Influence of a Student Image on Group Cohesiveness at University

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Abstract: Students constantly have to correlate their personal image with relations that have already developed in a group which has a considerable influence on the educational process quality at university. Unfortunately, the influence of a personal image on group cohesiveness which is a complicated but an important process, is sometimes difficult to optimize. We often see discrepancy in interpersonal relations inside a group at university, at work and in everyday life which negatively affects not only their personal development but also group cohesiveness. One of the most important mechanisms of developing group cohesiveness is everyday resolution of contradictions arising from the influence the image has on relations within a group. The study studies the influence of a student image on group cohesiveness in the context of intensive activity at university, at work and in everyday life. Negative and positive images of first and last year students have been revealed. The main peculiarities of group cohesiveness development as well as factors that reinforce or, on the contrary, destroy group cohesiveness of Russian students have been defined. High level of group cohesiveness at Russian universities can be achieved by developing students 'ability to successfully form their image focusing on po sitive interpersonal relations and social recognition.

Key words: Cohesiveness, student group, student image, studies, everyday life, work, quality of education, influence of image

INTRODUCTION

The influence of a student image on group cohesiveness is considered by us as one of the important aspects of improving the quality of education. Students often underestimate the influence their personal image has on cohesiveness of a student group. Such multidirectional influence can not only strengthen but also damage group cohesiveness which has an impact on the quality of education a student receives.

Russian students cannot usually feel cohesiveness of their group to the full extent. A considerably small number of students feel high level of cohesiveness in their group while many students even find it difficult to define their image and way of life. In other words, most students do not have any experience in the development and assessment of the influence their image has on group cohesiveness or this experience is very insignificant. At the same time students can and have to solve the problem of group cohesiveness together. With this view, it is important to study in detail the peculiarities a student image influence on group cohesiveness, then determine best ways of its optimization and after that implement the results of the research in a student community. However, one of the limitations which prevents from obtaining optimum influence of a student image on group cohesiveness is the fact that this problem, unfortunately, has not been studied enough by Russian scholars. That is why our objective is to accumulate objective research material in order to come up with recommendations on the most efficient way of developing a positive image and cohesiveness of Russian students. The image of a student that has developed during studies, work and in everyday life can be defined as an aggregate of subjective perceptions of an individual student by the members of his/her group. Young people today build their relations with others most often based on images and stereotypes: material wealth, possibility to find a good job, social prestige. Moreover, we suppose that in every group every student has his/her own complex image which has a big influence on the perception of relations including group cohesiveness.

Researchers studying the phenomena of group cohesiveness define groups of subjective personal factors such as orientation towards communication and success, etc. which improve the efficiency of group interaction and motivation to study (Binsiddiq and Alzahmi, 2013). It is considered that an efficient exchange of information and convenient communication which in this research are expressed through the perception an individual student image by a group of students, has a strong influence on group cohesiveness.

Interpersonal relations among different student groups can have most influence on the quality of

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education and image of an educational institution in general where personal and professional potential of a student is developed (Sojkin *et al.*, 2012). Thus, we can assert that the information on student relations in a group including the information on the image of individual students can be used to evaluate the quality of education (Kazoleas *et al.*, 2001).

Group cohesiveness can be defined as a dynamic process which reflects group's willingness to stick together and have a single approach to the satisfaction of basic needs of its members (Carron *et al.*, 1998). That is why, we think that the result of high group cohesiveness will be not only positive interpersonal relations that contribute to student's personal development but also commitment to high quality of education as one of the basic needs of a student. It is considered that when evaluating cohesiveness it is necessary to use not only such subjective factors as the feeling of "we" (Owen, 1985) and simple "attraction togroup" (Libo, 1953) but other factors that take into account a complex collective character of group cohesiveness (Mudrack, 1989). We got interested in this idea and decided to examine the influence of a positive and negative student image developed in the course of work, studies or in everyday life on interpersonal relations within a group of students that form the cohesiveness of a student group.

The extent to which individuals can develop the ability to work together in a group depends on different factors such as emotional intelligence, common interests and team cohesiveness (Troth *et al.*, 2012). That is why, we suppose that group cohesiveness at work, university and in everyday life is directly connected with the quality of education at university in general. Proceeding from scientific publications which form the basis of this research we have formulated the following scientific hypothesis: an aggregate of well-developed positive images of Russian students in such key areas as studies, work and everyday life has a strengthening effect on group cohesiveness which, in its turn has a positive impact on the improvement of an educational process at university.

