

CONCEPTUALIZING AND MEASURING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF YOUTH INDEPENDENCE IN ARMENIA

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Abstract. As youth transition from childhood dependence to adult independence, various dimensions such as financial, economic, mental, daily life independence, and civic participation come into play. The methodology involves quantitative interviews, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, expert interviews, document analysis, and an academic literature review. The youth independence index encompasses financial independence, economic independence, mental independence, daily life independence, providing a comprehensive approach to understanding and measuring youth independence. Each sub-index is meticulously justified and evaluated using a variety of indicators. Analyzing data from 625 young people aged 18-35 in Armenia, the study reveals insights into the landscape of youth independence. Civic participation stands out as a key area for improvement, while mental and daily life independence demonstrate the highest levels. The analysis considers factors such as age, gender, education, and location, highlighting significant disparities and correlations. The article concludes with considerations for policy interventions and discussions on the representativeness of the chosen sub-indices. The comprehensive framework proposed in this research contributes valuable insights to the field of youth studies, offering a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of youth independence in Armenia.

Key words: *youth in Armenia, sociology of youth, youth independence, youth studies, measuring youth independence, independence index*

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ԵՊՀ կիրառական սոցիոլոգիայի ամբիոնի հայցորդ, հետազոտող
Կրթական հետազոտությունների և խորհրդատվությունների
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Ամփոփում: Մանկության կախվածությունից մեծահասակների անկախության անցնելու գործընթացում կարևոր դեր է կատարում երիտասարդների ֆինանսական, տնտեսական, մտավոր անկախությունը: Հոդվածում ներկայացված է երիտասարդների անկախության չափման նոր մեթոդաբանություն՝ երիտասարդների անկախության համաթիվը, որը հիմնված է քանակական հարցազրույցներից, ֆոկլուս խմբերի քննարկումներից, խորին հարցազրույցներից, փորձագետների հարցազրույցներից և փաստաթղթերի վերլուծությունից ստացված տվյալների համադրման վրա: Երիտասարդների անկախության համաթիվը ներառում է ֆինանսական անկախությունը, տնտեսական անկախությունը, մտավոր անկախությունը, առօրյա կյանքի անկախությունը՝ ապահովելով երիտասարդության անկախությունը հասկանալու և չափելու համապարփակ մոտեցում: Յուրաքանչյուր ենթահիմնքս մանրակրկիտ հիմնավորված է և գնահատվում է ցուցանիշներով: Վերլուծելով Հայաստանում 18-35 տարեկան 625 երիտասարդների տվյալները՝ ուսումնասիրությունը բացահայտում է ՀՀ երիտասարդների անկախության նկարագիրը: Քաղաքացիական մասնակցությունը ևս դիտարկվում է որպես երիտասարդների անկախության և ինքնության ձևավորման առանցքային ուղորտ, մինչդեռ երիտասարդների մտավոր և առօրյա կյանքի անկախության մակարդակը համեմատաբար ավելի բարձր է: Վերլուծությունը ներկայացնում է անկախության վրա ազդող այնպիսի գործոններ, ինչպիսիք են տարիքը, սեռը, կրթությունը և բնակության վայրը՝ ընդգծելով էական անհավասարությունները և փոխառնչությունները: Երիտասարդների անկախության համաթվի կիրառման հիմնավորման նպատակով հոդվածում ներկայացված են նաև երիտասարդների անկախության և սոցիալական հարմարման փոխառնչությունները՝ ձևակերպելով նրանց տիպաբանությունը ըստ հարմարման պրակտիկաների և անկախության ցուցանիշի: Այս հետազոտության մեջ առաջարկված համապարփակ շրջանակը արժեքավոր ներդրում կարող է լինել երիտասարդության ուսումնասիրության ոլորտում, քանի որ առաջարկվում է Հայաստանի երիտասարդության անկախության դինամիկայի չափման մի նոր մոտեցում, որը կարող է կիրառվել նաև այլ երկրներում:

