

RESEARCH THE PHENOMENON OF JUSTICE IN THE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT

Evgeniya Khokholeva¹, Elena Lysenko², Oleg Potapov³,
Ural Federal University, Russian Federation

Abstract

Global changes associated with world crisis processes, numerous political events in recent years, a change in the technological order and the technological revolution have had a powerful impact on all spheres of life of society and people, from economy to politics, from management to education. All this forces, adapting to new conditions, to change the rules of interaction, laws, which causes the reaction of people associated with adaptation to this constantly changing environment, to think about how fair the existing order of things is. The article is devoted to the study of the phenomenon of justice in the university environment in a broad context: students' understanding of the concept of "justice", the experience of facing injustice in life and in the educational environment, behavioral models and reactions, opinions about the fairness of the structure of society and fair assessment in the learning process. Based on a survey conducted using the author's questionnaire, in which students from the largest university in Russia took part, how "belief in justice" and "sensitivity to justice" affect students' reactions, to various situations of injustice and form behavioral models. The proposals of students regarding a more equitable organization of the educational process are analyzed. The results obtained are in many respects consistent with studies carried out by other authors in recent years on various samples of Russians.

Key word: justice, belief in a just world, sensitivity to justice, education system, fair assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Global changes associated with world crisis processes, numerous political events in recent years, technological development and the technological revolution have had a powerful impact on all spheres of life of society and people, from economy to politics, from management to education. All this, adapting to new conditions, makes change the rules of interaction and laws, which causes the reaction of people associated with adaptation to this constantly changing environment. They start to think about how fair the existing order of things is. The relevance of the issue of justice is evident both within a wide and within a narrow framework.

Obviously, the concept of justice can be interpreted in very different ways by individual people, even belonging to the same culture, not to mention representatives of different ethnic groups and cultures. Various sciences, such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, political science, etc.,

¹ Evgeniya Khokholeva, Department of Human Resources Management and Psychology, Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin Mira str. 19, 620002 Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation, e-mail: e.a.hoholeva@urfu.ru

² Elena Lysenko - Department of Human Resources Management and Psychology, Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin Mira str. 19, 620002 Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation, e-mail: e.v.lysenko@urfu.ru

³ Oleg Potapov, Department of Human Resources Management and Psychology, Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin Mira str. 19, 620002 Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation, e-mail: o.a.potapov@urfu.ru

study this concept. Since the time of Aristotle, there have been such interpretations of the concept of justice as:

- equalizing justice (equality of members of society before some established conditions, for example, the law);
- distributive justice (distribution of some benefits between members of a society in accordance with their merits, roles, contribution).

K. Popper in his work "Open Society" and its enemies identifies at least five different meanings of this concept: "(a) equal distribution of the burden of civic responsibilities, i.e., those restrictions on freedom that are necessary in public life; (b) equality of citizens before the law, provided, of course, that (c) the laws are not biased in favor of or against individual citizens, groups or classes; (d) a fair trial and (f) an equal distribution of benefits (and not just burdens), which may mean membership in a given state for citizens "[5, p. 126]. These examples and studies carried out by many authors [1, 2, 6, 8, 9] prove the ambiguity of the concept of "justice" and the dependence of the interpretations prevailing in society on cultural development, political situation and many other factors.

Situations that make people feel unfair are, for example, a) the violation of human rights, b) the violation of rights is carried out not by the victim, but by other people or groups of people, c) the offender had the opportunity to act differently, d) the act or, on the contrary, the absence of the necessary actions were deliberate, e) the offender did not receive retribution [3, 15, 17].

In psychology, various approaches and concepts focus on the study of the phenomenon of justice at the level of individual consciousness and behavior. M. Lerner [11, 12, 13], the founder of the theory of belief in a "Just world", believes that people unconsciously support the illusion of a just world, despite clear evidence of the opposite. This helps people to cope with the situations, which strongly indicate that life can turn out to be completely unexpected and unfair. This is what leads to the demonstration during psychological experiments of a tendency to ascribe positive personality traits to a randomly awarded participant and vice versa to devalue and reveal negative qualities in a randomly selected participant who has been punished.

Thus, a "belief in a just world", like many other ideological stereotypes, contributes to the saving of the individual's mental energy, maintains trust in people and reflects a person's need to live in a predictable safe environment [10, 16].

The concept of "sensitivity to justice" provides another approach to describing a person's perception of justice. Studies [18, 19, 23] on the influence of personality traits on the perception of justice, leading to the conclusion that people have different sensitivity to situations of justice / injustice, became the foundation of the assumption made by M. Schmitt [19, 20, 21]. He believes that there is a special personality trait manifested in behavior, which he called "justice sensitivity".

Studies of this personality construct were carried out taking into account different positions of perception of injustice. And in this regard, the sensitivity to the perception of the injustice of the victim, witness and beneficiary (accidental or deliberately violating the justice) from the situation of injustice stood out.

Studies have shown a high correlation between these positions. However, the sensitivity to the perception of injustice of the victim was somewhat different from the rest. Thus, the "sensitivity of the victim" turned out to be positively associated with such negative traits as suspicion, envy, distrust, Machiavellianism, vindictiveness, and was not associated at all with positive qualities. Thus, it had a clear selfish connotation. Other positions of perception (from the role of a witness and a beneficiary) had a positive relationship with positive socially desirable traits (empathy, social responsibility), more favorable to cooperation [18, 14, 22].

The phenomenon of justice acquires particular importance in the educational environment, where one can observe both equalizing and distributive types of injustice. This manifests in different situations that arise in the educational environment. Above all, it has a strong impact on the professional development of the personality of young professionals. These processes are

particularly important for the areas of training related to management — management, human resource management, state and municipal management, etc. Situations of injustice affect the modelling of professional behavior, the consolidation of behavioral patterns, which can later be transmitted to the professional sphere.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study — the assessment of the phenomenon of fairness in the educational environment as perceived by university students.

