

THE ATTITUDE OF YOUTH TOWARDS THE THREATS AND BENEFITS OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The issue of active citizenship is very topical in modern society. Particular attention is paid to the promotion of civic activity by youth and the creation of positive experience. National surveys show increasing engagement among young people in various activities, but they also show that young people are more likely to notice and see the threats posed by active citizenship. Therefore, the article aims to research the attitude of young people towards an assessment of active citizenship in society, the threats and benefits it brings. Qualitative research methods were used to gain a detailed and comprehensive understanding of attitudes: analysis of literature, focus group discussion, and content analysis. In the discussions, informants mentioned most often that citizenship is viewed both positively and negatively (especially in relation to political activity). The study revealed that when discussing the risks of active citizenship, young people mentioned most often the physical threats to the health and life of an active citizen when performing compulsory or voluntary military service. Other possible active citizenship threats indicated were: provoking intolerance and encouraging confrontation between different groups. The discussion also identified the perceived and noticed benefits of active citizenship to young people. Those most frequently mentioned by the informants were: helping groups or professions in difficulty; creating a better environment through basic putting in order and doing one's duty. Some of the statements by the informants show that examples of active citizenship create a sense of community and tolerance, as well as being 'contagious' (setting an example) and encouraging young people to join various organisations.

KEY WORDS: *youth, active citizenship, focus group, citizenship threats and benefits.*

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Introduction

Active citizenship refers to a person's normative commitments to the state, and the state's commitments to its citizens (Grigas, 2022). In the Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania No X-818 'On the Approval of the Long-Term Programme of Civic and National Education', citizenship is defined as 'the individual's perception of his/her rights, responsibilities and duties to the democratic state, activities for the benefit of society, protection of the rights and freedoms of fellow citizens, democracy, and the pursuit of the well-being of Lithuania' (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2006). The exercise of rights and responsibilities is associated with being or becoming a member of a particular entity (state, city, political party, trade union or non-governmental organisation) (Pilietiškas ir pilietinė visuomenė, 2012). Citizenship is concerned with people's social lives and posing questions about political, social and civil rights, and the conditions for social participation (Matthews, 2001). Hvinden and Johansson (2007) emphasise the opportunities for active participation through representative democracy, civil society, and freedom of choice. A key element of active citizenship is participation, which legitimises decision making. Such participa-

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tion is characterised by mutual respect and free will, based on human rights and democracy. A democratic system supports an effective public policy system, in which people can work together to solve common problems, and social cohesion sustains the community by uniting citizens and fostering relationships (Hoskins, Janmaat, Villalba, 2012; Yang, Hoskins, 2022). A high level and a high quality of active citizenship bring particular social benefits. Active citizenship connects members' multiple identities, and empowers them to participate in the economic, social, cultural, civic and political life of society.

Active citizens are unique individuals, active and creative citizens applying critical thinking to public life in the country, or to the state and the government itself. However, there is a danger that an active and broadly organised civil society becomes an opposition to the government itself. The 'sunder' the government in the country, the less it needs active, rights-protecting and critically thinking citizens. Despite this relative threat, citizenship is promoted in all democratic and open countries as one of the essential criteria for the development of the state. If economically active individuals organise their activities in free market mode, disregarding the rules of social life, they will form a community that is concerned only with pursuing selfish needs by any means, rather than a community that is concerned with the common good, both personal good and that of other citizens in the state (Pilietišumas ir pilietinė visuomenė, 2012).

The literature highlights the importance of the participation of youth in public life, as a way for young people to understand how democracy works, and how they can participate actively, gain confidence, develop new skills, and propose new ideas to tackle local and regional problems. The goal of having active, creative and responsible citizens is linked to active communities and hardworking citizens, and is not disconnected from civic action (Lietuvos pažangumo strategija, 2030). Youth participation is commonly understood as a process by which young people engage in activities and make decisions that affect their lives as individuals and as groups (Bečević, Dahlsted, 2022).

In the literature (Sherrod, Flanagan, Youniss, 2002; Pontes, Henn, Griffiths, 2019; Fennes, Gadinger, 2021; Joris, Simons, Agirdag, 2022; Yang, Hoskins, 2022), the debate on promoting the citizenship of young people has tended to focus on ways of expressing citizenship and on the teaching/education on civic engagement. For example, at the secondary school level, the Citizenship Study (Pilietišumo studija, 2017) identifies the components of citizenship as learning about and exploring society, participating in and initiating change in the community, and building and maintaining social ties. The methodological publication *Jaunimo pilietišumo ugdymo rekomendacijos* (2021) suggests a full range of citizenship activities for young people: from volunteering and taking part in the constitution exam to getting involved in municipal issues. Community participation has a major impact on the development of an active society. The European Parliament Resolution on the Implementation of the Action Plan on Citizenship Education (2022) points out that citizenship education encompasses a combination of knowledge, skills, methods, tools, content, abilities, attitudes, values and care, and is essential for solidarity and a sense of community. Therefore, the active involvement of young people helps youth policy makers and implementers to understand the real needs and situation of young people (Šakalinė, Ruškienė, Jucevičienė, 2022). Tursunboyevich (2022) emphasises that active citizenship is influenced by the methods and tools used in studies, and the individual characteristics of each person.