In order to prove this hypothesis, we have set a goal to reveal the influence that the image of Russian first and last year students has on group cohesiveness at university, work and in everyday life. In order to reach this goal, we have defined the following objectives of the research:

- Study the influence of a student image on group cohesiveness among first and last year students at university, work and in everyday life as the basis for the improvement of an educational process at university
- Reveal the images of first and last year students at university, work and in everyday life

- Characterize the exiting level of group cohesiveness among first and last year students considering the intensive activity in the course of studies and in everyday life
- Study peculiarities of the dynamics of group cohesiveness development among first and last year students throughout the whole studying process

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was carried out in 6 groups of first year students and 6 groups of last year students at the faculty of international Economic Relations of Plekhanov Russian University of Economics. The research was held among 425students which makes 51% of the total number of students at the faculty. The respondents were asked to give their personal evaluation of their group cohesiveness, their own image and its influence on relations in a group.

The respondents aged 17-22, the average age being 20.9 years and included representatives of various nationalities (Russians (84%), Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Bashkirs, Dagestans, Tajiks, Tatars, Chechens, Albanians) and different religions (the majority are Christians (69%), Muslims (27%), Buddhists (1%)). The gender factor is the following: 58% of female respondents and 42% of male respondents.

We have made a survey to get information about the feelings of students: their personal opinion-whether they feel group cohesiveness, their evaluation of student images that have already developed-the influence of a student image on relations in a group. In the course of the research we have engaged in a question-response dialog with students by asking them to fill out a questionnaire. Questioning students in a group was considered to be a promising method, however we often had to ask questions individually.

Questionnaire: We have made a questionnaire consisting of 52 questions. It was structurally divided into 10 sections dedicated to the influence of a student image on group cohesiveness at university. In each section students were asked to give their personal opinion on the existing level of group cohesiveness, the existing images of students and the extent to which it influences intergroup relations. The questions allowed us to prove the research hypothesis empirically.

RESULTS

Table 1 demonstrates a number of indicators connected with first and last year student's personal

Table 1: Personal assessment of the level of cohesiveness and competitiveness within a group by first and last year students.

	First year students		Last year students	
Personal assessment (%)	Assessment of group cohesiveness	Assessment of competitiveness within a group	Assessment of group cohesiveness	Assessment of competitiveness within a group
High	29	24	26	5
Medium	56	52	53	57
Low	3	19	19	36
Cannot say	1	5	2	2

Table 2: Personal assessment of the existing level of group cohesiveness by first and last year students

	First year students						
Personal assessment (%)	Assessment of own academic	Desired academic performance	Subjective assessment	Opinion about competitiveness	No. of non-attenders	Influence of dean fs office assessment	Mutual help in the course of study
High	37	76	2	29	1	38	42
Medium	57	24	81	57	11	29	26
Low	1	0	12	13	86	24	25
None	-	-	5	-	2	-	7
Cannot say	5	0	-	1	-	9	-
Last year student							
High	48	72	10	26	23	36	21
Medium	48	19	40	60	36	36	33
Low	2	2	40	9	38	23	36
Cannot say	2	7	-	5	-	5	-

Table 3: Personal assesment of the existing level of group cohesiveness in everyday life by fisrt and last year students

	First year students					
Personal assessment (%)	Attitude of family towards a group	Feeling of involvement	Commoninterests	Out-of-class communication	Attitude of a group deviant behavior	Attitude to the level depressiveness
Positve	28	30	10	43	4	3
Neutral	29	48	82	39	67	57
Negative	0	14	9	11	29	38
Cannot say	43	8	0	7	0	2
Last years students						
Positve	20	40	33	32	10	10
Neutral	40	33	62	52	50	45
Negative	0	20	5	10	30	35
Cannot say	40	7	0	0	10	10

assessment of the existing level of cohesiveness and competitiveness in their groups. In the course of the research we have found out that the evaluation of group cohesiveness does not differ significantly (around 3%). At the same time 19% of last year students in comparison to 3% of first year students assessed their group cohesiveness as very low. About 24% of first year students as compared to 5% of last year students assess the existing level of competitiveness within a group as high. The number of last year students who see the level of competitiveness as medium amounted to 57%, the same figure equals 52% among first year students. About 36% of last year students and 19% of first year students consider the level of competitiveness to be insignificant. It has turned out that one student in two among both first and last year students evaluate the existing level of cohesiveness and competitiveness in a group as medium.

