

ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL FREEDOM AND  
RESPONSIBILITY BY FEMALE STUDENTS DURING  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND SAFETY CULTURE

*Keywords:* security, safety culture, freedom, responsibility, pandemics, the dangers and risks, female students

Drawing on the outcome of field research conducted among female students at the St. Petersburg University, the article examines the relationship between values of personal freedom and those of responsibility under the conditions of the pandemic. I argue that this relationship is tied to the formation of a safety culture and that these values are significant for young women, but their assessment and impact on the personal situation during the pandemic is experienced ambiguously. Almost a third of the young women interviewed experienced negative feelings caused by the restriction of freedom. I specifically address the main strategies that the interviewees referred to as helping them cope with the situation of restriction of freedom: compensation for the lack of inclusion in society; rapprochement with family; training and self-development; withdrawal from or denial of problems; increasing the comfort of life; etc. Most of the female students believe that their responsibility during the pandemic was somehow connected with the moral value of the rights of other people. At the same time, about a quarter of them indicated that the imposition and use of prohibitive norms by the state suppresses the moral responsibility of citizens rather than stimulates it. The existing favorable conditions for the development of a safety culture can be strengthened by establishing a balance between administrative and legal measures and respect for the moral components of freedom and responsibility.

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Population health ranks among the first-priority issues in contemporary scientific research. A special view of this problem has developed in anthropology, ethnography and related disciplines (medical anthropology, sociology of medicine, etc.) – scientists pay attention to the relationship between the culture of an ethnos and the health of its representatives. Here we can mention the development of social history of medicine currently interested in patient’s problems, reconstruction of “popular ideas of disease, health, treatment, prevention, corporeality, etc.” (*Mikhel* 2009:304). One of the important subjects having different interpretation is the problem of influence of cultural and social processes on the formation of medical ideas and realisation of health-saving practices in different ethnic groups (the problem of medicalisation) (see: *Foucault* 2010; *Avrusin et al.* 2010; *Svetlichnaya, Smirnova* 2017). The subject of ethnicity and health is relatively new for Russia, but we can already state that it has aroused great interest of specialists, since it is connected with identification of most significant factors influencing treatment and prevention of diseases. These factors primarily include: genetic predisposition to diseases,

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geographical environment of ethnic groups, socio-economic conditions (availability and quality of medical aid, susceptibility to medical effect with regard for diseases, dieting, way of life, etc.) (Kolesnikova et al. 2013; Antipov, Antipova 2016).

The new challenges posed to the humanity by the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty of the epidemiological situation prospects entailed increased interest in all issues relating to safety of the country's population as a specific community of ethnic groups in the field of health protection. In any catastrophic situation, different communities and individuals, proceeding from cultural preferences, respond differently to hazards, choosing different survival strategies (Schepanskaya 2020). However, rational organisation of measures to protect the population requires not only consideration of different factors and well-thought-out policy in the area of treatment and prevention of diseases, but also development of safety culture that can ensure people's involvement in handling the challenging tasks of maintaining the sufficient level of "resilience" to coronavirus spread. An important task in building safety culture is people's attitudes to measures that address the issues of personal freedom and responsibility. Despite the existing experience in studying the mentioned problems (see: Reshetnikov et al. 2016; Skabelkina 2017), it should be noted that this direction of research is not particularly well developed. Meanwhile, it is important for planning preventive measures and predicting the response of different social and ethnic groups to them. Of particular interest, from the authors' point of view, is research to be undertaken among women, since they, on the one hand, are more susceptible to anxiety than men, and, on the other hand, are more oriented towards measures related to maintaining health (their own and of their loved ones'). In addition, they are traditionally involved in educational process, being translators of survival strategies for their (present or future) children in conditions of real threats, which should undoubtedly affect the (less-than-prompt) process of formation of safety culture in the society.

### **The role of freedom and responsibility in fostering the culture of safety: operational concept**

With the introduction of coercive measures affecting habitual daily activities in the society, individuals become particularly sensitive to everything that in one way or another affects their fundamental moral values. One of such values is freedom; people's aspiration for it appears to be an inalienable natural human need. It is no coincidence that in some countries (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Mexico) escaping from prison is considered as an "instinctive human right to strive for freedom" and does not entail, caeteris paribus, any additional penalty (see: Novikov 2019). In general, although one can find different points of view on the phenomenon of "freedom" in philosophy (from complete denial by supporters of behaviourism to justification of the urge to escape freedom in the conditions of modern civilisation crises (Fromm 2006), freedom is most commonly understood as the possibility to make a choice (Mikhel 1994; Frankl 1990). This definition inherently includes the problems of freedom of choice as well as choosing the extent of moral responsibility for one's actions. This burden is inherent in every person throughout his/her life: "It depends on a person whether he will be able to set his own life path by adhering to clearly defined life guidelines or prefers not to accept and give up his freedom, shifting responsibility to other people" (Sabitova 2019: 110). J.-P. Sartre asserted that "man is freedom", thus emphasising not only man's instinctive aspirations, but also the fact that man "cannot help but choose" from what is offered to him by the society (Sartre 1990: 327). By choosing, man becomes responsible not only for his individuality; "he is responsible for all people" (Ibid: 324).