However, Zaleskienė and Andriušaitytė (2015) identify the conclusion by international researchers that the content of civic education offered to young people, the methodologies of civic action, and the forms and methods of activities offered by educators, no longer meet the expectations, needs and interests of today's youth. This weakens the motivation to be active and engaged. Similar problems can be identified in Lithuania, such as the lack of motivation of students to act as citizens, the inadequacy of the forms and methods of formal citizenship education, and the inadequacy of the expectations and interests of young people. Civic passivity among youth is often attributed to the lack of preparation of teachers for civic action. Also, Hooghe and Dejaeghere (2007) note that citizens' relationship with the public sphere has evolved towards more non-institutionalised and individualised forms of participation. Low levels of civic and political engagement do not necessarily indicate complete disengagement, but may be related to passive interest and involvement in public affairs, adopting a standing-by or monitoring attitude (Amna, Ekman, 2014). Amna and Ekman (2014) highlighted the existence of different forms of passivity, and suggested exploring standing-by latent involvement, which is characterised by an interest in civic and political affairs, and a readiness to participate. The authors empirically investigated

different orientations of passivity among young people, and identified four groups: the active, who have high scores in both political participation and political interest; the wait-listed, who have average participation and high political interest; the disengaged, who score low in both participation and interest; and the disenchanting, who have the lowest levels of participation and interest. According to the research findings, young people may often be relatively engaged and interested in politics and citizenship, but may be reluctant to express an 'engaged' identity (Amna, Ekman, 2014). This type of latent engagement arises from trust in institutions and their representatives to do their job (Tzankova, Prati, Cicognani, 2022).

The results of the Civic Empowerment Index (2022) can be used to analyse the expression of civic participation by youth in Lithuania. The survey shows that the civic engagement of young people (18 to 29 years old) has been steadily increasing: in 2019 the average rating of the index was 34.1 points; in 2020 it was 35.4 points; and in 2021 it was 43.0 points (Pilietinės galios indeksas, 2022). Other indicators relating to active citizenship are also very relevant: the average interest of young people (18 to 29 years old) in public news is 40.8 per cent; the index of potential civic engagement is 31.3 per cent; the average of the Civic Empowerment Perception Index is 56.8 per cent; the index of risk assessment in relation to participation in civic activities is 22.4 per cent (the highest compared to other age groups). Thus, young people are most likely to perceive that there is a certain possibility of being exposed to various risks when participating in active citizenship (e.g. losing a job, being perceived as a freak by others, being publicly attacked or slandered, being subjected to group bullying, having one's authority undermined, being suspected of selfish motives, being subjected to the threat of reprisals) (Pilietinės galios indeksas, 2022). A more detailed understanding of the threats posed by participation in active citizenship can provide insights into what is stopping young people from being involved in active citizenship. However, there is no other scientific research focusing on an analysis of the threats perceived by young people. Also, the approach to the benefits and the assessment of the phenomenon itself (as positive or negative) are rarely analysed. A more detailed and exhaustive understanding of the threats and benefits may reveal opportunities to communicate active citizenship better and engage more young people in it.

Thus, the article raises problematic questions: how do young people perceive society's attitude towards active citizenship? What is young people's attitude towards the threats and benefits posed by active citizenship?

The aim of the research is to explore young people's attitudes towards the evaluation of active citizenship in society, and the threats and benefits it poses.

Research methods: in the introduction, analysis systematisation, generalisation, and comparison of scientific literature sources; in the empirical study, qualitative methods of data collection and processing were applied.

1. Research methodology

Qualitative methods were applied in the research: the analysis of scientific literature, group discussion, and content analysis. The empirical research was carried out in the framework of the project 'Know Citizenship'. The participants in the research were young people (14 to 29 years old) living, studying or working in Klaipėda. Invitations to participate in the focus group and project were published on the project's Facebook page and sent to various Klaipėda youth organisations by e-mail. The informants' opinions were collected in group discussions as qualitative data. Four discussions were held: 12 informants participated in each discussion. The research sample consisted of 48 informants. Seven questions were asked of the participants during the discussion. The discussions were recorded, and the recordings were transcribed into minutes. The informants' responses were categorised in categories and subcategories. General principles of research ethics and qualitative research were followed during the implementation of the study and the analysis of the data. Principles of respect for personal privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, goodwill and willingness not to harm the research subject, and fairness (Žydzūnaitė, Sabaliauskas, 2017; Gaižauskaitė, Valavičienė, 2016; Kardelis, 2017) were observed. The ethical considerations for focus groups are the same as for most other methods of social research (Homan, 1991). Full information about the purpose and uses of participants' contributions was given when selecting and

involving participants. At the outset, the moderators clarified that each participant's contribution was important (Gibbs, 1997). In the analysis of the data, the identities of the participants in the focus group were protected from publicity by giving each focus group participant a code, e.g. inf. no 1, inf. no 2. In the processing analysis, all the identifiable information was removed from the quotes by informants.