The Research base - Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin.

The respondents are senior students of the management training course.

The research method is a survey.

Research tool - a questionnaire designed by the author, which includes 4 blocks:

- A) Worldview of respondents about justice and related concepts;
- B) The assessment of the fairness of the social environment;
- C) The respondents' assessment of their own behavioral patterns in a situation of injustice;
- D) The attitude of students towards fairness in the educational environment.

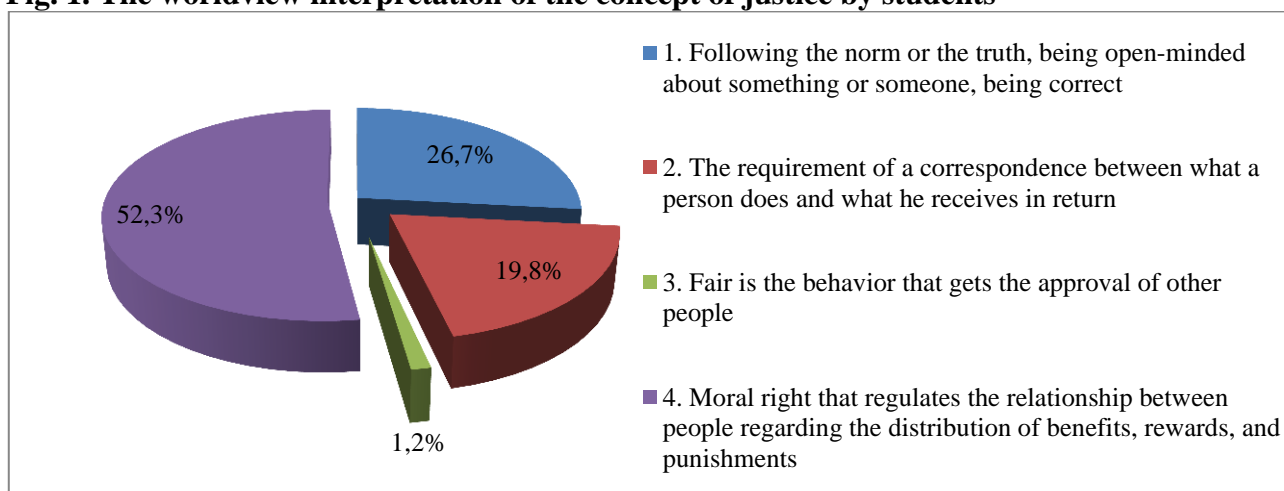
Findings

According to the research results, the following trends can be distinguished.

Block A – Worldview of respondents about justice and related concepts

1. The worldview interpretation of the concept of justice by students tends to understand justice as “a moral right that regulates the relationship between people regarding the distribution of benefits, rewards and punishments. Each deed should be judged according to its merits” (52.3%). At the same time, almost a quarter (26.7%) of students were inclined to choose the definition that it is “adherence to the norm or truth, impartiality to something or someone, correctness”, a fifth (19.8%) chose “the requirement of conformity between what a person does and what he gets in return”, and only 1.2% considered that “an attitude that gets the approval of other people” is fair. (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1. The worldview interpretation of the concept of justice by students

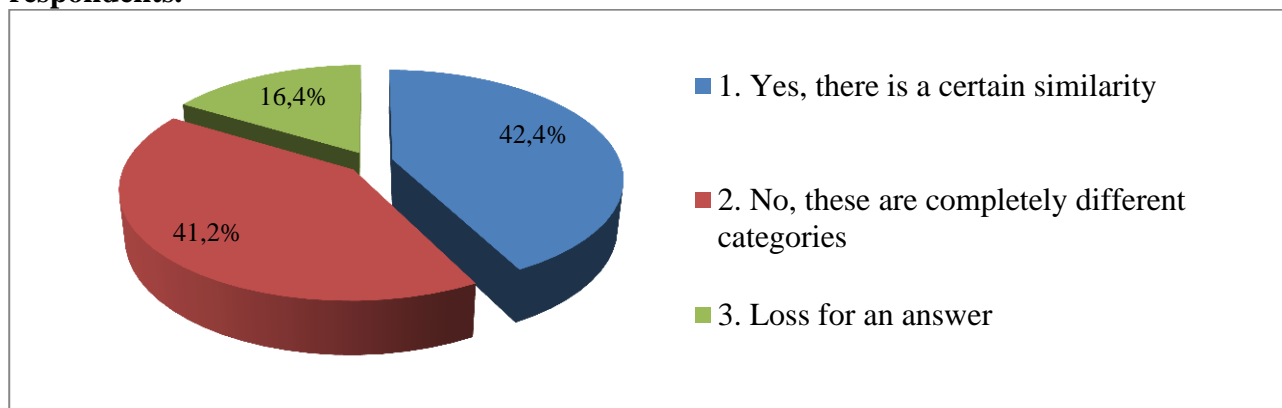


Source: own research, 2020

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the distributive interpretation of the concept of justice clearly prevails over the equalizing one.