Freedom is not only a cultural phenomenon; it is also a generic characteristic of ethnicity. Indeed, individual choice, like ideas about freedom, is largely determined by dominant communicative codes reflecting cultural specificity and self-identity of an ethnos. Ideologists cultivated different attitudes to freedom in different periods of human history. Thus, the representatives of "barracks communism" "identified freedom with the savage state of

humanity the reverse side of which can only be represented by crimes and misfortunes” (Nanaeva 2010: 259). Since freedom as a specific aspect of social relations is realised through everyday practices, one can talk about inclusion of this concept in the fundamental notions of human existence and man’s relation to the surrounding reality. In the conditions of power crisis, presence of real threats and domination of traditional (patriarchal) values (primarily mutual assistance and mutual help), the idea of freedom becomes a quintessence of ethnic spiritual culture and acquires the function of criterion of equality and justice (Ibid: 261-262).

The question of how freedom and responsibility relate to safety culture takes on particular importance during pandemic periods because of the critical state of public health and the demand for informed risk behaviour.

U. Beck (*Beck* 2000), N. Luhmann (*Luhmann* 2001), A. Giddens (*Giddens* 2011) put forward the following thesis: the modern society is a field of extended reproduction of risks that affect safety/security of individuals. The subject was further developed in the concepts of “extended security” (*Daase* 2014), “human security” (*Debiel, Werthes* 2013), “social security” (*Kuznetsov* 2007). These concepts, along with theoretical arguments on the content and scope thereof, possible risks, etc., discuss the idea that not only the state should take care of the citizens’ security, but also all members of the society. The basis for individuals to become security actors should be represented by formed security culture understood as aggregate beliefs, values and practices of individuals who make decisions about *what is* regarded as a danger and by what means it should be countered, with regard for personal and social interests (*Daase et al.* 2014: 10). This definition of safety culture during the pandemic is particularly relevant, as the risk of coronavirus spread threatens individuals’ health and lives (ontological threat) (*Daase* 2014: 22). If dealing with hazards is deemed to be the prerogative of administrative and legal resources solely, this does not lead to the formation of due safety culture. Subjective risk assessment, like subjective security, is no less meaningful than experts’ assessment used by mainstream regulators in formulating measures and laws. The subjective view of security is included in the domain of debate in scientific, political, and everyday discourse. At the same time, the ontological threat sets the line not only for discussions, but also for everyday practices, making it possible to cope with the need to comply with certain rules, norms, measures that limit freedom, but that contribute to adoption of individual strategies of protection against contamination and further spread of disease. One of the directions in thematisation of security is the discussion about dimensions of security culture. In particular, according to the theory of “extended security”, one should consider several dimensions, when analysing the collective (public) security culture: mainframe (micro- and meso-level of the society as a whole), material level (political, economic, environmental, technical and legal aspects) involving dangers and risks, and temporal level. In this case, security culture, as a flexible construct of social activity practice, needs a special concept of security management which would be justified in terms of culture (culture of the society, ethnos, social group) (*Lange, Wendekamm* 2014).

The dynamic transformation of epidemiological situation does not always provide opportunities for individuals to make painless decisions. It can be tempting to shift the burden of responsibility onto others (people infected by COVID, the state, organisations, etc.). If the individual withdraws from any responsibility, then he passes the burden of responsibility for protection of population on major security actors, particularly on the state which plays a leading role in this process. The success of preventive measures in this case will only depend on the measure of punishment, i.e. the extent of responsibility established (enforced) by the subject setting the legal framework of social interaction. Undoubtedly, this choice facilitates the individual’s existence owing to removal of any responsibility; however, it increases the personal negative experience of the “security paradox”. The core of the paradox lies in the fact that transfer of responsibilities and powers (rights) to the state and other social institutions, as concerns forming and implementing the security policy, leads to individual’s increased sense of insecurity. This condition is always disconcerting: “People live in

greater security and yet feel more unsafe” (Daase. 2014: 21). Most citizens, against the backdrop of expansion of official social institutions, try to “take possession of the situation”, seeking to overcome the feeling of insecurity. They use destructive protests as a tool, or develop a culture of security allowing individuals to participate in provision of security on a par with other actors. The security culture, by promoting and defending the measures that protect human dignity and civil liberties, acts as a certain counterbalance to politically/technically attractive, but unrealisable promises of security. “Otherwise, we run the risk that security measures will change society in such a way that it is no longer the society that we actually wanted to protect. It would then no longer be the society in which citizens are sovereign...”. (Quinn 2014: 131).