Informants' statements on three questions are analysed in this article: informants' opinions on the assessment (support or condemnation in society) of active citizenship; informants' opinions on the threats posed by active citizenship; informants' opinions on the benefits to society of active citizenship.

Limitations. The paper discusses the issues raised in the context of the specific study, i.e. young people's attitudes towards active citizenship, the benefits and threats of active citizenship. The focus group research involved young people living, studying or working in Klaipėda; therefore, the research findings are limited geographically.

2. Research data analysis

Evaluation of the attitude of youth towards active citizens in society. The young people who participated in the focus group discussion identified three possible variations on the evaluation of active citizens in society (category): positive evaluation, dual evaluation, negative evaluation. It is appropriate to note that a sixth of the informants who took part in the discussion thought that active citizens are evaluated positively in society (e.g. *'Mostly supported'* [inf. no 47]; *'Civic people are not condemned because they do useful work for society'* [inf. no 45]). However, some of the people who expressed a positive view also seemed to doubt their position (e.g. *'I don't think they would be condemned'* [inf. no 48]; *'I think that everyone would support such a person ...'* [inf. no 12]). Other informants gave justifications for the positive evaluation (e.g. *'Other people understand that they only want to do good [...] and do not seek any benefit for themselves'* [inf. no 11]; *'They do nothing wrong, but only help others without seeking benefit for themselves'* [inf. no 17]). A very large number of informants identified a dual public perception of active citizens (e.g. *'I think they are both supported and condemned'* [inf. no 18]). Some informants expressed condemnation because of the activity itself (e.g. *'Supported because it helps others who need it, but declaimed because it is demonstrated in public and may not be liked by others'* [inf. no 30]; *'Supported by those who are also involved in civic activities and are interested in doing so, and not supported because they do not like the principle itself ...'* [inf. no 48]). Some informants noted that certain forms of civic activism, such as politics, rallies, etc. are condemned (e.g. *'... as for political activities, they are stigmatised by some and very much supported by others'* [inf. no 19]; *'When people go to meetings/rallies for a cause, some people will be very supportive, others will be very unsupportive and say why do we need a circus and something similar [...] it's very ambiguous, everyone has their own opinions and beliefs'* [inf. no 25]; *'Of course other people will be supportive of people who help the elderly or handicapped people. But then there are also those who fight for the rights of others, like various meetings ... such activity is usually not supported by the majority ...'* [inf. no 44]). These statements correlate with the findings of the Citizenship Index survey on citizens' willingness to act in the face of a serious political problem: the smallest proportion of participants in the above-mentioned survey identified that they would organise or agree to contribute to activities to address a problem, and the largest proportion would stand back and do nothing or remain unaware of their actions. Continuing the analysis of the research data, it is necessary to mention that some informants even identified a kind of active condemnation (e.g. *'... to some people, your good work seems ... really good. And another one will say that maybe you did something worse there, you might have not even touched your fingernails at all. It depends on the other person'* [inf. no 22]; *'... others will be very unsupportive, and will say, why do we need this circus and all that [...] it's very ambiguous, each person has their own opinions and beliefs'* [inf. no 25]).

Some of the participants in the focus group discussion thought that civic activism is evaluated negatively in society (e.g. *'Condemned'* [inf. no 1]), and sometimes even questioned the Lithuanian origins of these people (e.g. *'... if they don't conform to the Lithuanian standard and appearance ... and ... they are civic minded, people just condemn them, because they say that you're not really a true Lithuanian'* [inf. no 32]). Some of those who feel this way noted that most of the public are inactive, and therefore active citizens annoy them (e.g. *'If you are too active, you will be condemned by many people, especially by people who are inactive by nature and do not like people who are too active'* [inf. no 20]; *'The majority, in my opinion, are comple-*

tely inactive people and they do not like it when active people show their activities in public and encourage others to do something' [inf. no 46]). And some of the statements identify a desire to protect one's own convenient or passive position (e.g. '... when you are active on an issue, they condemn you because you want to dismantle what might be convenient ...' [inf. no 18]). Summing up the analysis of informants' opinions, it can be noted that young people mostly notice society's dual (positive and negative) attitude towards active people: part of society supports active people, and part of society condemns activists.