Table 2 shows indicators connected with first and last year students 'personal assessment of the existing level of cohesiveness in their groups. In the course of the research we have found out that the majority of first year (76%) and last year (72%) students would like to be in a group with high academic performance. At the same time the majority of both first (57%) and last (48%) year students assess their academic performance as medium. The majority of first (57%) and last (60%) year students think that competition in their group is acceptable under certain circumstances. About 29% of first year and 26% of last year students consider competitiveness to be a positive phenomenon. While 13% of first year students and 9% of last year students think that competitiveness is harmful for a student group. At the same time the difference between first and last year students 'assessment of competitiveness is only 3-4%, even considering the fact that first year students are more differentiated in positive and negative assessments. It has turned out that the number of first year students who highly appreciate mutual help in the course of studies (42%) is twice the number of last year students (21%). At the same time 36% of last year students and 25% of first year students consider the existing level of mutual help in a group to be insignificant.

Table 3 shows indicators connected with assessment of the existing level of group cohesiveness in everyday and personal life by first and last year students. The same

Table 4: Personal assessment and approach of first and last year students to work when it is combined with studies

| Personal assessment (%) | First year students | | | | |
	Status value of having a job	Approach to combining work with studies	Opinion about a working student	Opinion about a job not connected with a specialty field	Assessment of reasonable financial expenses
Positive	62	24	67	9	9
Neutral	19	52	19	81	14
Negative	10	24	14	10	20
Cannot say	9	0	0	0	57
Last year students					
Positive	71	31	78	40	17
Neutral	19	62	18	60	40
Negative	10	5	0	0	0
Cannot say	0	2	2	0	43

Table 5: Personal assessment of the existing student image by first and last year students

| Personal assessment (%) | First year students | | | | | | |
	Image of an A and B student	Influence of an academic record book image	Influence of your appearance	Image of a student in science	Attitude to skipping classes	Image of a student with an academic scholarship	Attitude to cheating
Positive	27	39	57	16	3	43	19
Neural	55	21	31	28	16	33	19
Negative	3	11	4	56	81	13	62
Cannotsay	15	29	8	-	-	11	-
Last year students							
Positive	50	10	43	12	9	14	46
Neural	40	33	40	19	20	38	15
Negative	7	19	0	69	61	31	39
Cannotsay	-	3	38	17 -	-	17	-

percentage of last year student's parents (40%) are not interested in student's group relations or are neutral. 40% of last year students as compared to 30% of first year students have a highly pronounced feeling of involvement. At the same time almost half of first year students assess their own importance to a group as "medium" (48%). A considerable number of first year students (43%) are ready to spend their free time with their group mates while the same figure for last year students amounts to only 32%.

Table 4 shows indicators connected with first and last year student's opinion on combining work with studies. The survey showed that the majority of first year students (62%) and last year students (71%) find it prestigious to have a job. At the same time more than half of first year students (52%) and the majority of last year students (62%) are neutral towards combining job with studies. In comparison to last year students (5%), almost one quarter of first year students (24%) have negative feelings towards students who combine work and studies although 24% of first year students find this combination positive.

It has turned out that the majority of both first year students (67%) and last year students (78%) have a positive attitude towards working students. However, while no one among last year students had a negative attitude towards working students, 14% of first year students have a negative approach. It is also worth noticing that the majority of first year students (57%) and last year students (43%) cannot assess whether their group mates financial expenses are reasonable.

Table 5 shows indicators connected with first and last year student's personal assessment of a student image in their own group. It has turned out that in comparison with half of the last year students (50%) who think that they have an image of an A student, more than half of first year students (55%) believe that they have an image of an average student. The 39% of first year students in comparison with 10% of last year students think that the image of their academic record book influences the grades they receive at the exam. More than half of first year students (57%) and 43% of lastyear students assess the influence of their appearance and neatness on relations within a group as positive.

At the same time, it has been found out that neither first year students (56%) nor last year students (69%) have any opinion about a positive image of a student in scientific activities as they do not engage in any scientific activity themselves. However, 43% of first year students think that the image of a student who has an academic scholarship has a positive impact on the attitude of his/her group mates. About 31% of la st year students don't think that having an academic scholarship is prestigious. 17% of last year students and 11% of first year students did not know about the existence of an academic scholarship at their university at all.