Naturally, security is possible even without freedom – but only in autocratic systems that ignore the needs of the population for this “luxury good”. In democratic states, freedom is certainly not a luxury, but rather the *raison d’être* of the modern constitutional and constitutionalised system (Abels 2016: 47). At the same time, freedom is impossible without security. This is why the state monopoly of force gains its legitimacy. The only question is “to what extent security is tolerant of freedom and how much freedom it tolerates”. One can pursue “negative freedom” – freedom from the state, or “positive freedom” – freedom to do something, freedom to control oneself, one’s actions and life situation (Ibid: 48-49). The choice in favour of positive freedom and moral responsibility means voluntary acceptance of obligations towards others, inherent in the culture of security. Responsibility in the moral sense implies that one acts freely, knowingly and voluntarily, choosing strategies of behaviour and setting boundaries for his actions (Dictionary *(no details)*). The criterion for setting boundaries is the rights of others to be protected from ontological threats – as expression of justice and equal worth of each person’s life. Here the interests of individuals intersect/coincide with the interests of the society, which ultimately shapes the formation of not only individual’s, but also collective culture of security. Of course, this is a less-than-prompt process, but extreme conditions, such as a pandemic, can favour its intensification.

### **Characteristics of participants; organisation and methods of the research**

***Characteristics of research participants.*** The study entitled “The pandemic and myself in it: the problem of freedom and responsibility” was carried out in March-April 2021. It was aimed to study the attitude of female students of the Faculty of Sociology of St. Petersburg State University towards the problem of interrelation of freedom and responsibility in the extreme conditions of the pandemic and their assessment of the above phenomena in terms of impact on the girls’ personal situation. The research involved 26 second- and third-year female students aged 19-20, studying at the department of social work. The given specificity of the object of study seems justified since this group of students, firstly, is distinguished by orientation towards active social life (like all students in general); secondly, they have skills of reflective, analytical work; thirdly, their specialisation promotes greater sensitivity to social problems. In this regard, one could count on adequate judgments and assessment of the situation.

Among the other characteristics of the survey participants is their predominant belonging to the Russian ethnicity (23 out of 26). Two of the remaining three girls were born in a mixed marriage; one was born in an Armenian family and considers Armenian to be her native language; at the same time all of the three speak Russian well and are, at least partially, bearers of the Russian culture. In addition, just over half of the research participants came to study in St. Petersburg from small Russian cities, which can mean greater importance of traditional values for them (as compared to the residents of megacities).

***Analysis of the cultural environment.*** The peculiarities of cultural environment in which the girls live and study are also worth noting, as this influences their perception of reality in a most direct way. St. Petersburg “has been an indicator of most significant events in the

Russian history for three centuries” (Uvarov 2012: 153); it maintains the status of cultural capital of Russia and the city of Russian spiritual culture where the pursuit of freedom is of foremost value. This is evidenced not only by the three revolutions with the heart in St. Petersburg, not only by the siege that showed the strength of mind of Leningrad residents, but also by the special attitude to the theme of freedom in cultural sources – in the works of outstanding poets and writers (A.S. Pushkin, F.M. Dostoevsky, I.A. Brodsky, S.D. Dovlatov, etc.) whose biographies are connected with the city on the Neva; composers (it is in St. Petersburg that “the Mighty Five” was formed in the second half of the 19th century – a commonwealth of great composers M.A. Balakirev, M.P. Musorgsky, A.P. Borodin, N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov and C.A. Cui); painters (I.N. Kramskoi, G.G. Myasoedov, N.N. Ge, V.G. Perov and others, the best graduates of the Imperial Academy of Arts who founded the “Society of Itinerant Art Exhibitions” in 1870 and who were inspired by the idea of populism). It is fair to say that most of the progressive Russian intelligentsia was traditionally formed and settled in St. Petersburg. It created a special atmosphere attracting young people who were hungry for education and were eager to develop spiritually. It is probably for this reason that studying at the leading universities imbued with the spirit of knowledge, creativity and freedom so far remains attractive for young people living both in St. Petersburg and in other Russian cities. St. Petersburg University stands out particularly among the oldest universities of the city; D.I. Mendeleev, I.P. Pavlov, L.D. Landau, L.V. Kantorovich, I.M. Sechenov and other prominent figures taught here at different times. After the University was closed in connection with student disturbances in autumn 1861, these progressive professors gave lectures at the first “Free University” (it was the name for paid public lectures held in January – March 1862 in the premises of the City Council and in the auditorium of Petrishule).