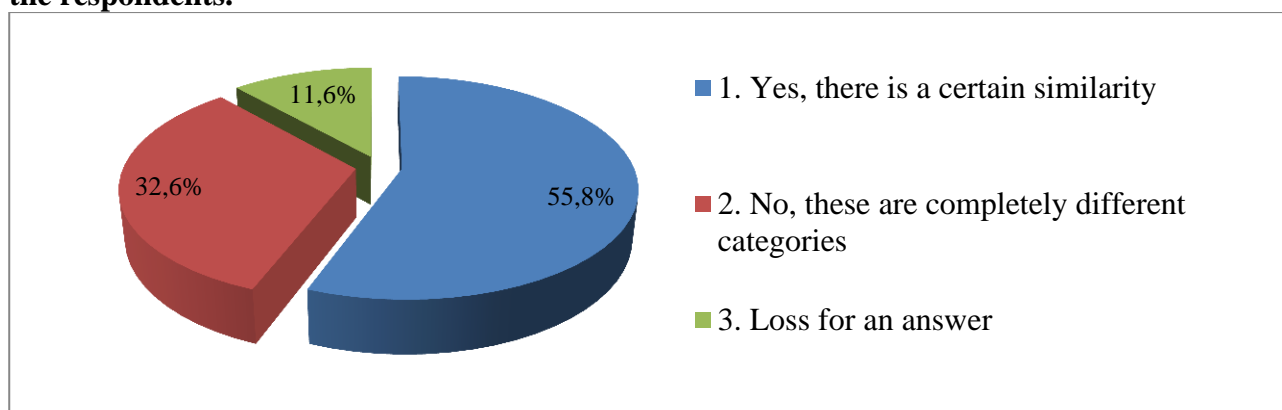
2. The correlation between the concepts of fairness — order and fairness — equality are shown in Fig. 2, 3.

Fig. 2. The correlation of the concepts of "justice" and "order" in the understanding of the respondents.



Source: own research, 2020

Fig. 3. The correlation of the concepts of "fairness" and "equality" in the understanding of the respondents.



Source: own research, 2020

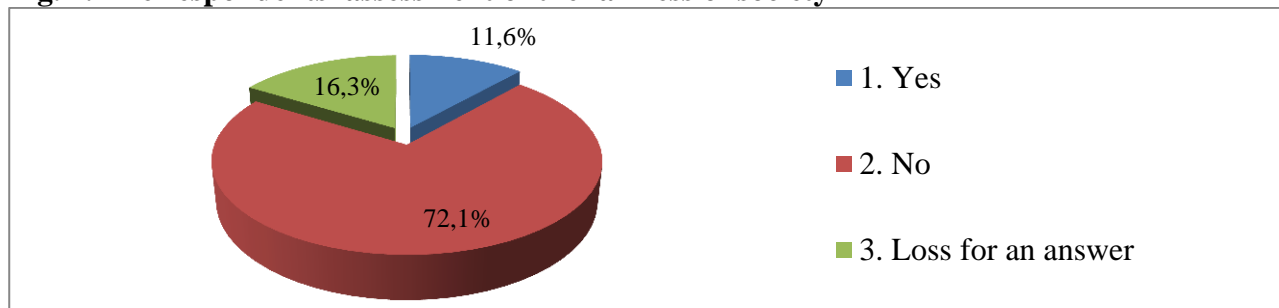
As follows from Figs. 2 and 3, students find the concept of justice more similar to the concept of equality (55.8%) than to the concept of order (42.4%). However, these differences are not so great. At the same time, as it follows from the students' answers, a fairly large proportion (41.2 and 32.6%, respectively) of respondents do not consider the concept of justice to be similar with either category. This emphasizes the polysemy of the concept and the need to continue research to clarify the perception of it by students. In an online survey of the Internet community about justice conducted by D.V. Rudenkin in 2014 [7], it was concluded that although the proportion of respondents for whom justice is equal to equality is significant (42.4%), for the majority, it is associated primarily with legality, morality, honesty, human rights, objectivity. The connotations of this concept, close to those given above, were noted by students in our study as well. (Fig. 1)

Block B – The assessment of the fairness of the social environment

1. The respondents' assessment of the fairness of society turned out negative. (Fig. 4)

In response to the questionnaire about whether society is justly organized, 72.1% of the respondents answered negatively, 11.6% positively, 16.3% found it difficult to answer.

Fig. 4. The respondents' assessment of the fairness of society

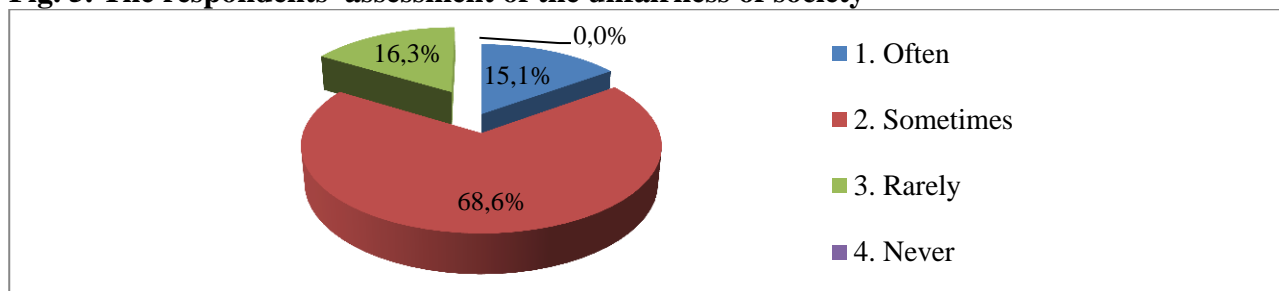


Source: own research, 2020

These data correlate well with the results of other studies, where the idea that modern Russian society is organized unfairly was given by 73.9% of respondents in 2014 [7], 76% in 2003 [8], 68% of respondents to a survey by the Public Opinion Foundation in 2005 [4].

