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Socio-Philosophical Content and Theoretical-Methodological Foundations of Youth Social Protection in The Context of Digital Transformation

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Annotation: This article looks into the socio-philosophical dimension of youth social protection, its theoretical underpinnings and current trends. The concepts of social protection, social justice and human rights are examined, and the legal, economic, social and cultural aspects of youth social protection are analyzed. Moreover, the nature and meaning of this concept are explained from the three lenses of John Rawls's theory of justice, Nancy Fraser's concept of recognition and representation and Amartya Sen's capability approach. The results show that youth social protection is not merely a material aspect of social protection, but a multifaceted system which protects the rights and freedoms of young people, builds their capacities and ensures their active engagement in social life.

Key words: youth social protection, social justice, human rights, welfare state, capability approach, youth policy, human capital.

INTRODUCTION

The process of globalization, digitalization and the fast-changing socio-economic dynamics have brought youth social protection to the forefront of current social development. The youth represent one of the most dynamic, and promising sectors in a society, and their key role is not just in the current development of a nation but also its sustainable development in the future. Thus, the protection of their rights and freedoms and the establishment of conditions for education, health, work, professional development, and active involvement in social life, are important priorities of public policy.[1]

Youth social protection in modern socio-philosophical debates is not limited to material support but also relates to increasing the potential of young people to fulfil their potential, guided by principles of human rights, social justice and the welfare state. The importance of this topic is also accentuated because of the socialization of children and young people, the desire for economic independence, their growing legal awareness and the advent of new opportunities and new challenges in the digital world. The socio-philosophical aspects of youth social protection, its theoretical basis and current developments in social justice, human rights and the theory of the welfare state are explored.[2]

METHODOLOGY

Systematic, comparative and conceptual analysis methods were used in this study, aimed at analyzing socio-philosophical foundations of youth social protection. The national legislation on youth rights, theory of welfare state, human rights paradigm, theory of social justice were used for the theoretical framework of the research. The analysis focused on the economic, social, legal and cultural aspects of youth social

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protection and how these aspects relate to each other.[3] Moreover, this concept was explained and given meaning by the theories of John Rawls, Nancy Fraser and Amartya Sen. Additionally, theories of John Rawls, Nancy Fraser and Amartya Sen were used to understand and define the concept. Based on the analysis of legal and regulatory documents, scholarly literature and theoretical sources, the study has pinpointed the current approaches with regard to youth social protection and has clarified its role in relation to sustainable development. Theoretical conclusions were drawn and systematically organized on the basis of these findings.[4]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In contemporary socio-philosophical analyses, the concept of youth social protection is interpreted as a multidimensional and dynamic category shaped by the institutional structure of society, its value system, and the principles of social justice. "The State ensures the protection of the personal, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights of young people and encourages their active participation in the life of society and the State. The State creates conditions for the intellectual, creative, physical, and moral development of young people and for the realization of their rights to education, healthcare, housing, employment, work, and leisure" [5].

This provision clearly reflects the humanistic and anthropocentric approach characteristic of contemporary socio-philosophical thought, according to which young people are regarded not only as objects of social protection but also as active participants and key agents of social development. In this context, the role of the State extends beyond the provision of paternalistic assistance and includes creating the necessary conditions for young people to fully realize their potential through the effective protection of their personal, political, economic, and cultural rights.[6] This approach is characteristic of the contemporary welfare state, where the primary focus is directed not merely toward outcomes but toward the expansion of opportunities. As a result, the intellectual, creative, physical, and moral development of young people is supported in a comprehensive manner, enabling them to become not passive members of society but a dynamic and leading force for sustainable development.[7]

Youth social protection refers to a set of legal, economic, and organizational measures implemented by the state and society to ensure the rights and freedoms of young people (individuals aged 14 to 30), safeguard their health, facilitate their access to education and vocational training, and provide opportunities for decent employment and working conditions [8]. To gain a deeper understanding of this concept, it is necessary to examine its theoretical and methodological foundations within the frameworks of social justice, human rights, and welfare state theory.