Table 1. Informants' opinions on the evaluation of active people in society

Subcategories	Supporting statements
Positive societal evaluation	<p>'... other people understand that they only want good ... they are actively involved in whatever is good for others, and they do not seek benefit for themselves' (inf. no 11).</p> <p>'I think everyone would support such a person who tries to help others' (inf. no 12).</p> <p>'... they are not doing anything wrong; but only help others without seeking any benefit for themselves' (inf. no 17).</p> <p>'I think that civic people are not condemned [...] to mention for example those who died on 13 January' (inf. no 33).</p> <p>'The majority of society support' (inf. no 42).</p> <p>'Civic people are not condemned because they do useful work for society' (inf. no 45).</p> <p>'Mostly supported' (inf. no 47).</p> <p>'I don't think they would be condemned' (inf. no 48)</p>
Positive and negative societal evaluation	<p>'Most of the time it's because you're not doing it the right way, because you're not doing it according to other people's dictates, that's the biggest condemnation, but those who understand what you're doing, they don't condemn you ...' (inf. no 1).</p> <p>'... wise people will not condemn, but those who are already difficult to talk to, they will say whatever they want ...' (inf. no 2).</p> <p>'... an active person expresses his/her opinion, and some people will support him/her because they agree with his/her opinion, and others will condemn him/her because they disagree with his/her opinion' (inf. no 13).</p> <p>'Active people are condemned when people disagree with what they are doing, and others are just as supportive because they think alike and see only the benefits of what they are doing' (inf. no 14).</p> <p>'... it depends on the activity ...' (inf. no 16).</p> <p>'I think both are supported and condemned' (inf. no 18).</p> <p>'... as far as political activities are concerned, they are condemned by some and very much supported by others' (inf. no 19).</p> <p>'To some, your good work seems ... really good. And others will say that maybe you did something worse there, you might never even have touched your fingernails at all. It depends very much on the other person' (inf. no 22).</p> <p>'Everybody has their own opinion, and everybody has their own opinion about something that has happened, and sometimes it's acceptable to them, and sometimes it's not ...' (inf. no 23).</p> <p>'There will always be those who condemn and those who support [...] for example, some people may think you are doing a good job ... but others may think that you are not needed there ...' (inf. no 24).</p> <p>'When people go to a rally for a cause, some people will be very supportive; others will be very unsupportive, and say why do we need a circus and all that [...] it's very ambiguous, everybody has their own opinion and beliefs' (inf. no 25).</p> <p>'We are all very different, and we all have different opinions. It may be good for one person, but for another person it may seem that you are doing this for no reason at all' (inf. no 27).</p> <p>'Supported because it helps others who need it, and condemned because it is shown in public and others may not like it' (inf. no 30).</p> <p>'We all think differently: what seems civil and good to some may be wrong to others ...' (inf. no 32).</p> <p>'Of course others will support people who help the elderly or disabled. But then there are also those who fight for the rights of others, like the various rallies ... such activity is usually not supported by the majority ...' (inf. no 44)</p> <p>'Supported by those who are also engaged in civic activities and are interested in them, but not supported because they do not like the principle itself ...' (inf. no 48).</p>

Subcategories	Supporting statements
Negative societal evaluation	<p><i>‘Condemned’ (inf. no 1).</i></p> <p><i>‘... when you are active on an issue, they condemn you because you want to dismantle what might be convenient ...’ (inf. no 18).</i></p> <p><i>‘If you are too active, you will be condemned by many people, especially by people who are inactive by nature and do not like people who are too active’ (inf. no 20).</i></p> <p><i>‘... most of the time you will get criticism from people who express themselves in society ...’ (inf. no 31).</i></p> <p><i>‘... if they don’t conform to the Lithuanian standard and appearance ... and ... they are civic-minded, people just condemn them because they say you are not a real Lithuanian ...’ (inf. no 32).</i></p> <p><i>‘... always the people who are the most vocal will always get that criticism ... you can’t do without it ...’ (inf. no 34).</i></p> <p><i>‘... if they are active and they express their opinion constantly, I think a lot of people don’t like it ...’ (inf. no 43).</i></p> <p><i>‘The majority, in my opinion, is made up of people who are completely inactive, and they don’t like it when people who are publicly active show their activities and encourage others to do something’ (inf. no 46)</i></p>

Source: compiled by the authors based on research data.

The attitude of youth towards threats to active citizenship. The focus group discussion participants discussed actively the dangers of active citizenship (see Table 2). Physical threats to active citizens were the most frequently mentioned. Physical threats to the health and life of an active citizen were perceived by the informants, both in the context of compulsory military service or volunteering for national defence (e.g. *‘... volunteering for military service can be dangerous to the health’* [inf. no 12]; *‘... when voluntary military service is performed, all volunteers and civilians would be at risk during war’* [inf. no 11]), in the performance of certain duties (e.g. *‘How many people are injured in the course of their duty as officers, fire-fighters, medics’* [inf. no 36]). However, some informants expressed the fear that a physical threat also comes from taking an active stance in the face of an unjust situation and trying to do something good (e.g. *‘Let’s take the refugees that came last year and this year ... they wanted to take them in and give them a roof over their heads, and some of them experience a threat ... as there were a lot of people who were like robbers, and that could have been a possible threat to citizens ...’* [inf. no 19]; *‘When you want to help a family but they don’t want your help ... e.g. you want to help children whose parents drink, I think they might not be happy with the help, and, when they are drunk, they might misbehave and hurt you in some way’* [inf. no 21]).