At present, much attention is traditionally paid to students’ involvement in the university life: their representatives take part in academic council meetings, discussing topical issues of teaching and residence, cultural events, etc. The respectful attitude to the students’ opinion and cooperation in solving any arising problems contributes to the formation of responsibility and social identity. Drawing into classical sources of culture, along with the special spirit of university camaraderie, forms the perception, one way or another, and comprehension of fundamental human values, of one’s own personality and the events taking place in the society.

**Choice of research method.** This choice in different disciplines depends primarily on the complexity of the research object structure.

In virtue of the fact that ethnography faced the task of providing comprehensive characterisation of peoples and ethnic processes, it could not limit itself to a single universal method. Its arsenal included a number of methods: general scientific, used by related humanities and social sciences, and special methods solely inherent in ethnography (Belov et al. 2017: 17).

Among the general scientific methods, the historical method (study of archaeological materials, scriptural sources) and the sociological method (questioning and interviewing, observation, sample and exhaustive survey, analysis of statistical and archival sources) are important; the special methods of interest include direct observation, experiment, audio and video fixation (Belov et al. 2017: 17; Gribanova 2019). It was decided, with regard for the sensitivity of the research subject, as well as for the reason of no direct access to the participants (the university studies were held remotely), to use a hybrid approach – combining the elements of questioning with the study of written sources. The structured essay seemed to be the most suitable method for the goal of the research, since it enabled the authors to highlight some subtopics within the general subject matter (the exception was one formalised question required for introducing to the topic). The girls were asked to expound their ideas/reasoning without reservation. The advantage of this method is the absence of prompts in the form of answer options and, as it seemed to the authors, the absence of “control of the reasoning

process”, while its difficulty lies in the fact that the genre of essay as such is not simple and requires thoughtfulness and concentration. The distance learning caused certain adjustments: the students were burdened with routine assignments, while the participation in the research required allotting time for writing the essay. In this regard, the authors relied on the principle of available opportunity.

The texts of the essays were processed by means of content analysis. To evaluate the experience of freedom/non-freedom during the period of forced restrictions, frequency distribution of answers (v) was used, in addition to the respondents’ reasoning about the relationship between freedom and responsibility. Words and expressions were used as counting units.

### **Freedom and responsibility at the pandemic period, as perceived by the girls: research results**

#### ***“Optimists” and “pessimists”: perception of personal freedom in the condition of restrictions.***

The preliminary brief question (assuming choice among the answer options) about the experience of freedom/non-freedom in connection with the imposed restrictions during the pandemic made it possible to divide the girls into two groups: “optimists” – those who “did not feel that their freedom was affected” and “pessimists” – those who “felt that they were deprived of freedom”. The girls in the first group (v=16) chose the answers: “no, because human freedom does not depend on external factors” (v=2); “restrictions in extreme situations are a forced measure and it has nothing to do with freedom” (v=9); “other” (v=5). Explaining the last option, the female students essentially wrote that those were restrictions only for a certain part of the population, so this did not affect them (v=4); they wrote that the rapid adaptation to the changed conditions did not prevent them from “living in accordance with their own desires and rules” (v=1). The second group included the girls who chose the answer “yes, definitely” (v=10).

After splitting the participants, a comparative analysis of the content of “optimists” and “pessimists” mini-essays was made. The representatives of both groups gave different arguments to justify their choice of the answer option. The first-group respondents referred to the fact that they understood the importance of restrictive measures and accepted them as a guide to action, relying on the sense of self-preservation or law-abidance (v=6):

- ...it was my personal decision not to go out anywhere... Even if the government hadn’t imposed such strict precautions...;
- Since the restrictions were imposed for the benefit of the society, I believe that we, citizens, must abide by them. It is easier to go through restrictions, in order to reach normalisation sooner, than to rebel and shout about freedom.

Another argument of the “optimists” was that the corpus of restrictive measures served the public good and safety of all citizens (v=4). This idea was voiced, for instance, in the statements:

- It was clear that it was all about security... The goals of restricting freedom and self-isolation are completely different...;
- Restrictive measures were imposed for the common good, to protect the health of all people. This is not deprivation of people’s liberty, it is mutual care of each other.