2. The respondents' assessment of the experience of experiencing injustice shows a medium degree: "from time to time." (Fig. 5)

Fig. 5. The respondents' assessment of the unfairness of society



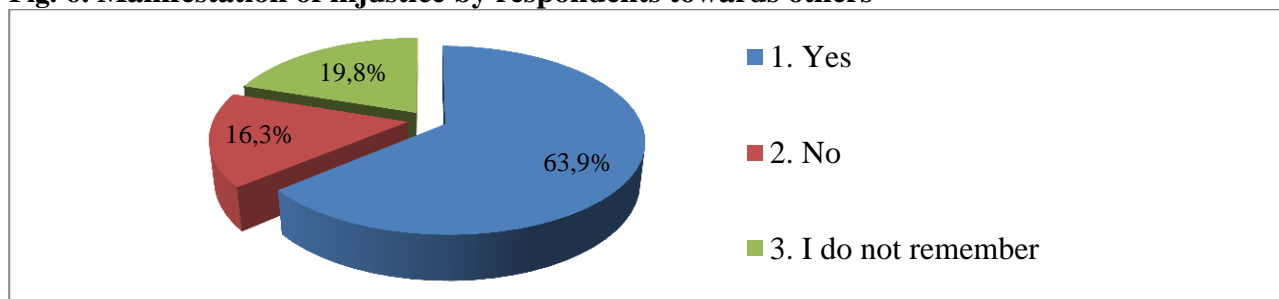
Source: own research, 2020

Most of the surveyed students (69.4%) faced injustice in their lives from time to time, but 15.3% faced it often. There is no one in the sample who did not face injustice at least once in their life.

Block C - The respondents' assessment of their own behavioral patterns in a situation of injustice

1. Most of the respondents showed injustice towards others (Fig. 6)

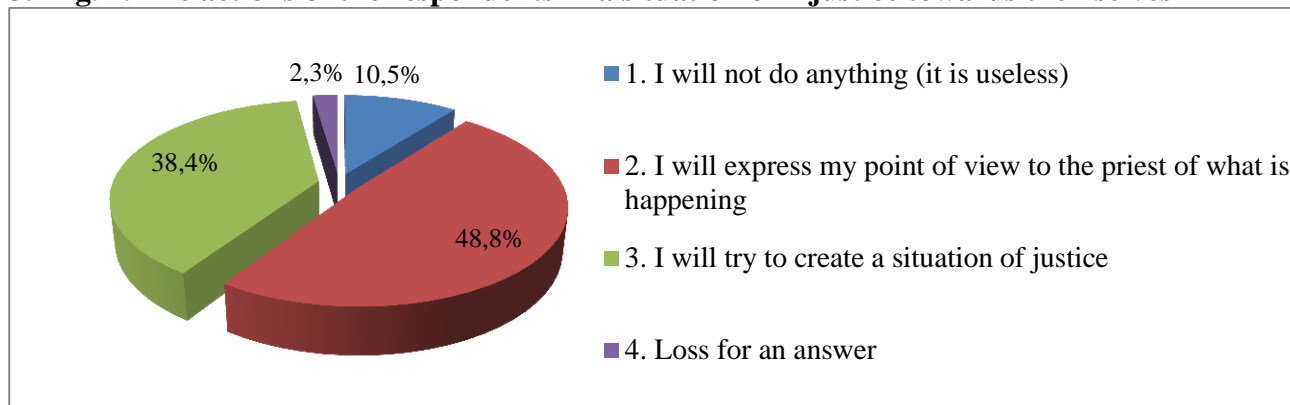
Fig. 6. Manifestation of injustice by respondents towards others



Source: own research, 2020

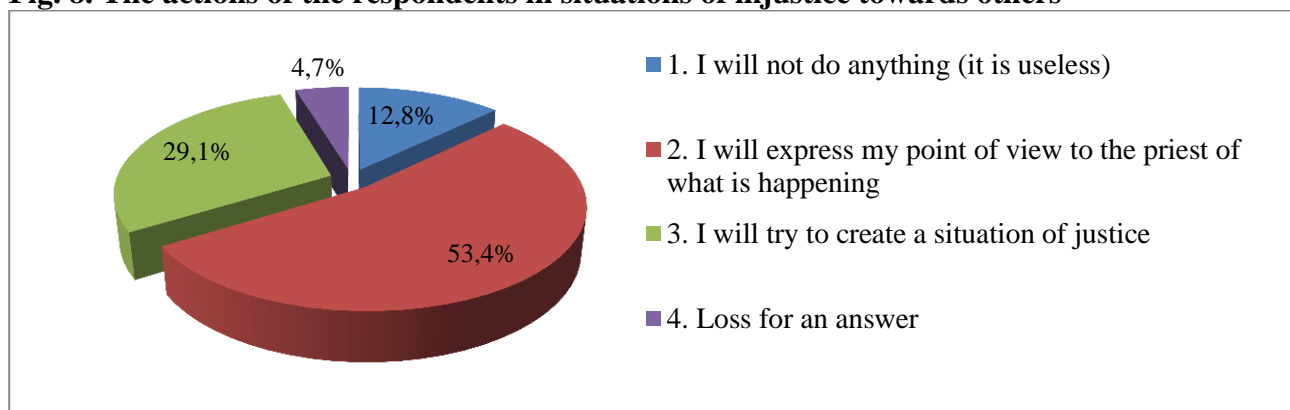
2. The reaction of the respondents to injustice towards themselves and towards others indicate that they tend to choose an active model of behavior and advocate for the restoration of justice. (Fig. 7, 8)

3. Fig. 7. The actions of the respondents in a situation of injustice towards themselves



Source: own research, 2020

Fig. 8. The actions of the respondents in situations of injustice towards others



Source: own research, 2020

It should be noted that the answer to the question whether the respondents found themselves in a situation when they behaved unfairly towards someone is of a special interest (Fig. 6). Approximately the same percentage (16.3%), close to the percentage of students who are often faced with injustice, and who supposedly possess dominant mentality of a person-victim, believes that they have never behaved unfairly towards someone. The presence of active protective mechanisms of the psyche (for example, projection or repression) in people stuck in the role of the victim could explain such results. However, the coincidence of the questionnaires, in which people answer that they never commit injustice to someone, with the questionnaires, where the respondents state that they often encounter injustice, anywhere, is 28.6%. Despite the tangible share of coincidence, it cannot be said that they belong to the same group of people.

