respondents, while cheating on homework, plagiarism and purchasing tests/essays/coursework are more likely to be common for younger respondents. The only deviation type that does not undergo any significant changes in the scale is producing and making use of cheat sheets.

3. Intergenerational differences in reasons for plagiarism as the most common form of deviation have been revealed. Students of generation Z consider it to be a heavy academic load, students of generations Millennials, X and baby boomers think it is a formal attitude to study. The relevance of such a reason as "lack of interest in a particular discipline" is consistently increasing with each generation. From the perspective of generational theory these differences can be attributed to socio-cultural peculiarities of socialisation - higher education is becoming more and more affordable and large-scale, universities of generation 4.0 declare practice-oriented education. In this context, Generation Z students do not consider it worth studying unnecessary disciplines from the perspective of their future professional career. At the same time, the academic load and educational requirements for them are increasing (point-and-rating system).

4. It is revealed that the degree of tolerance to plagiarism is the highest among the students of generation Z, that correlates with the previous conclusion. The Mann-Whitney test recorded a significant difference at the level of p-value <0.01 compared to all other generations for that generation only. The analysis of focus group records confirmed the tolerant attitude to plagiarism among present-day students. On the one hand, they have a very narrow understanding of what plagiarism is, and on the other hand, they believe that they will not create anything new themselves, that is why plagiarism is inevitable.

5. It is justified that pedagogical, educational and methodological recommendations to reduce the level of academic deviations have to consider the specific characteristics of students of generation Z: networking, quick learning of new technologies, clip thinking and at the same time their ability to quickly search for information, focus on self-actualisation, practice-orientation, desire to work on their own mode, ability to communicate in the online environment, etc.

Compliance of the thesis topic to the provisions of the Passport of the Scientific Speciality of the Higher Attestation Commission.

The research is carried out within the framework of speciality 5.4.4. "Social structure, social institutions and processes" and is in accordance with the following areas of research:

17. Age cohorts in the system of socio-structural relations.

18. Youth as a social group. Specific features of the social status, awareness and behaviour of various groups of young people. The problem of social development of youth.

27. Processes of digitalisation, virtualisation, and networking in a contemporary society.

Theoretical significance of the study lies in the increase of knowledge in the field of sociology of youth (students), sociology of deviant behaviour and also in related sciences that include pedagogy, ethics and jurisprudence.

Practical significance of the study. The results of the study can be used by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, as well as by the academic community in designing programmes for the promotion of scientific potential in higher education (Priority-2030 Programme) and in making proposals for the improvement of quality of higher education training. The recommendations of the study will be helpful in shaping curricula and academic programmes of disciplines in higher education institutions, particularly in the development of courses on academic writing, in the educational process of all areas of study, in the interim certification, and when specifying the requirements for graduation qualification works. The findings and

recommendations of the dissertation may serve as a basis for the elaboration and implementation of new pedagogical practices. The findings of the research would be useful in reading courses on sociology of youth, sociology of education, sociology of deviant behaviour and other courses. Furthermore, the recommendations elaborated on the basis of the research results can be of interest for university and college teachers as well as for teachers of general education institutions.

The degree of reliability of the provisions and results of the undertaken research is confirmed by a comprehensive analysis of empirical data, consistency of the author's findings and the earlier studies conducted by other scholars, approbation of the results of the author's research at seminars, conferences and in classes with undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate students in the academic writing discipline that the author has developed.

Structure of the work. The thesis comprises an introduction, three chapters, nine paragraphs, a conclusion, a list of the used sources and references (282 titles of which 102 are in English) and 5 appendices. The overall volume of the work is 245 pp.

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