Some thought that even verbal expressions of opinion could lead to physical threats (e.g. *‘... if you disagree with another person’s opinion, it depends how each person accepts that opinion, whether a person accepts it tolerantly, or a person gets bitter, gets angry and moves on to other actions that are dangerous to you’* [inf. no 3]; *‘I can quote the example of Belarus, where people behaved in a civil way, and that’s why they’re now sitting in prison’* [inf. no 45]). Several informants identified rallies as places/times that pose many physical threats (e.g. *‘... rallies can be dangerous, because historically speaking, we can give the example of 13 January, when active citizens gathered at the TV Tower to defend their country, but were injured or even run over by tanks as a result’* [inf. no 14]; *‘... rallies should be dangerous because they are often the scene of accidents, and among the protesters themselves, because there are disagreements that can lead to dangerous situations’* [inf. no 15]). Fears were also identified that in certain situations citizenship becomes a criminal activity (e.g. *‘... if you harm another person with your opinion, with your citizenship, then you are no longer a citizen, you are a ... In my opinion, this is already an anti-state activity ...’* [inf. no 1]; *‘All the riots, when they broke out, it was brutal here’* [inf. no 31]). Also, defending one’s own opinion might be spreading disinformation (*‘... there are many books ... where older people express their opinion about all kinds of rallies and Russian provocations. They just spread fake information there’* [inf. no 3]). In the informants’ words, two other dangers can also be distinguished: provoking intolerance (e.g. *‘... maybe*

sometimes you don't have to contradict the opinion of the majority, but sometimes it's enough to touch on, to catch up, to trip up a person who I don't know, but who's not very tolerant, who's not very calm, who's not very willing, in general, to accept the opinion of others, and then it's maybe dangerous' [inf. no 5]), and promoting confrontation between different groups (e.g. 'But still, people who are maybe fighting against a certain thing, they are interested in that policy and that's why they are active' (inf. no 34). Concluding the analysis of informants' opinions, it can be noted that the following threats to active citizenship are noted by young people: physical threats to the person, the transition from citizenship to criminal activity, the confrontation between different groups, spreading disinformation, attracting intolerance.

Table 2. Informants' attitudes towards the threats active citizenship poses

Subcategories	Supporting statements
Physical threats to the person	<p>'... if you disagree with another person's opinion, it depends on how each person accepts that opinion, whether a person accepts it tolerantly, or a person gets bitter, gets angry, and moves on to other actions that are dangerous for you' (inf. no 3).</p> <p>'... when voluntary military service is performed, all volunteers and civilians would be at risk during war' (inf. no 11).</p> <p>'... volunteering for military service can be dangerous to the health' (inf. no 12).</p> <p>'... rallies can be dangerous, because, historically speaking we can give the example of 13 January, when active citizens gathered at the TV Tower to defend their country, but were injured or even run over by tanks as a result' (inf. no 14).</p> <p>'... rallies should be dangerous because they are often the scene of accidents, and among the protesters themselves, because there are disagreements that can lead to dangerous situations' (inf. no 15).</p> <p>'I can give you the example of Belarus, where people behaved in a civil way, and that's why they're now sitting in prison' (inf. no 45).</p> <p>'Let's take the refugees that came last year and this year ... they wanted to take them in and give them a roof over their heads, and some of them experienced threats ... as there were a lot of people who were like robbers, and that could have been a possible threat to citizens ...' (inf. no 19).</p> <p>'... when you touch on some socially sensitive topics, when people feel that what you are doing is wrong and uncivil and that some disgruntled people might do something dangerous to your health' (inf. no 20).</p> <p>'When you want to help a family but they don't want your help ... e.g. you want to help children whose parents drink, I think they might not be happy with the help, and, when they are drunk, they might misbehave, and hurt you in some way' (inf. no 21)</p> <p>'... that when there are fires, people, neighbours, run to the rescue, to help, even though they may be burnt and injured themselves ...' (inf. no 21).</p> <p>'... if they see some conflicts, fights, and they try to be civic, to help, they understand that they are taking a risk, that they can get hurt themselves; that is such a courageous act, which is very risky' (inf. no 22).</p> <p>'... I have heard of situations where, say, people are drowning and some strangers come to rescue them, so they are risking their own lives to help others' (inf. no 25).</p> <p>'How many people are injured in the course of their duty as officers, firefighters, medics' (inf. no 36).</p> <p>'If a smaller part of the population has one opinion, and a larger part has another opinion, who are not right, but who manage to impose their truth, even though their action is completely uncivil, and then there is the small part who acted intelligently and civilly, but their option was not accepted. The small part may be in danger at that moment' (inf. no 42).</p> <p>'... there is quite a risk to health at rallies when two groups of different minds meet and that citizenship and desire to help everyone to be free becomes exaggerated and leads to aggression ...' (inf. no 47).</p> <p>'I think that volunteering for military service can be hazardous to health' (inf. no 48)</p>

Subcategories	Supporting statements
Transition from citizenship to criminality	‘... if you harm another person with your opinion, with your citizenship, then you are no longer a citizen, you are a ... In my opinion, this is already an anti-state activity ...’ (inf. no 1). ‘All the riots, when they broke out, it was brutal here’ (inf. no 31)
Confrontation between different groups	‘But still, people who are maybe fighting against a certain thing, they are interested in that policy and that’s why they are active’ (inf. no 34)
Spreading disinformation	‘... there are many books ... where older people express their opinions about all kinds of rallies and Russian provocations. They just spread fake information there’ (inf. no 3). ‘... when it is excessive activity and maybe some kind of overstepping of boundaries, then the people who are unhappy with that may come up with some kind of harm to that person, and in terms of a situation that is dangerous to society, I think it would have to be something to do with other countries, some kind of action that is threatening to create a threat of war’ (inf. no 13)
Attraction of intolerance	‘... when it comes to today’s issues, vaccinations, orientation, I think it is those who are from older generations ... who are doing the damage here’ (inf. no 3). ‘... Maybe sometimes you don’t have to contradict the opinion of the majority, but sometimes it’s enough to touch on, to catch up, to trip up a person who I don’t know, but who’s not very tolerant, who’s not very calm, who’s not very willing, in general, to accept the opinion of others, and then it’s maybe dangerous’ (inf. no 5)

Source: compiled by the authors based on research data.