At the same time, 64% of the sample realize that they themselves behaved unfairly towards other people, 19.8% could not remember it. It is difficult to say whether 64% of reflective people who are present in the student environment is a large enough value.

Undoubtedly, it would be interesting in further studies to clarify how variable the proportion of individuals with the mentality and psychology of the victim in a particular social group is. The effectiveness of social interaction, the ability to constructively solve emerging problems and come to a consensus and accept certain social innovations will directly depend on this.

The answers about the actions of the respondents in case of injustice to themselves and to others are presented in Figure 7. The proportion of students who claim their readiness to show some activity is naturally greater in case injustice to themselves. In case of injustice to themselves, 38.4% of students will try to create a situation of justice; in a situation of injustice to another, the proportion of such students decreases to 29.1%. Interestingly, the proportion of those who

presumably voice their point of view in relation to what is happening in case of injustice to themselves (48.8%) is even slightly less than those who will speak out when faced with injustice to others (53,5 %). (Fig. 8) The share of those who will not do anything (because it is useless) in case of injustice against themselves (10.5%) is slightly less than the share of those who are not ready to do anything (these are their problems) in a situation of injustice to another person (12.8%).

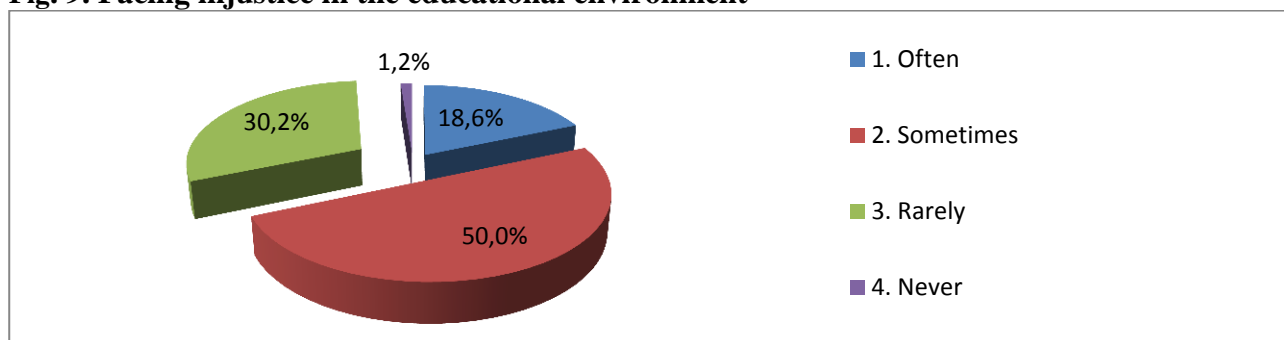
The coincidence of the samples of students who are not ready to defend themselves with the sample of those who will not interfere in the process of committing injustice to another is 44.4%. However, at the same time, in the category of those students who will not undertake anything to defend themselves, because consider it useless, 55.6% will express their disagreement or take some action to restore justice in case of injustice to another. In this category of altruists, 60% think that they themselves have never acted unfairly towards someone or do not remember it. This may be a consequence of both the remains of the collectivist consciousness at the level of the previously dominant ideology, and mental attitudes and programs coming from the family (the other is more important than myself; taking care of yourself is a manifestation of selfishness). It is worth noting that the conclusions based on the study of how people are grouped by their answers within the already allocated groups associated with different options need additional verification and study, since multiple division of groups into even smaller subgroups leads to statistically unreliable results associated with a small size of a sample.

Block D – The attitude of students towards fairness in the educational environment

1. Half of the respondents faced a situation of injustice at the university from time to time. (Fig. 9)

2.

Fig. 9. Facing injustice in the educational environment



Source: own research, 2020

When answering the question whether they encountered injustice specifically at the university, it is clear that, in general, students have much less such encounters than in life in general. There is even a proportion of students (albeit not significant - 1.2%) who did not encounter injustice at all within the walls of the university. However, the share of respondents who often encounter injustice remains approximately the same (at the university even higher - increased by 3.5%) and amounts to 18.8%. The constancy of the proportion of such respondents in both cases, despite the fact that the frequency of encounters with injustice at the university, compared with life in general, among those who chose other answer options, is noticeably less. Possibly, it is due to the peculiarities of the perception of a person who has a high sensitivity to justice from the position of the victim. And as described above, such a position positively correlates with the character traits, thanks to which a person can see only injustice everywhere, a threat to his security. Therefore, it was important to check to what extent the stability of the share of respondents who are often and everywhere encountered by unfairness is due to personal factors, and is not just a coincidence.

Verification whether the respondents who reported frequent encounters with injustice both in life and in the university are basically the same group, showed that to a large extent (58.3%) these

are the same people. This suggests that some people have a tendency to see injustice everywhere, although this tendency is not as total as one might initially assume.

Among those who noted that they often encounter injustice in life, at the university or everywhere at the same time, 27.3% answered that in case of injustice they would not take any actions to protect themselves since they think it is useless. 18.2% would not do anything in defense of others, and 13.6% would do nothing to defend both themselves and others.

