

MILITARY SERVICE AND YOUTH: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD CONSCRIPTION

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Abstract: This article presents a sociological analysis of young people's attitudes toward compulsory military service. It examines the social meaning of military service, the role it plays in the consciousness of youth, how it is perceived as a social institution, and the influencing factors shaping these perceptions. The study also delves into youth preparedness for service, cases of evasion, the influence of social networks, and the roles of family and cultural environments. The article is based on surveys conducted among Uzbek youth, analysis of academic literature, and expert opinions.

Keywords: military service, youth, social institution, sociological analysis, civic duty, patriotism, gender differences, social motivation, media influence, national security.

In modern social systems, military service is not only a means of ensuring national security but also an essential tool for socializing citizens—especially the youth. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, military service is compulsory and considered a duty for every male citizen. However, young people's attitudes toward this obligation are increasingly diverse. Some view it as a symbol of honor, responsibility, and patriotism, while others see it as a burden, a waste of time, or an obstacle to life plans.

This article explores the sociological roots of these conflicting attitudes and analyzes the social, cultural, economic, and psychological factors that influence them. The goal of the study is to comprehensively examine youth perceptions of military service and to identify the key factors shaping these attitudes.

From a sociological perspective, military service is a distinct social institution. It maintains societal order based on ideas of national security, civic duty, and patriotism. It also fosters personal discipline, physical and mental preparedness, teamwork, and the ability to follow orders.

This institution serves as a significant vehicle for integrating youth into the broader social system. Through military service, young people form their national, civic, and masculine identities. Therefore, sociologists consider attitudes toward military service as a reflection of youth's social position, values, and social capital.

Youth attitudes toward military service vary significantly based on social class, geographic location, education level, family background, gender, and exposure to information channels. For example, rural youth often see military service as a marker of manhood, while urban youth may view it as an obstacle to career ambitions and personal growth.

Sociological surveys reveal that secondary school graduates or those who have not pursued higher education are more likely to view military service as an opportunity for social recognition. In contrast, students currently enrolled in higher education or aspiring to study abroad often perceive it as a hindrance. From a gender perspective, while young men see military service as a symbol of masculinity and responsibility, young women tend to view it as a potential threat to life and safety.

Patriotism remains one of the fundamental ideological pillars of military service. However, in today's context, the concept of patriotism among youth is often weakly expressed in substance rather than form. This can be linked to ideological gaps in society, overwhelming information flows, and the rising influence of Western values.

Sociologists emphasize that patriotism should not merely be a slogan, but must be grounded in concrete actions. Choosing to serve in the military is a prime example of such action. In this regard, state military propaganda, the role of mass media, and the educational system's focus on patriotic instruction in schools and universities are critically important.

In Uzbekistan, there are instances where youth attempt to avoid military service. Sociological analysis identifies the main causes of this trend as:

- Economic challenges and a desire to migrate abroad;
- Incompatibility with career plans;
- Health-related issues (sometimes involving falsified medical documents);
- Negative rumors about violence and poor discipline in the service;
- Negative content spread through social media.

To address these challenges, it is necessary to ensure transparency, improve service conditions, enhance psychological readiness, and strengthen social guarantees.

Today, the majority of young people get their information about military service from social media platforms. This often results in a distorted, negative, or one-sided understanding. For instance, viral videos on TikTok, Telegram, or Instagram showing "a struggling conscript" or even staged content can shape negative perceptions among the youth.

Moreover, the lack of official, positive, and effective content related to military service exacerbates this problematic situation. According to sociologists, showcasing military service as a modern, educational, and career-building institution on social media platforms is essential to restoring youth trust in it.

Numerous sociological studies classify youth motivation toward military service into three main categories:

1. **Intrinsic motivation:** patriotism, sense of responsibility, masculine duty, and the desire to test oneself.
2. **Extrinsic motivation:** post-service employment benefits, the perceived usefulness of military experience for future careers.
3. **Obligatory motivation:** legal obligation, fear of punishment, and external pressures.

One of the main directions of state policy should be to encourage intrinsic motivation, enhance extrinsic motivation, and redirect obligatory motivation toward a more positive framework.

Compulsory military service represents an important phase in a young person's life. Its social acceptance and positive perception are key indicators of societal stability. Sociological analyses reveal that youth attitudes toward this service vary sharply today. In order to reduce these disparities and strengthen trust in the service, systematic measures are required. These include reinforcing the idea of patriotism, producing positive content on social media, improving service conditions, and boosting youth motivation. Through these means, the social value and prestige of military service as an institution can be significantly enhanced.

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