As for cheating at the exam, it turned out that first year students are less tolerant of such activity (62%) in comparison with 46% of last year students who cheat regularly.

Table 6: Personal assessment of a student image in everyday life by first and last year students

| Personal assessment (%) | First year students | | | | |
	Image of a student admitted to a branded university	Image of a socially minded student	Image of a "plain fellow"	Image of deviant behavior	Ownstress resistance
High	86	48	74	9	25
Meduim	6	33	13	57	54
Low	8	12	11	18	19
Cannotsay	0	7	2	16	2
Last year students					
High	71	31	71	19	52
Meduim	7	24	17	19	34
Low	20	33	7	22	7
Cannotsay	2	12	5	40	7

Table 7: Personal assessment of the image of a working student by first and last year students

| Personal assessment (%) | First year students | | | | |
	No. of working students	Image of a working student	Image of a student looking for stable income	Level of prestige of a place	Ratio of own money to parent's money
High	7	31	87	26	2
Medium	13	38	6	4	3
Low	80	18	7	60	95
Cannotsay	-	13	-	10	-
Last year students					
High	19	45	86	12	10
Medium	19	27	2	7	14
Low	62	14	12	60	76
Cannotsay	-	14	-	21	-

Table 6 demonstrates indicators connected with first and last year student's personal assessment of a student image in everyday life and personal communication. It has turned out that for the majority of first year (86%) and last year (71%) students it is extremely important to enter a prestigious and branded university. First year students (48%) in comparison with last year students (31%) assess the image of a socially minded student who participates in different social and voluntary activities in a more positive way. Benevolence in communication is very important for the majority of first year students (74%) and last year students (71%).

As for the image of a student with deviant behavior, 40% of last year students and 16% of first year students have said they have never violated social order. It has been found out that 52% of last year students think that they have a high level of stress resistance in comparison with 54% of first year students who think that they can resist stress only to a certain extent.

Table 7 shows indicators connected with first and last year student's personal assessment of the image of a working student. In the course of the research we have found out that 80% of first year students do not have a job in comparison with 62% of last year students.31% of first year students and 45% of last year students think that they can succeed both at work and at university. The majority of first year students (87%) and last year students (86%) would like to have stable income and have

a positive opinion about students who are looking for a job. It has been revealed that the same high number of first and last year students (60%) do not find it acceptable to work in a non-prestigious sphere. In comparison with first year students, among last year students the number of those who do not mind working in a non-prestigious sphere is twice as small (12%).

Table 8 shows indicators connected with fist and last year student's personal assessment of the influence a student image has on relations (cohesiveness) within a group at university. More than half of first year students (66%) and last year students (62%) think that the number of A students in a group has an insignificant influence on the improvement of relations in a group. The same number of the respondents among last year students (36%) think that the proneness to conflict in a group fully or partially depends on discipline and responsibility of students. Half of the last year students (50%) believe that group 's reputation does not depend on the number of students who regularly skip classes.

It has turned out that 50% of first year students think that the image of a trustworthy student has a big influence on the level of group cohesiveness while 50% of last year students believe that this image has only a partial influence. About 70% of first year students and only 55% of second year students say that the image of a student who is ready to help group mates with studies has a positive impact on relations within a group.

Table 9 shows indicators connected with first and last year student's personal assessment of the influence

Table 8: First and last year students' personal assesment of the influence the image has on relations within a group in the course of studies

Personal assessment (%)	First year students				
	Influence of an A student's image on academic progress	Influence of the image of a responsible student on proneness to conflict	Influence of the image of non-attenders on cohesiveness and competitiveness	Influence of the image of a trustworthy student on dean's office	Influence of the image on support within a group
High	20	41	32	50	70
Medium	66	46	20	37	30
Low	1	2	31	12	0
Cannotsay	13	12	17	1	0
Last year students					
High	17	36	9	28	55
Medium	62	36	24	50	31
Low	2	27	50	20	12
Cannotsay	19	1	17	2	2

Table 9: First and last year students's personal assessment of the influence a student image has on relations within a group in everyday life and out-of-class communication

Personal assesment (%)	First year students				
	Influence of university on self-confidence	Influence of a student image on cohesiveness	Influence of the image on out-of-class communication	Influence of the image of a rule-breaker on relations in a group	Influence of the image of a calm student on relations in a group
Low	82	27	63	2	28
Medium	8	45	24	42	27
High	6	18	7	46	40
Cannotsay	4	10	6	10	5
Last year students					
Low	57	17	38	10	17
Medium	28	28	36	36	36
High	12	38	14	40	38
Cannotsay	3	17	12	14	9