Some of the authors of these and similar statements were aware that the restrictions did exist (“in terms of financial matters”, spending leisure outside home), but were ready to accept this circumstance for the sake of safety.

The third argument probably is the most specific for the “optimistic” mood of the group (v=6). The girls argued that there are a number of alternative innovative ways to compensate for the deficit of social communication and interaction, and that the situation left more time for self-actualisation:

- I did not feel the restriction of freedom painfully, since all possible channels for study and communication with the teachers, relatives, friends were fully available,
- The limitation of freedom for me did not represent its curtailment in the spheres I was used to; it meant shifting the focus to other spheres of its manifestation;
- Now I have an opportunity to spend more time with the family, to engage in self-development, to think about my future life plans;
- ...The pandemic endowed me with more freedom than I used to have. I think the main thing is to be able to adapt to the new conditions and to learn to enjoy them.

The “pessimists’” arguments can also be split into blocks depending on the dominant idea or meaning. At this stage the number of answers does not match the total number of girls ( $v=10$ ), since the emotional descriptions of the research participants assigned to this group sometimes contained two main ideas. The first block accommodates the arguments based on the impossibility to pursue one’s everyday life in a familiar format and rhythm, even if the restrictions are recognised as reasonable and justified ( $v=7$ ):

- ...I was not able to attend ballet performances, philharmonic concerts, theatres or exhibitions... All of that was the most pleasant part of everyday life that had inspired me to move to St. Petersburg;
- ...I was deprived of the opportunities I had before the pandemic – walking outdoors, going to a café, learning and working offline, etc;
- The usual rhythm of life was disrupted...

The second block of arguments includes those explaining the perceived loss of freedom by the “social climate” formed by the media and some politicians (oppressive, with intrusive information about the pandemic situation), as well as by the prohibitive measures imposed by the state, which are treated in the essay as excessive or not always justified ( $v=5$ ):

- Now we face prohibitions; if you break them you will not just see disapproval on the part of the society, but get a real punishment... One is simply deprived of the possibility to choose, he/she is forced to obey these rules;
- ...The [life] was relentlessly overshadowed by the frightening and increasingly irritating warning alarms and loudspeaker announcements prescribing not to leave home. The pressure of threats continued at home, via the Internet... Pervasive intimidation out in THE STREET, reaching your home nest!
- I realised that the taken measures were aimed at keeping people healthy, but many of them were obviously ridiculous, and their mandatory compliance caused me a lot of questions and a flurry of outrage.

There is a great deal of negative emotion and expression in the essays of this group of girls. When reading their texts, one can feel that even after the relative stabilisation of the situation with the coronavirus (it should be recalled that the study was conducted in early spring) they feel strained recalling their experience. Here are just some of the expressions that convey the tension of that time:

- ...I was in a state of captivity and apathy;
- ...I felt powerless;
- ...obsessive encroachment on radio listeners’ self-preservation instinct (when broadcasting news programmes on the radio and TV);
- ...it felt like it was all about locking all of us up at home;
- ...staying locked up in a one-room apartment seemed a torture.

**Perception of freedom.** The definition of freedom by representatives of two different groups is interesting. The girls-“optimists” proceed from two main ideas in its interpretation. First: freedom is an opportunity to do what one wishes ( $v=7$ ):

- ...I decide on my actions myself;

- ...to control my own life as I wish;
- ...I have the right to do whatever I wish;
- ...no restrictions of any kind;
- ...a possibility to act the way I wish;
- ...to follow my inner impulses and desires without hindrance;
- ...I am free to decide for myself how to act in any given situation...

The second idea carries the generally accepted understanding of freedom as a possibility of choice (v=9). Sometimes clarifications about choice as such are added: it must be conscious, therefore a person must take responsibility for it (v=2); it must not devalue the other people's worldviews and must include "respect for the law and the government's decisions, even though I may not agree with them" (v=1). One of the definitions emphasises the congruous combination of the right to choose and "the objectively existing possibility to realise one's fullest potential in the reality that has taken shape".

The opinions of the girls-"pessimists" are quite consistent with those expressed by their mates from the first group; however, the emotional colouring of the texts is more pronounced. Thus, freedom is treated as an opportunity to do what one wants (v=4), in the statements asserting that freedom means the following:

- there is no room for worrying about limitations, therefore you may live realising all your wishes;
- I do what I want to do and what I can do;
- personal constraints of an individual, which he/she has the right to set for himself/herself;
- I do what my soul desires, but, of course, within the limits of what is reasonable and legal.