Attitudes of youth towards the benefits of active citizenship. Participants in the focus group were also encouraged to talk about the benefits of active citizenship (the category of attitudes towards the benefits of citizenship). The attitudes expressed by the informants are structured in Table 3 in six subcategories. The largest number of informants made statements that can be summarised as helping specific groups of people facing difficulties (e.g. ‘Helps people to make life easier, e.g. pensioners’ [inf. no 45]; ‘... active people help families in need with financial donations, clothes, and things like that. This is how poverty is reduced in Lithuania, and society is the whole of Lithuania’ [inf. no 46]), or for professionals (e.g. ‘... but there are certainly many cases, for example, like the teachers’ strike, although the situation has not really changed much, but still more reactions and more news has been received by members of parliament from the fact that there is dissatisfaction with society, and although not very many of these actions have been carried out, it is still a kind of reaction’ [inf. no 34]). Other informants referred to building the foundations of the state through elementary everyday expressions of citizenship (e.g. ‘... we can include voting as active citizenship, the benefit to society is that active citizens are interested in the country and have thought things through before they vote [...] the benefit is that those who will improve the country and solve problems are elected and society benefits’ [inf. no 18]), or actions that require great sacrifices and bring major changes (e.g. ‘... let’s take a basic look back at history, let’s look at 13 January. We all know how citizenship benefits society’ [inf. no 6]).

Table 3. Informants' attitudes towards the benefits of citizenship to society

Subcategories	Supporting statements
Helping specific groups of people facing difficulties	<p>'... the association for young deaf people didn't exist, and now it is one of the most active associations in Klaipėda with the help of citizenship' (inf. no 1).</p> <p>'... helps to identify the needs and priorities of the community' (inf. no 17).</p> <p>'... let's say people can achieve something, let's say with a rally, when people rally they want to achieve some kind of transformation, to adopt something new or to change something [...] people help the poor and they want to benefit from it, to have something to eat, to have something to wear, etc. The benefit is simply to help and assist, to change things for the better' (inf. no 25).</p> <p>'... but there are certainly many cases, for example, like the teachers' strike, although the situation has not really changed much and little is done, but still more reactions and more news has been received by members of parliament from the fact that there is dissatisfaction with society ...' (inf. no 34).</p> <p>'Helps people to make life easier; e.g. pensioners' (inf. no 45).</p> <p>'... active people help families in need with financial donations, clothes, and things like that. This is how poverty is reduced in Lithuania, and society is the whole of Lithuania' (inf. no 46)</p>
Building the foundations of the state	<p>'... let's take a basic look back at history, let's look at 13 January. We all know how citizenship benefits society' (inf. no 6).</p> <p>'... we can include voting as active citizenship, the benefit to society is that active citizens are interested in the country and have thought things through before they vote [...] the benefit is that those who will improve the country and solve problems are elected, and society benefits' (inf. no 18).</p> <p>'The more we are involved in the governance of the state, the more we can perhaps help the state: what we don't like, what we need. This might make it easier for MPs to navigate and legislate accordingly' (inf. no 34)</p>
Creation of a better environment	<p>'... citizens contribute to environmental stewardship' (inf. no 24).</p> <p>'... keeping the city clean' (inf. no 43).</p> <p>'... picking up litter' (inf. no 45).</p> <p>'... serving in the army is citizenship because it helps society. In the event of war, society will feel protected in its environment. Service provides a better environment and lets the public know that they are safe' (inf. no 46).</p> <p>'... when we report a drunk driver we are really protecting the people around us, so that nobody gets hurt, and ultimately the driver himself, who thinks he can drive while drunk. It is there to protect people's health. Let's say even for the protection of the city's property, because a drink-driver can also be hit' (inf. no 23)</p>
Creation of a sense of community and tolerance	<p>'... encourages everyone to be a better citizen' (inf. no 15).</p> <p>'... It would be really hard to imagine if we all lived just thinking about what we need, always ignoring the troubles of others, because if trouble happened to us and we needed help too, and if we met someone who is just as ignorant as we are, say, we would feel that this citizenship is really necessary' (inf. no 22).</p> <p>'... citizenship has the benefit of making people friendlier and ...' (inf. no 26).</p> <p>'... others are taught to behave well and to follow the example of those who encourage citizenship and make our country better' (inf. no 47).</p> <p>'... citizenship encourages others to be more courteous and helpful and to take better care of their country' (inf. no 48)</p>
Contribution to organisations	<p>'... encourages other people to actively join organisations' (inf. no 15).</p> <p>'Contributes to organisations in need of help, helping the organisation to continue to succeed' (inf. no 12).</p> <p>'... it is useful because society and organisations all need volunteers, all those civic-minded people go and volunteer' (inf. no 27)</p>
Improving the individual's psychological well-being	<p>'... helping others helps you feel better inside that you have spent your free time in a useful way' (inf. no 1).</p> <p>'... citizenship has the benefit of making people ... more cheerful' (inf. no 26)</p>

Source: compiled by the authors based on research data.