Table 10: First and last year students' personal assesment of the influence a working student image has on relations within a group

Personal assesment (%)	First year students				
	Influence of a working student image on mutual respect in a group	Influence of a successful student image on the feeling of envy	Influence of an independent student image on group stability	Influence of a working working student image on attitude to studies	Influence of a successful student on respect
High	15	13	10	38	41
Medium	43	37	22	33	29
Low	37	44	58	14	20
Cannotsay	5	6	10	15	10
Last year student					
High	19	12	10	19	26
Medium	24	38	19	36	34
Low	50	40	52	36	31
Cannotsay	7	10	19	9	9

a student image has on relations within a group (cohesiveness) in everyday life and out-of-class communication.

In the course of the research we have found out that 82% of first year students and 57% of last year students think the image of a student studying at a branded university has a big influence on the feeling of self-confidence. About 63% of first year students in comparison with 38% of last year students think that the image of a sociable student certainly has a positive influence on group cohesiveness. About 46% of first year students and 40% of last year students say that the image of a rule-breaker has a negative impact on relations within a group. However, 40% of first year students and 38% of last year students believe that the image of a calm student does not have influence on relations within a group.

Table 10 shows indicators demonstrating first and last year student's personal assessment of the influence a working student image has on relations (cohesiveness) within a group. We have found out that first year students (43%) think that the influence of a working student image on relations in a group is medium. At the same time half of the last year students (50%) consider the influence of a working student image to be low. Both first year students (58%) and last year students (52%) assess the influence of a working student image on the level of competitiveness and stability in a group as low. But the majority of first year students (41%) in comparison with last year students (26%) believe that the level of respect in a group is highly dependent on the image of a financially independent student.

DISCUSSION

In the course of the research we have carried out a survey among Russian students regarding the influence of a student image on group cohesiveness in key spheres of life with a subsequent analysis of the survey results in accordance with the main objectives of the research. In the previous section (Results) we presented statistical data in tables based on the survey results. Having analyzed the received data, we have come up with the following conclusions.

Group cohesiveness: In the course of the research we have compared the responses of first and last year students to determine the existing level of cohesiveness of student groups at Russian university. It has been revealed that the majority of students assess the level of cohesiveness in their group as "average" ("Results", Table 1-56% first year, 53% last year). At the same time, students in the last year have a more pronounced feeling of lack of integration ("Results", Table 1-19%). It is considered that group cohesiveness tends to increase significantly within certain time. However, if we compare these results with the assessment of competitiveness in a group, it turns out that first year students who have a significantly higher level of competitiveness in a group show more group cohesiveness than last year students where the level of competitiveness is not high ("Results", Table 1). At the same time first year students have a slightly more positive attitude towards competitiveness while last year students give a more negative evaluation of competitiveness ("Results", Table 2). The results of other research show that small groups with stable interpersonal relations need more time to solve problems than groups where group members are not acquainted or have just started building relations (Nibler and Harris, 2003). As a result, students are less motivated to do academic tasks in a group ("Results", Table 1). Thus, the level of competitiveness among students decreases in the course of their studies. Then, encouraging competitiveness among students will have a positive impact on the level of group cohesiveness.

Group cohesiveness in the course of studies: It is considered that students should be grouped heterogeneously according to their academic performance. At the same time, the majority of first and last year students assess their academic performance as "average" but almost all of them would like to study in a group with better academic performance ("Results", Table 2-76% of first year students, 72% of last year students). Nevertheless, a considerable number of students do not want to acknowledge their poor academic performance. It is probable that for this reason students in the last year are twice less motivated to help group mates in studies ("Results", Table 2, 42% of first year students, 21% of last year students). Thus, students often connect their own aspirations and motivation to study with the overall group's focus on studies. As a result, encouraging a more optimistic approach to study will have a positive impact on student's motivation to be the best.

Attendance of classes and group cohesiveness: The previous research has demonstrated that if a group of students shows higher level of competition and cohesiveness and, as a result, is motivated to study, such students tend to attend more classes. It has turned out that almost quarter of last year students in comparison with first year students find it acceptable to skip classes ("Results", Table 2-1% of first year students, 23% of last year students). Thus, competition within a group together with high level of cohesiveness has definitely a positive impact on attendance. Then, in order to improve class attendance, responsible tutors should pay more attention to building cohesiveness in a group.