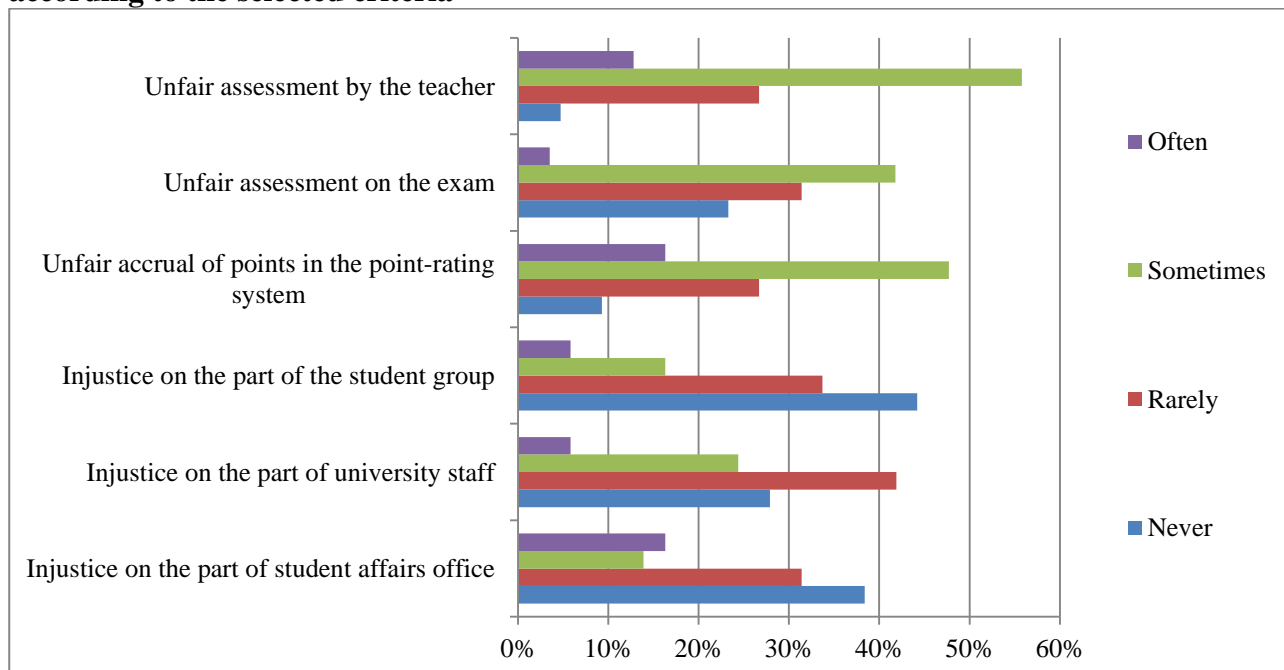
On the other hand, out of 9 people (which is 10.5% of the total sample) who will not do anything if they face injustice to themselves, 6 people (66.7%) note that they often face injustice in different situations. A large percentage of such a coincidence makes us assume that the respondents have a problem associated with learned helplessness.

3. Differentiation of the respondents' perception of injustice in the educational environment according to the following criteria (Table 1) is presented on Fig. 10, 11: a) unfair assessment by the teacher; b) unfair examination mark; c) unfair accrual of points in the point-rating system; d) injustice on the part of the group-mates; e) unfair treatment on the part of the university staff; f) unfair treatment on the part of the dean's office employees.

Table 1. Differentiation of the respondents' perception of injustice in the educational environment according to the defined criteria (Source: own research, 2020)

№ п/п	Question	Variants			
		Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Unfair assessment by the teacher	38,4%	31,4%	13,9%	16,3%
2	Unfair assessment on the exam	27,9%	41,9%	24,4%	5,8%
3	Unfair accrual of points in the BRS	44,2%	33,7%	16,3%	5,8%
4	Injustice on the part of the student group	9,3%	26,7%	47,7%	16,3%
5	Injustice on the part of university staff	23,3%	31,4%	41,8%	3,5%
6	Injustice on the part of student affairs office	4,7%	26,7%	55,8%	12,8%

Fig. 10. Differentiation of respondents' perception of injustice in the educational environment according to the selected criteria



Source: personal research, 2020

Students believe that to a greater extent unfairness towards them is present in the assessments of teachers and calculation of points in the point-rating system (where the teachers are also undoubtedly involved). However, students find more fairness in the assessment on exams. Perhaps, this is why some exams are organized in test format. This creates a feeling of greater objectivity and impersonality, as a result of which there are fewer claims of injustice. It is also possible to explain this by the tendency of teachers to assess students in exams less strict (minimizing the loss of their time to take the same exam again) than during their current work in the classroom.

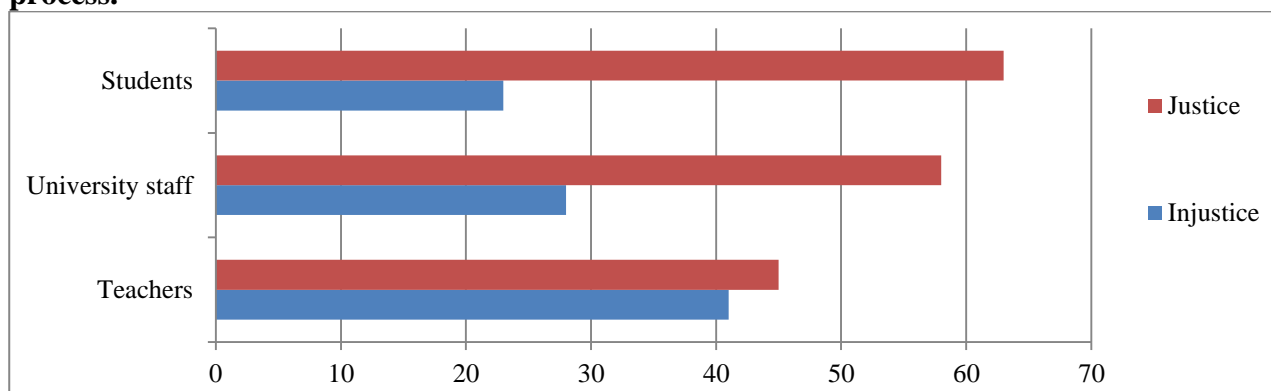
Anyway, Fig. 10 shows that the point-rating system does not create a feeling among students that the assessment with its help is more fair and objective. Much less injustice is associated by students with other university staff.