Another benefit observed and identified by the informants is the creation of a better environment through basic environmental improvement (e.g. ‘... *keeping the city clean*’ [inf. no 43]; ‘... *picking up litter*’ [inf. no 45]) and fulfilling duties (e.g. ‘... *serving in the army is citizenship because it helps society. In the event of war, society will feel protected in its environment. Service provides a better environment and lets the public know that they are safe*’ [inf. no 46]). Some of the statements identified by the informants reveal the very interesting idea that examples of active citizenship are contagious and create a sense of community and tolerance (e.g. ‘... *encourages everyone to be a better citizen*’ [inf. no 15]; ‘... *it would be really hard to imagine if we all lived just thinking about what we need, always ignoring the troubles of others, because if trouble happened to us and we needed help too, and if we met someone who is just as ignorant as we are, say, we would feel that this citizenship is really necessary*’ [inf. no 22]). These statements also led to other thoughts by the informants, which fell into the subcategory of ‘contribution to organisations’ (e.g. ‘... *it is useful because society and organisations all need volunteers, all those civic-minded people go and volunteer*’ [inf. no 27]). And the additional benefit of active citizenship was also identified in terms of improving the individual’s psychological well-being (e.g. ‘... *helping others helps you feel better inside that you have spent your free time in a useful way*’ [inf. no 1]). Summarising the content analysis, the following attitudes of young people concerning the main benefits of citizenship can be identified: helping specific groups of people or professionals facing difficulties, building the foundations of the state through elementary everyday expressions of citizenship, basic environmental improvement and fulfilling duties, the creation of a sense of community and tolerance, contribution to organisations, improving the individual’s psychological well-being.

Conclusions

Active citizenship depends on people having the relevant up-to-date knowledge and skills to participate in public life. Active citizens are unique individuals, creative and imaginative citizens, with critical thinking skills about public life in the country or about the state and the government itself. During the discussion, young people noted that active citizens are perceived positively in society. But the findings that a large number of informants identified the dual attitude (support and condemnation) of society towards active citizens must be taken into consideration by civic education policy makers and educators, as this dual perception might be stopping young people from participating, especially considering young people’s understanding that the majority of society is inactive and therefore active citizens are condemned. Another finding is that some participants in the discussion also thought that civic activism is viewed negatively in society, and sometimes even the ‘traditional’ Lithuanian origin of active people is questioned. Therefore, the goal of civic education policy makers and educators is to change that ‘traditional inactive Lithuanian origin’ picture with a picture or pattern of the modern active citizen. Noting that some informants indicated a condemnation of certain forms of civic activism, there must be possibilities for young people to practise and experience political activity and inclusion.

Another important finding of the research is that young people indicated various forms of threats that active citizenship poses. The informants mentioned different physical threats, provoking intolerance, and encouraging confrontation between different groups. So young people need to receive more information about the outcomes of physical and other harm, and ways to stay safe while staying active. But the most interesting thing that young people notice is that sometimes active citizenship becomes a criminal activity, and defending one’s own opinion turns into spreading misinformation. These findings indicate that young people and all of society must be educated in how to express and exercise active citizenship and defend a position.

The discussion also identified benefits of active citizenship as noticed and perceived by young people: helping groups of people or professions in difficulty; building the foundations of the state through basic everyday expressions of citizenship or actions requiring great sacrifices; the creation of a better environment through the basic tidying up of the environment and the performance of one’s duty; creating a sense of community and tolerance; encouraging young people to join various organisations; and improving the psychological well-being of the individual. Civic education policy makers and educators must advertise these benefits and practice more, in order to show a good example, and use the ‘contagious’ benefit/impact of active citizenship.

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JAUNIMO POŽIŪRIS Į AKTYVAUS PILIETIŠKUMO NAUDĄ IR GRĖSMES

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Santrauka

Aktyvaus pilietiškumo klausimas šiuolaikinėms visuomenėms yra svarbus. Ypač didelis dėmesys skiriamas jaunimo pilietinio aktyvumo skatinimui ir pozityvios patirties kaupimui. Aktyvus pilietiškumas priklauso nuo žmogaus turimų atitinkamų naujausių žinių ir įgūdžių, kurie būtini dalyvaujant visuomeniniame gyvenime. Aktyvūs piliečiai yra unikalūs individai, kuriantys ir kūrybingi piliečiai, turintys kritinę nuomonę apie viešąjį gyvenimą šalyje ar pačią valstybę, jos valdžią. Tyrimai atskleidė didėjantį jaunimo išitraukimą į įvairias veiklas, taip pat ir labiau pastebimas su pilietiškumu susijusias grėsmes. Tad straipsnyje siekiama pažinti jaunimo požiūrį į pilietiškumo vertinimą visuomenėje, jo grėsmes ir naudą.