Freedom as a possibility of choice (v=5) is revealed in statements like:

- ...it is a state of self-sufficiency and the right to be aware and control one's actions through choice;
- ...it is a possibility to go where you want to go and to do what you want to do, to verbally express anything you wish, to communicate with whoever you want to.

One of the girls (v=1) noted:

- ...true freedom does not exist, and one can only come close to feeling free; this is contributed to by a number of restrictions that we perceive necessary for survival in the modern world.

Despite the fact that the understanding of "freedom" in both groups is generally similar, two interesting differences can be highlighted. In particular, the "pessimists" are more likely to mention the rights of others in their discussion of this phenomenon (if we proceed from proportionate comparison), although three individuals had the same view in each of the two groups. This is probably indicative of a greater sensitivity of the second-group girls to violation of personal boundaries, both their own and those of other persons, as well as heightened sensitivity to all kinds of uncertainty that requires flexibility and quick change of everyday practices. To a certain extent, this is evidenced by the girls' reasoning on the following sub-topic: "If you felt that your freedom was restricted during the pandemic, how did you cope with this feeling and what allowed to minimise it?"

It should be noted that the answer to this question was not obligatory; it was assumed that those who did not feel restricted in their freedom during the pandemic would not submit their mini-essays. However, only three persons admitted not to have been constrained; 13 girls out of the 16 who had initially stated that they had not been deprived of freedom during the pandemic ("optimists") acknowledged that they did experience this feeling, at least with regard to certain spheres of life activity. The girls noted the following limiting factors:

- impossibility to relocate freely and visit various establishments (shopping, entertainment, etc.);



- impossibility to manage their time due to the distance learning and remote work (“It was scary to be offline for more than an hour during the day, because so many things could happen during that time: sudden assignments from the teacher outside the online learning hours... or an urgent task arising at work, not scheduled previously”);

- intrusive negative information in the media about deaths, spread of the disease, etc;
- monotony of life during the constraints period.

Two students from the first group wrote that they felt restriction of freedom only on the part of their parents:

- ...They were controlling and watching me more intensely than before... They were much worried that they might get infected;
- ...It is very difficult to live with your parents when you are already used to living on your own. This is where conflicts and misunderstanding arise.

Three girls (v=3) experienced intense negative emotions which they defined as follows:

- I was wearied with longing for communication to the point of hysterics;
- I felt “emotional burnout”
- I experienced certain psychic tension.

**Main strategies of overcoming the situation of non-freedom.** Proceeding from the essays of the “optimist” girls, it is possible to identify the main strategies of overcoming the feeling of non-freedom during the pandemic:

- *compensating for lack of social inclusion.* The inconveniences connected with the restrictions were compensated by: switching to online communication with friends and relatives (v=12); inclusion in Internet communities and active online interaction with their members, for instance, through online games, joint viewing and discussion of films, various online competitions (v=4); going out to a park with the friends, having street walks, sometimes breaking the bans (v=4);

- *developing affinity with the family* (v=7). “Physical contact with the family members, help in solving their domestic and communication problems minimised the feeling of restricted freedom”; “such pastime was in fact to my liking... and, as it seems, we became even closer”;

- *learning and self-development:* immersion in the learning process (v=3), taking online courses and getting an online job (v=2);

- *creativity, hobbies* (v=4);

- *sports* (v=3);

- *increasing the comfort of life:* establishing a proper sleep and rest pattern (“I finally got rid of lack of sleep, stress and discomfort in public transport”); realisation and protection of personal boundaries (“awareness of personal boundaries I have the right to. For example, not responding to a work email at 1 a.m.”); releasing weekends from all and any business; attending some study and work online meetings in silent mode (v=2); stocking foodstuffs through online supermarkets for a month in advance (v=1);

- *estrangement from the problem.* This strategy included: treating and studying the pandemic as a subject and “choosing own position in respect of it; fencing oneself off from all conversations about it”; mastering stress-relief meditation practices (v=2);

- *passive pastime:* reading books, watching TV films/serials (v=2).

The “pessimistic” girls also used different strategies for overcoming their feelings of not being free. Most of them are similar to those used by their mates from the first group. Using the same classification, the answers were distributed as follows (from a greater number of answers to lower figures): creative work, hobbies (v=6); compensation for deficit of social inclusion (v=4); getting closer to the family (v=4); learning and self-development (v=4); sporting activities (v=1); increasing life comfort (v=1); estrangement from the problem

through meditation practices ( $v=1$ ); passive pastime ( $v=1$ ) (one of the students saw the solution in acquiring a pet and taking care of it).