Feeling of belonging to a group: Considering that students spend four years at university together, it is extremely important for them to develop the feeling of belonging to a group. As a result of longer acquaintance last year students have a stronger need of a collective feeling of "we " and their belon ging to a group ("Results", Table 3-30% of first year students, 40% of last year students). The necessity to belong to a group among last year students can be explained by the fact that students realize the importance of belonging to a certain social group and building interpersonal relations. As for the length of the acquaintance, we can observe low indicators in the field of common interests among first year students who are acquainted with their group mates for only three months ("Results ",Table 3-10% of first year students, 33% of last year students). Moreover, the members of a group showing high level of cohesiveness should, as a rule, spend more time with each other and have tendency towards a more comfortable exchange of knowledge than the members of a group with low cohesiveness (Pescosolido and Saavedra, 2012). Thus, the length of studies at university is expressed differently: on the one hand, it has a slightly negative influence on the level of cohesiveness; on the other hand, has a positive impact on interpersonal relations among students.

Out-of-class communication: The majority of the research shows that students are extremely interested in working in groups with their friends during studies. First year students who are not yet well acquainted with their group mates are ready to devote more of their free time to communicate with their classmates ("Results", Table 3, 43% of first year students, 32% of last year students). Thus, first year students would like to make friends among their group mates as quickly as possible to feel more comfortable working together and be more efficient in studies. As a result, it is important to develop group cohesiveness not only when classes start but during preliminary organizational meetings, informal meetings and first acquaintances with members of the group even before the start of the classes.

Combining work and studies: Despite the fact that all the students think that having a job is prestigious ("Results", Table 4-62% of first year students, 71% of last year students), in comparison with last year students, almost a quarter of first year students have a negative attitude towards combining work with studies ("Results", Table 4, 24%). But even considering this trend, both first and last year students have a positive attitude towards group mates who combine work and studies ("Results", Table 4, 67% of first year students, 78% of last year students). It was also revealed that not all the first and last year students would like to work together with their group mates outside university. Nevertheless, some researchers demonstrate a considerably positive impact of group cohesiveness on group performance including outside the group which allows the future graduate having experience of working in a team (Chiocchio and Essiembre, 2009). Thus, first year students, not having this social experience have a slightly distorted opinion about a working student, about working in their field of studies and perspective of working with their group mates in the future. Then, it is necessary to inform students who want to work timely and objectively about the perspectives and challenges of combining work with studies.

Student image in a group: A student image and interpersonal relations in a relatively small group are important for the process of studies at university as they theoretically reflect the quality of the studying process. Student image can be multidirectional and can have both positive nature by reinforcing cohesiveness and negative character by destroying this group cohesiveness. It was revealed that in comparison with first year students, last year students have a clearer notion of a student image at university, work or in everyday life. Thus, last year

students pay less attention to subjective factors when assessing the image of their group mates. It means that familiarity of student images that influence personal attitude to work in a small group can contribute to a more efficient studying process in a group.

Student image in the course of studies: It was proved a long time ago that there exist positive relations between class attendance and academic and scientific performance of a student. At the same time, high attendance at the beginning of studies doesnot mean that group members will be always oriented towards a high quality of education at university and regular attendance of classes ("Results", Table 6). This is explained not only by the fact that a considerable number of last year students have a job ("Results", Table 7) but in general by the loss of interest in studies in the last year. It is worth noticing that last year students have a clearer notion of an A student image in a group ("Results", Table 5-50%).

At the same time, the image of a non-attender in the last year, in comparison with the first year has an extremely low influence on relations in a group while the image of an A student loses its reinforcing character only by 3% ("Results", Table 8-20% of first year students, 17% of last year students). Thus, the majority of last year students with low level of attendance try to justify their negative image by factors not connected with their behavior. It means that even in the last year the maintenance and reinforcement of the image of an A student will reinforce group cohesiveness, although to a smaller extent than in the first year.