Students experience the least injustice in relationships in student environment.

The students' assessment of injustice towards them by the dean's office is quite curious. Quite a lot of students feel such an attitude, but, at the same time, there are students who have never experienced injustice towards themselves. Such a distribution of opinions, obviously, is due to the fact that the dean's office is actively trying to influence negligent students. But those students who study well, the attention from the dean's office may not concern. Therefore, some students have a protest against the work of the dean's office, while others practically do not interact with the dean's office.

The answers to the question of who, in your opinion, is more likely to demonstrate manifestations of justice and injustice at the university, well correlate with the answers shown in Figure 10 (Fig. 11).

Fig. 11. Integral assessment of justice / injustice on the part of the subjects of the educational process.

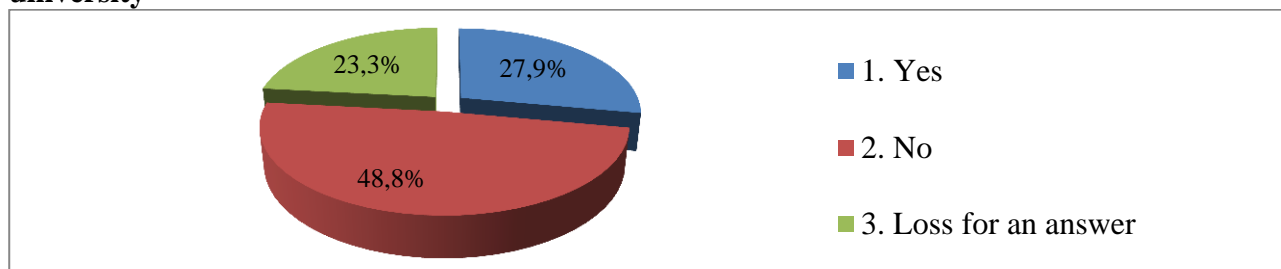


Source: own research, 2020

Consequently, the degree of manifestation of justice towards students consistently decreases, and injustice - increases with the transition of relationships from other students to employees and, finally, to teachers. This is quite an expected result, given that the main activity of students at the university is related to study. The most important aspect of this activity is associated with assessment, during which the topic of justice / injustice, as a rule, is raised most often.

4. Almost half (48.5%) of students consider it unfair to pay for education at a state university. (Fig. 12)

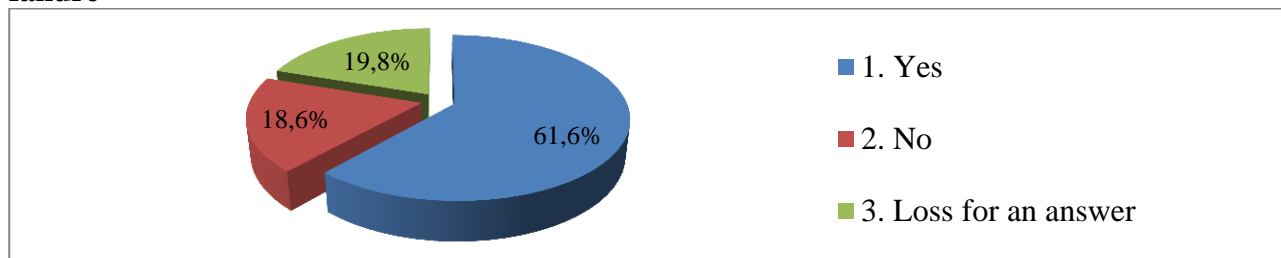
Fig. 12. Attitude of the respondents to justice / injustice to pay for education at a state university



Source: own research, 2020

5. More than half of students (61.6%) believe that it is fair to expel students for academic failure (Fig. 13)

Fig. 13. The attitude of students towards justice / injustice of expelling students for academic failure



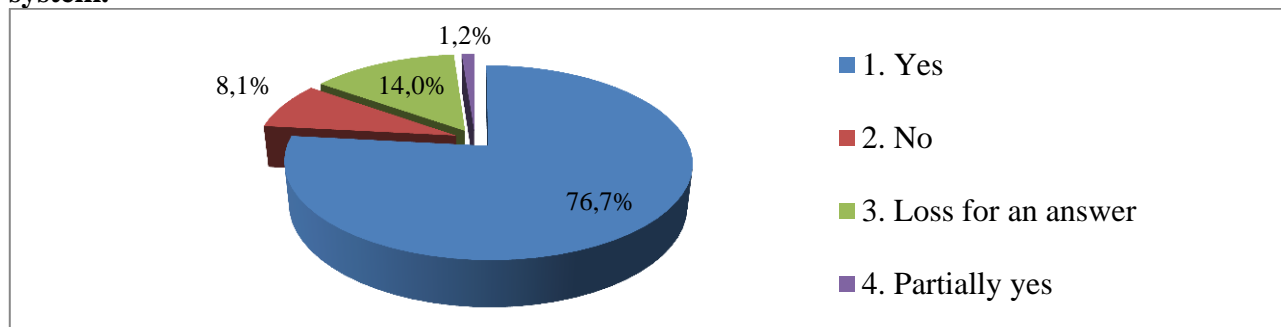
Source: personal research, 2020

Comparison of the results of assessing justice / injustice in terms of “tuition on a paid basis in a state university” and “dropping out for academic failure” showed that among 16 students who believe that it is unfair to expel for academic failure 11 people (68.8%) also consider it unfair to pay for education at a state university, 2 (12.5%) found it difficult to answer, and 3 (18.8%) consider this to be fair.