At the same time, the girls from the second group applied to certain specific strategies triggered by strong negative feelings. Some of them describe their feelings like this:

- The powerlessness and fear were not easy to cope with – they were always creeping up with the feeling that subsequently it would be... even worse;
- Locking yourself in a room and not leaving it might seem to be a big plus...;
- ...I took that time much to heart, and nothing helped me to cope with those feelings.

One of the essay's authors conveys her feelings as follows:

...daily walks to the cemetery... This place kept its own record of new settlers. I took notice of new tombstones; the death dates showed very recent departure from life. The cemetery became similar to a formerly living and vibrant social field; it did not, thankfully, produce sighs and lamentations about the cursed virus, but it conveyed indifference, perhaps even mockery, at the world of the seemingly living...

Immersed in this negative wave, the girls: “let themselves to have tasty treats” which led to overeating ( $v=1$ ), showed aggression ( $v=1$ ) or chose to “ignore restrictions utmostly” ( $v=2$ ). When describing their breach of rules, the girls most often tell of going out for a walk, alone or with the friends. It can be supposed that in practice their violations were not limited to this.

As can be seen, the representatives of the second group turned to creative practices significantly more often than the “optimists”, in order to overcome the sense of bondage. Moreover, their heightened sensitivity and emotiveness could lead to (conscious) breach of prohibitions as a protest reaction to the restriction of freedom.

***Relationship between personal freedom and responsibility*** – this issue was reflected in the following two subtopics. The “optimistic” girls pointed out that the above interrelation manifests itself mainly in voluntary (free) awareness of the need to comply with the restrictive measures. This idea can be traced in the vast majority of female students from the first group ( $v=13$ ), and its verbalisation looked like this, for instance

- Freedom represents conscious acceptance of generally established norms and rules; it is not based on fear of sanctions, but relies on personal comprehension and agreement with the indispensability of the taken measures. This is taking responsibility for one's own choice and refraining from going out, for instance...;
- Responsibility guides freedom in a sense... You take a decision not to leave home, you make your CHOICE in line with your moral principles and conscience. Responsibility determines one's behaviour and actions, while conscience regulates them;
- Conscientious and responsible attitude towards your fellow countrymen today will return a hundredfold in the form of your freedom tomorrow.

Personal responsibility, as viewed by the supporters of this concept, reflects a person's civic position. Responsibility on the part of a large number of people generates informal control of a situation on the part of the society (“I mean that the society itself has become in control of itself; people have become responsible for their own fate and the fate of the society”). Three more respondents advocate this “optimistic” position in their essays. There are also some other arguments voicing that people's responsibility was caused not only and not so much by moral attitudes as by the introduction of administrative and criminal punitive measures for violation of the prohibitions ( $v=3$ ).

We get a more diverse picture when analysing the essays of the “pessimists”. The reasoning of this group's representatives is multiple-valued, as well as the actual notions of “freedom” and “responsibility”. Nevertheless, in most cases one can trace the idea that interrelation of freedom and responsibility manifested itself in practice through observance of

the quarantine measures ( $v=7$ ). At the same time, however, some additional meanings can be observed, for example:

- ...being a responsible personality, sometimes you have to place the needs of the society above your own ones, which constitutes a limitation of freedom ( $v=2$ );
- ...excessive concern for one's freedom at the expense of responsibility to others leads to all sorts of deviations ( $v=2$ ).

One of the girls argues in her essay that “the awareness of responsibility for one's actions and the extent of self-restraint depend on the required level of compliance with the accepted rules and responsibilities”; she claims that the introduction of state measures backed up by the relevant laws created a logic chain “the pandemic – measures – non-compliance – sanctions” in people's minds. However, the bans did not lead to any serious results, while no other solution was proposed. Therefore, “people exclude their influence on the situation and are less likely to take any serious steps on their own”. This opinion is shared by two other girls who wrote that the need to comply with the ill-conceived measures under threat of punishment reinforced the legal liability, but minified the people's freedom. Finally, one respondent concludes that “the context of 2020 and the subsequent phases... extended the concept of ‘freedom’ with the notion of ‘necessity’. Freedom was thereby abolished, while responsibility, as a civic duty to meet legal precepts, became an obligation. Thus, at least four girls were pessimistic about the possibility of preserving the moral nature of the concepts “freedom” and “responsibility” in the pandemic situation, since these notions either “have been abolished” or are treated within the purely legal framework. Thus, the textual analysis shows that the “pessimists” are more inclined to critical conceptualisation of reality. Therefore, if we count the same-nature opinions of the “optimists”, we get seven negative views on the impact of the official legal prohibitive norms on the relationship between freedom and responsibility in terms of their moral content.