Straipsnyje keliamas probleminis klausimas, kaip jaunimas suvokia visuomenės požiūrį į aktyvų pilietiškumą ir kokias pilietiškumo grėsmes bei naudas įžvelgia?

Tyrimo tikslas – iširti jaunimo požiūrį į aktyvaus pilietiškumo vertinimą, jo keliamas grėsmes bei naudą.

Tyrimo metodai: įvade taikyta mokslinės literatūros šaltinių analizė, sisteminimas, apibendrinimas, palyginimas; atliekant empirinį tyrimą taikyti kokybinis duomenų rinkimo ir apdorojimo metodai; kokybiniai metodai – mokslinės literatūros analizė, grupinė diskusija, turinio analizė.

Empirinis tyrimas vykdytas įgyvendinant projektą „Pažink pilietiškumą“. Tyrimo dalyviai – jaunuoliai (14–29 m.), gyvenantys, studijuojantys ar dirbantys Klaipėdos mieste. Kvietimas dalyvauti projekte buvo paskelbtas projekto feisbuko paskyroje ir išsiųstas įvairių Klaipėdos jaunimo organizacijų el. paštais. Grupinėse diskusijose rinkti kokybiniai duomenys – informantų nuomonės. Surengtos keturios diskusijos, kiekvienoje dalyvavo 12 informantų. Tyrimo imtį sudarė 48 informantai. Diskusijos metu dalyviams pateikti septyni klausimai. Diskusijos įrašytos, įrašai surašyti į protokolus. Informantų atsakymai suskirstyti pagal kategorijas ir subkategorijas. Atliekant tyrimą ir analizuojant duomenis laikytasi bendrųjų tyrimo etikos ir kokybinio tyrimo principų: pagarbos asmens privatumui; konfidencialumo ir anonimiškumo; geranoriškumo ir nusiteikimo nekenkti tiriamam asmeniui; teisingumo (Žydzžiūnaitė, Sabaliauskas, 2017; Gaižauskaitė, Valavičienė, 2016; Kardelis, 2017).

Šiame straipsnyje analizuojami informantų teiginiai 2 / 3 klausimais: informantų nuomonių apie aktyvius piliečius vertinimas (visuomenės palaikymas ar smerkimas); nuomonės apie aktyvaus pilietiškumo keliamas grėsmes; aktyvaus pilietiškumo naudą visuomenei.

Esminiai tyrimo rezultatai. Atliekant tyrimą jaunuoliai teigė, kad aktyvūs piliečiai visuomenės vertinami teigiamai. Labai daug informantų įvardijo dvilypį visuomenės požiūrį į aktyvius piliečius: jie yra palaikomi ir kartu smerkiami. Dalis informantų pastebėjo smerkimą dėl paties aktyvumo, be to, smerkimo sulaukia tam tikros pilietinio aktyvumo formos, kaip politika, mitingavimas ar pan.

Atliktas tyrimas atskleidė, kad jaunuoliai diskutuodami apie pilietiškumo pavojus dažniausia minėjo aktyvaus piliečio sveikatai ir gyvybei kylančias fizines grėsmes, atliekant privalomąją ar savanoriškąją karinę tarnybą, vykdant tam tikras pareigas. Dalis informantų išsakė nuogąstavimus, kad fizinė grėsmė kyla ir dėl aktyvios pozicijos užėmimo susidūrus su neteisinga situacija ar bandant padaryti kažką gero. Dalis manė, kad net ir žodinis nuomonės išreiškimas gali kelti fizinę grėsmę. Keli informantai įvardijo mitingus, kaip vietą / laiką, keliančius daug fizinių grėsmių. Informantai pastebėjo, kad tam tikrose situacijose pilietiškumas tampa nusikalstama veikla, o savo nuomonės gynimas perauga į dezinformacijos sklaidą. Dar dvi įvardytos grėsmės: netolerancija ir skirtingų grupių susipriešinimo skatinimas.

Diskutuojant nustatytos jaunų žmonių pastebimos ir suvokiamos aktyvaus pilietiškumo naudos. Daugiausia informantų pateikė teiginius, kuriuos galima apibendrinti kaip pagalbą sunkumus patiriančioms asmenų

grupėms arba profesijų atstovams. Kita dalis minėjo valstybės pagrindų kūrimą per elementarias kasdienes pilietiškumo išraiškas ar didelių aukų reikalaujančius veiksmus. Kita informantų pastebėta ir įvardyta nauja – palankios aplinkos kūrimas, elementariai sutvarkant aplinką ar vykdant savo pareigas. Dalis informantų įvardytų teiginių atskleidžia, kad aktyvaus pilietiškumo pavyzdžiai kuria bendrumo jausmą ir toleranciją, taip „užkrečiami“ bei skatina jaunimą prisidėti prie įvairių organizacijų veiklos arba bent pagerina asmens psichologinę savijautą.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *jaunimas, aktyvus pilietiškumas, diskusijų grupės, pilietiškumo grėsmės ir nauda.*

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