Image of a student in science: Some researchers think that negative stereotypes about science and scholars and also about students carrying out research that have formed in the course of studies will further prevent positive perception of a scientific activity and, as a consequence, of a career in teaching (Finson, 2012). Indicators reflecting a positive image of a student in science turned out to be rather low ("Results ",Table 5-16% of first year students, 12% of last year students), although first year students have a clearer notion of a student in science. It can be explained by the fact that first year students were initially encouraged to carry out research activity at university. Thus, the image of a student who engages in a scientific activity has the least influence on group cohesiveness both in first and in last year. It means that it is necessary to inform students about the importance of research activity starting from the first year of their studies. As a result, the image of a student who actively engages in a scientific activity will positively influence group cohesiveness.

Image of a socially minded student: First and last year students, being at the intellectual forefront of young people have a high level of interpersonal relations and communication culture. The majority of first and last year students say that the image of a socially minded student and a student who always try to be benevolent and friendly is most important for them to communicate effectively with their group mates ("Results", Table 6). At the same time, it has turned out that a considerable number of last year students do not have any positive attitude towards socially minded students and they do not think such students have any influence on group cohesiveness ("Results", Table 6-33%). Some researchers speak about a group 's ability to have a negative influence on social relations of students and the studying process in general which is manifested a lot in among last year students (Chisaka, 2002). It has turned out that a bigger number of last year students find it acceptable to violate social rules ("Results", Table 6-19%) and as a result they have a more positive attitude towards students with deviant behavior. Thus, the image of a socially minded student which has quite an important role in reinforcing group cohesiveness in the first year, in the last year loses in value by giving way to a more sustainable image of a socially passive student.

Image of a stress resistant student: Enrolment to university and the beginning of the studying process is the most stressful time for students. As a rule, more than half of last year students due to a more dynamic lifestyle and combining studies with work consider themselves to be extremely stress resistant ("Results", Table 6-52%). First year students, on the contrary, are under pressure due to a change of social environment when leaving school and entering university and are less stress resistant ("Results", Table 6-19%), they have a more positive attitude towards depressed students ("Results", Table 3-57%). As a considerable number of first year students are stressed out, it is more difficult for them to develop their sustainable image in a group. Higher level of cohesiveness in the first year can be explained by student's need of emotional and psychological support of their newgroup mates due to the fact that parents have now less influence on their life. Thus, high level of stress and depression in the first year although does not have a direct significant influence on group cohesiveness, is reflected in interpersonal relations indirectly.

Image of a financially independent student: It is evident that students in the course of their studies change their career plans quite frequently. However, they become more and more confident in the choice of their future career

path and are focused more and more on planning their future in terms of professional status and prestige (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Nevertheless, it has turned out that last year students pay less attention to the prestigious character of their job if it guarantees financial security ("Results", Table 7-12%). On the contrary first year students are less inclined to work in a non-prestigious sphere ("Results", Table 7-26%). Moreover, last year students have a more developed notion of an employee in general and the majority of them think that a student can be successful both in studies and at work ("Results", Table 7-45%). It is worth noticing that students 'aspiratio n to be financially independent from their parents and be active in studies and at work at the same time is developed in a family (Ottoni *et al.* 2014). Considering the fact that most last year students have a job, they show a higher level of personal satisfaction from economic efficiency of their job and focus on financial independence, that is why some of them have already developed their image of a successful employee. Thus, the image of a financially independent student has one of the greatest potentials in reinforcing group cohesiveness.

Influence of a student image on group cohesiveness: It is considered that students having found their life balance are more satisfied from the process of studies, work and their life in general (author date). That is why those who have managed to reach balance in all the spheres of their life are more successful in developing a positive image which has then, a greater influence on reinforcing cohesiveness. In the course of the research, we have found out that in the first year the image of a student together with many other factors has a significant influence on group cohesiveness. In the last year when other factors are no longer relevant, the developed student image is one of the main factors which can maintain group cohesiveness.

Influence of a student image in the course of studies on group cohesiveness: It has been revealed that students in the last year show as a rule, a higher lack of integration. The student image in different groups has less and less influence on group cohesiveness in the course of studies which manifests itself in all the indicators connected with the assessment of the influence the image has ("Results", Table 8). It can be explained by the fact that students who have known each other for a while have already developed a certain perception of a student image and do not want to change their perceptions. In this context A and B students are less worried about their academic image as they used to when they were in the first year and

students with poor academic performance are less willing to improve it. However, students try to position positive elements of their image out of class in order to improve their own social status. Thus, group cohesiveness in the last year is gradually deteriorating but the remaining reserve of the developed student image can be used to reinforce group cohesiveness.