After the theoretical reasoning, the girls were asked to describe the ways of their own manifestation of responsibility during the pandemic. Since the main positions of the research participants coincide, it makes sense to present the generalised analysis, showing the frequency distribution of the answers by groups (“optimists” will be marked with “O”, “pessimists” with “P”). The girls' personal responsibility was manifested as follows:

- compliance with the self-isolation and disease prevention measures (wearing masks and gloves, social distancing, disinfecting gadgets, hands treatment with antiseptic, withdrawal from attending “hangouts”, etc.). The responsibility was manifested, in the first place, in “concerned attitude to people in general and, as a consequence, in limiting own freedom” ( $Ov=16$ ,  $Pv=10$ );
- care of health of elderly grandparents living separately (“did not visit them during the strict self-isolation period”, “called and asked about their condition”, “delivered food and necessary items”) ( $Ov=4$ ,  $Pv=1$ );
- care of parents (support, help, online communication) ( $Ov=5$ ,  $Pv=2$ );
- prevention of panic spread, support of friends, preserving optimism (“I did not let myself participate in discussions on coronavirus, avoided numerous “speculations” and conjectures... I believe, that was the most important and responsible act during that period”) ( $Ov=3$ ,  $Pv=1$ );
- care of own health (doing sports, “refraining from the planned trip abroad”, “well-conceived organisation of everyday life and reasonable planning of all affairs”) ( $Ov=4$ ,  $Pv=2$ ).

Thus, there are no serious differences between the groups at the level of everyday practices, as concerns understanding and realisation of individual responsibility: all of the study participants followed certain rules dictated by common sense. It is important that the girls did all that on the basis of their views about responsibility in moral terms, where the fundamental point is respect for the rights of other people, and in this case – concern about

their health. At the same time, this means protecting own health, although only five girls ( $v=5$ ) mentioned this directly. Only one person from the second group preferred not to present extensive reasoning on that issue, explaining it by the assertion that the pandemic period substituted the concept of “freedom” with the concept of “necessity”, and “responsibility” – with observance of legal norms.

\* \* \*

In conclusion, the authors would like to present a few conclusions and considerations which, possibly, would not be applicable to all population groups, but may serve as a kind of benchmark for further study of the subject under review.

The research showed that, despite the principal recognition of the need for restrictive measures during the first and second waves of the pandemic, the girls reacted differently to the limitation of their personal freedom. Just under a third of those interviewed experienced the restrictions painfully and were in a negative state of mind contributing to emotional burnout. Another 13 girls admitted that they had in fact sensed being partially restricted in particular spheres of life activities. Thus, the subject of freedom was relevant for all except three of the research participants. Half of the “pessimists” indicated that the feeling of captivity was connected not so much with the need to adapt to the new rules, but with the security actors’ deeds and the “moral panic” stirred up by some politicians and the media in connection with the coronavirus spread.

Approximately one fourth of the total number of girls participating in the research, when discussing the issue of interrelation between personal freedom and responsibility, concluded that state prohibitions and restrictive measures have a negative impact on the citizens’ moral responsibility for their actions, even when the need for restrictions is recognised. Given these results, it can be assumed that the use of purely restrictive strategies by the state may not only lead to reduction of the number of active security adherents among the population and inhibit the development of security culture, but may also engender numerous individuals relying solely on governmental (paternalistic) protection. One may also expect resistance (active or passive) to proposed measures on the part of some layers of the population, especially if the legal prohibitions are extended to a broader domain of life and/or the people’s right to health protection and free choice of medical intervention methods is infringed.

It was also revealed that at the level of everyday practices involving the family and broader environment, all the girls acted responsibly, respecting the imposed restrictions. The conscious responsible action was treated by them as a moral act and was supported by the girls’ notions of cohesion of freedom and responsibility in terms of moral content. This fact can be viewed as a signal evidencing that the young generation has due value-conscious prerequisites for the formation of the safety culture; however, in order to maintain and further develop it, more mindful and solicitous attitude of the state and other security actors to the moral aspects of freedom and responsibility is needed.

It is also noteworthy that only one fifth of the total number of respondents coupled manifestation of responsibility with taking care of own health. It seems that it is essential to extend the funding of the programmes promoting the idea of sanctity of every person’s life and value of every person’s health (public health improvement, promotion of healthy lifestyle, support of health camps and resorts, etc.).

It is impossible to form the culture of security solely through words and prohibitions. This process requires, on the one hand, the trust of the state in its citizens as full-fledged participants of social interaction, capable of taking reasonable decisions and acting responsibly, and, on the other hand, the trust of citizens in their state as the main security actor capable of developing well-considered decisions in the face of real threats and making efforts to unite the population on the basis of unfading moral values.

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