From the perspective of social justice, youth protection constitutes a system of measures aimed at preventing discrimination against a particular age group and ensuring opportunities for sustainable development. In this context, justice is important not only in its distributive dimension but also in its capacity to restore solidarity and promote participation.[9] As a transitional stage of life, youth represents one of the most complex periods in human development, involving challenges such as achieving economic independence, forming a personal identity, and assuming social responsibility. Therefore, the need for social protection during this stage extends beyond the provision of material assistance and should also encompass young people's active participation in decision-making processes and their integration into the cultural and moral environment.[10]

The human rights paradigm views youth protection as a fundamental right of every individual and establishes its foundations in international instruments and national legislation. Fundamental rights such as the right to growth and development, the right to education, and the right to healthcare impose an obligation on the state to create the necessary conditions for young people's successful development and future well-being.[11] However, a major challenge in this regard lies in the transition from the formal

recognition of these rights to their effective implementation in practice. Insufficient awareness among young people of their rights, as well as a lack of trust in the mechanisms designed to protect them, significantly reduces the effectiveness of the system.[12]

The welfare state concept defines youth policy as an integral component of a country's overall socio-economic development strategy. In this context, the state functions not only as a protector but also as an investor, as resources allocated to young people are regarded as investments in future stability and prosperity. In the contemporary world, youth protection is evolving from a model of passive support toward one centered on active empowerment and the creation of opportunities. This shift necessitates the implementation of measures aimed at introducing innovative educational systems, supporting young talent, assisting young families, and promoting youth entrepreneurship.

The effectiveness of youth social protection is determined by the complex interaction of factors operating at different levels. Macroeconomic stability, the alignment of the labor market with the education system, and the strength of family and community institutions constitute the principal pillars of this system. At the same time, the rapid development of digital technologies has generated not only new opportunities but also new challenges. The digital divide, exposure to harmful online content, and the distinctive characteristics of socialization in virtual environments require the adoption of contemporary approaches to youth protection.[13]

The philosophical essence of social protection is primarily expressed through the concept of social justice. According to John Rawls's theory of "justice as fairness", social institutions should take into account the interests of the least advantaged members of society when distributing resources and opportunities [14]. This principle, known as the "difference principle", constitutes the ethical foundation of the social protection system. It requires prioritizing the interests of the most vulnerable groups not only in the distribution of economic assistance but also in access to education, healthcare, equal protection under the law, and participation in cultural life. Behind Rawls's hypothetical "veil of ignorance", individuals, unaware of their future social status when establishing the principles of a just society, would be inclined to choose such a principle because each person would seek protection against the possibility of occupying the least advantaged position.

This approach provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding youth social protection, as young people are often regarded as a social group in a transitional stage of life with limited access to socio-economic resources.

However, social justice should not be confined solely to its distributive dimension. As scholars such as Nancy Fraser have argued, the dimensions of "recognition" and "representation" are equally crucial to the realization of justice. Social protection involves not only the distribution of material resources but also the granting of full citizenship status to protected groups (such as persons with disabilities, older adults, and young people), ensuring that their voices are heard and that they are actively involved in decision-making processes. In doing so, social protection seeks to secure their social recognition and dignity. This requires moving beyond a one-sided model of "providers" and "recipients" toward a dialogical model of social relations based on mutual respect and cooperation.

In the scholarly literature, the concept of social protection is generally interpreted through three main paradigms: the needs, risks, and rights approaches [15]. The needs approach focuses on ensuring a minimum standard of living, while the risks approach emphasizes protection against factors such as unemployment, illness, and social insecurity. The rights-based approach, in turn, views social protection as an inalienable human right. Together, these three approaches provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature and significance of youth social protection.

Amartya Sen's capability approach further broadens the concept of social protection by linking it to individuals' opportunities to achieve lives they have reason to value. According to this perspective, social protection encompasses not only material assistance but also the provision of opportunities for education, employment, and the realization of individual potential. From this standpoint, youth social protection can be regarded as a key mechanism for human capital development.

Within the framework of the welfare state model, youth social protection is implemented through the redistribution of resources, social insurance, and the provision of social services. This process is closely associated with the principles of distributive justice, which aim to ensure the equitable distribution of social goods and opportunities within society.

In contemporary socio-philosophical approaches, youth social protection is regarded as a multidimensional concept. Its main components include:

- Economic component – youth employment, sources of income, and economic independence;
- Social component – education, healthcare, and social services;
- Legal component – the protection and safeguarding of rights and freedoms;
- Cultural and moral component – socialization and value systems.

These components are interconnected and collectively contribute to the sustainable development of young people. The importance of this system continues to increase, particularly in the context of globalization.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, youth social protection in the modern socio-philosophical context is seen not only as a mechanism of material assistance or social support but as a multidimensional social institution that ensures rights and freedoms for young people, helps them to reach their potential and promotes active involvement in socio-economic development. The results of this study show the theoretical underpinnings of youth social protection are well connected to the notions of social justice, human rights and the welfare state, which view young people not as social policy's targets but as significant stakeholders for development. Meanwhile, youth protection is only effective when the various economic, social, legal and cultural elements work in harmony. The establishment of equal opportunities for young people, raising legal awareness and increasing their involvement in decision-making processes are more significant issues in the context of digital transformation, changes in the labour market and globalization. Hence, improve youth social protection is one of the key enablers for human capital development, social justice and sustainable social development.

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