As we can conclude, the feeling of injustice in expelling students for academic failure is likely to be largely influenced by paying a tuition fee at a state university. Thus, rent attitudes become more active.

6. The overwhelming majority (76.7%) of students appreciate the opportunity to increase justice in the education system.

Fig. 14. The students' assessment of the opportunity to increase justice in the education system.



Source: own research, 2020

Most students were confused to answer what measures need to be taken to make the education system fairer.

36% of the students from the entire sample wrote at least some answers to this question. About a quarter of this number believes that teachers should treat students equally and should not single out “favourites”. At the same time, it was often mentioned that there is an artificial overestimation of grades for students whose education is funded from the budget.

The point-rating system was mentioned in the students’ responses. One recommendation was to make it clearer, another — to abandon it and switch to a traditional grading system.

16% of the students who wrote their proposals are in favour of the active introduction of technical automated computer systems into the educational process in order to reduce the problems of unfair assessment associated with the human factor and subjectivity.

13% of students who wrote proposals believe that tuition fees should either be canceled or significantly reduced.

13% of students express general hopes that it is necessary to work on social beliefs and values, to be more demanding of ourselves, humane, attentive and more sensitive. Teachers should put in charge those who know how to distribute resources correctly and fairly.

The rest were single recommendations related to various aspects of the education and training system, for example, such as reducing bureaucracy, corruption, the need to make the education system aimed at translating more applied knowledge and skills, since now it is aimed not at the education of students, but at scientific activity.

DISCUSSION

Studies of students' perception of justice, justice / injustice in the educational process of the university are undoubtedly important for understanding the self-awareness of students and optimizing the learning process in terms of convenience, comfort and the absence of internal and external conflicts among students.

Students interpret the ambiguous concept of "justice" to a greater extent in understanding such regulation of relations between people regarding the distribution of benefits, rewards and punishments, when each act should be judged according to its merits, although other approaches are present.

The overwhelming majority of students (72.1%) believe that modern society is organized unfairly, which quite accurately coincides with various kinds of sociological surveys of Russians in recent years.

If we analyze the answers of respondents who consider society fairly organized (11.6% of the entire sample) to other questions of the questionnaire, then 30% often encounter injustice in their lives anywhere, 20% believe that they themselves have never shown injustice to someone, 20% will not do anything (because it is useless) if injustice is manifested against themselves. The presence of obvious contradictions in these positions suggests that this may be a consequence of the manifestation of the phenomena of faith in a just world, described by M. Lerner [11-13].

All students have faced injustice in their lives, most of them face it regularly, from time to time. The general trend shows that students to a lesser extent face injustice in their lives. However, there is a stable, practically unchanged percentage (15-18%) of students who often face injustice both in life and at the university, which makes one think about the influence of personal characteristics on the perception of injustice. Thus, the situational influence of the changing environment turns out to be not so significant. Verification of this assumption showed that students who often face injustice in life and at university are 58.3% the same people. Such rather large percentage of overlapping groups and a different dynamics of changes in the proportion of people who often face injustice (as opposed to the dynamics of changes in the categories of students who are less likely to meet with injustice), made it possible to assume that, even having changed the

social environment, this category tends to express a heightened sensitivity to perceptions of fairness.

64% of the sample realize that they behaved unfairly towards other people, 19.8% - could not remember it, 16.3% believe that they have not been unfair to anyone in their lives. The presence of people with sufficient reflection in the student environment is undoubtedly an encouraging phenomenon. However, it is quite difficult to say if 64% is a high or low figure.

The difference in reactions when students are faced with injustice to themselves and to others consists in an increase in the proportion of active actions when faced with injustice directed at themselves. However, in both cases, a small, but stable group remains (within 10-13%), which will not do anything in the face of injustice. The coincidence of members of the groups who will not do anything when faced with injustice towards themselves and those who will not react when faced with injustice towards another person is 44.4%.

Most often, students feel injustice towards themselves from teachers, to a lesser extent from other employees of the university, and least of all from the student environment. The relations of students with the dean's office are characterized by an increase in polarization - increases both the proportion of students experiencing an unfair attitude from the dean's office and the proportion of students who do not face any negative attitude at all. This is most likely due to the active work of the dean's office with unsuccessful students and the lack of frequent interaction with those who study well.

The distribution of students' answers about unfair scoring in the point-rating system suggests that the introduction of the point-rating system, most likely, did not bring more sense of fairness and objectivity in the scoring.

The majority of the students (48.8%) consider it unfair to pay tuition fee at a state university. The minority of students (18.6%) consider the expulsion of students for academic failure to be unfair. However, among them, the share of students who also consider it unfair to pay tuition fee at a state university is about 70%, which suggests that paid education activates the manifestation of rental attitudes among students.

The overwhelming majority of students (76.7%) believe that the education system can be improved. However, only 36% of students could formulate practical proposals - what needs to be done for this. About 25% of students believe that teachers should be objective and treat students more evenly (not to single out favorites and not to overestimate the grades for state-funded students). 16% believe that greater objectivity and justice of the assessment process could be facilitated by the introduction of automated systems that can assess without human intervention. Slightly fewer (13%) believe that it is necessary to reduce or completely eliminate student fees. The same amount of the respondents recommends treating each other gently and with understanding, trying to conduct a dialogue.

Thus, the study has largely confirmed the statistics of the distribution of respondents' opinions about the meaning of the concept of justice, the features of a just structure of society, noted in the research of recent years by other authors [7]. The use of the theories of belief in a just world and sensitivity to justice when analyzing the results allowed us to explain a number of features in the answers of the student about their experience and reactions to various situations of injustice. The students' opinions on what could make the higher education system fairer were collected.

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