Influence of university image on group cohesiveness: Students tend to associate themselves with institutions that they consider prestigious and attractive and it is unlikely that students would feel group cohesiveness at a university which is not attractive to them (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). It has turned out that a university image has a great influence on cohesiveness and positioning in a student group both in the first and the last year. Students of a prestigious university are more self-confident and feel their high status ("Results ",Table 9-82% of first year students, 57% of last year students). A considerable increase in negative assessments among last year students can be connected with the fact that these students haverealized all the advantages and disadvantages of the university. Thus, a student image of a branded university contributes a lot to the reinforcement of group cohesiveness at university and in everyday life. It means that making a university more prestigious will result in reinforcing cohesiveness of student groups in general.

Influence of a student image in personal communication on group cohesiveness: In everyday life and in out-of-class communication group cohesiveness becomes less pronounced in some spheres even to a greater extent than cohesiveness in the course of studies (Table 9). Image of a socially minded student in comparison with the first year for the majority of last year students does not influence group cohesiveness at all (Table 9, 38%). The influence of a student image on student's willingn ess to spend their free time together has decreased a lot either (Table 9, 38% of last year students). Thus, in the last year students finish restructuring personal relations in a group. They are fully adapted to life at university. This process is one of the reasons why factors that used to maintain group cohesiveness become less influential.

Influence of an image destroying group cohesiveness: In the course of the research we have found out that in comparison with first year students, last year students feel the destructive character of the image of a student who regularly violates social order to a greater extent ("Results", Table 9-2% of first year students, 10% of last year students).This process can be explained by the fact

that last year students are more tolerant towards the activity of such students ("Results", Table 3-10%). According to the respondents, part of the students are ready to become such violators of order themselves ("Results", Table 6-9% of first year students, 19% of last year students). Fewer last year students are neutral towards students with unsteady mentality and depression ("Results", Table 3-45%). Thus, the image of a student with deviant and depressive behavior has the biggest destructive effect on group cohesiveness and negatively affects interpersonal relations and psychological environment.

Influence of the image reinforcing group cohesiveness: It has turned out that the influence of a working student image plays an important role in reinforcing group cohesiveness in the last year. Nevertheless, the global research shows that social recognition of the developed image is more effective when it comes from colleagues who know how this person works and studies but not from administration which only have a quota of social recognition. The majority of last year students already have working experience that is why they can objectively assess the ability to combine work with studies. The image of a working student has more reinforcing influence on group cohesiveness in the last year than in the first year ("Results", Table 10-19%). Thus, the image of the working student amid falling influence of A students and socially minded students has most resources for encouraging and developing group cohesiveness and improving the quality of the studying process in the last year.

In conclusion it is worth noticing that group cohesiveness is mostly reinforced by the following student images (in decreasing order): image of a successfully working student; image of an A student; image of a socially minded student; image of a sociable student; scientific image of a student.

The following images (in decreasing order) have a most destructive effect: image of a depressed student; image of a violating social order student; image of a regularly skipping classes student; image of a poor academic performance student.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the research we have found out that a student image can have both positive and negative impact on group cohesiveness. The negative influence of the image can destroy group cohesiveness which often negatively affects a student personal development and the quality of university education in general. There is a

mistaken opinion that as a result of long personal communication and the development of their own highly positive image onlyin one life sphere (university, work, everyday life) students will have no difficulty reaching the optimum level of group cohesiveness. It means that students need to develop the ability to form group cohesiveness together by regularly creating their own positive image at university, at work and in everyday life.

The scientific novelty of the research consists in the following results: first of all, we have revealed the peculiarities of the influence the image has on group cohesiveness in the context of both an individual student and a student group in the course of studies, work and everyday life. Secondly, we have obtained personal assessment of students of the images that have developed at university, at work and in everyday life. Thirdly, we have studied the existing level of group cohesiveness amid intensive activity at university and at work. Fourthly, we have revealed the peculiarities of cohesiveness development and group dynamics as the basis for the university education quality improvement.

In other words, the objective of the research has been reached and our hypothesis has been proven. A lot of the ideas expressed in the present paper are subject to discussions but in general they comply with foreign research experience (Carron *et al.*, 1998; Mudrack, 1989; Chiocchio and Essiembre, 2009). The study is not exhaustive that is why, in order to study the image influence on group cohesiveness we suggest carrying out further research in the field at other universities in Russia and abroad.

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