Բանալի բառեր - *երիտասարդությունը Հայաստանում, երիտասարդության սոցիոլոգիա, երիտասարդական անկախություն, երիտասարդական ուսումնասիրություններ, երիտասարդության անկախության չափում, անկախության համաթիվ, սոցիալական հարմարում*

КОНЦЕПТУАЛИЗАЦИЯ И ИЗМЕРЕНИЕ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИХ И СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ АСПЕКТОВ НЕЗАВИСИМОСТИ МОЛОДЁЖИ В АРМЕНИИ

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Аннотация. По мере перехода молодежи от детской зависимости к взрослой независимости в игру вступают различные аспекты, такие как финансовая, экономическая, психическая. В статье представлена новая методология измерения независимости молодежи — Индекс независимости молодежи, основанная на сочетании данных количественных интервью, дискуссий в фокус-группах, глубинных интервью, экспертных интервью и анализа документов. Индекс независимости молодежи включает финансовую независимость, экономическую независимость, интеллектуальную независимость и независимость в повседневной жизни, обеспечивая комплексный подход к пониманию и измерению независимости молодежи. Каждый субиндекс тщательно обоснован и оценивается с использованием множества показателей. Анализируя данные 625 молодых людей в возрасте от 18 до 35 лет в Армении, исследование раскрывает картину независимости молодежи. Гражданское участие становится ключевой областью для улучшения, в то время как умственная независимость молодежи и независимость в повседневной жизни находится на высоком уровне. В анализе учитываются такие факторы, как возраст, пол, образование и местоположение, подчеркивая значительные различия и корреляции. В заключение статьи приводятся соображения относительно политического вмешательства и обсуждения репрезентативности выбранных субиндексов. Комплексный подход к измерению независимости молодежи, предложенная в этом исследовании, вносит ценную информацию в область молодежных исследований, предлагая тонкое понимание динамики молодежной независимости в Армении, которое также может применяться в других странах.

Ключевые слова: *молодежь в Армении, социология молодежи, молодежная независимость, молодежные исследования, измерение молодежной независимости*

Introduction

Youth is a crucial time of life marked by the emergence of personal aspirations, assumption of their economic independence and seeking for their place in society. Unfortunately, the global jobs crisis has exacerbated the vulnerability of young people in various ways of: i) higher unemployment, ii) lower quality of jobs even for those who fortunate to secure employment, iii) disparities in labour market opportunities among different groups of young people, iv) longer and more insecure school-to-work transitions, and v) increased detachment from the labour market. Defining youth as the life stage and age of transition from childhood to adulthood independence (Furlong, 2013), the easurement of independence becomes pivotal theoretical, methodological and empirical concern. Youth employment should be analysed not as a standalone dimension of the youth independence but as one of the critical factors of the independence.

The primary goal of the article is to elaborate a cohesive measurement framework to enable comprehensive analysis of independence as an integral part of the youth concept. In the pursuit of this goal, this study aims to go beyond traditional measurement approach and employ a comprehensive set of indicators for gauging youth independence based on the insights gained from the rigorous sociological research, conducted among the youth population of Armenia.

The aftermath of the war in Armenia has given rise to significant challenges across various domains, with a particular focus on the socio-economic issues facing young individuals. The societal integration of the youth in the current context, along with their perspectives on political life, represents a crucial area of concern. It is noteworthy that the challenges associated with post-war adaptation play a vital role in societal development. Young people, being a distinct group navigating the transition from childhood dependency to independence, are especially susceptible to environmental changes, particularly during crises (Furlong, 2013). Young people are still not completely independent; crisis situations make them doubly vulnerable. Consequently, investigating the social adaptation of young people in such circumstances holds academic, methodological, and practical significance and necessity.

Hence, the article aims to examine the impact of young people's independence on their practices of social adaptation through the utilization of the suggested model for measuring independence.

Literature review. Throughout the development of youth studies, there have been many efforts to conceptualizing and measuring youth independence based on both theoretical discussions (Alwin, 1988) and empirical research (Manzoni, 2016). All these efforts aimed at defining and measuring the empirical indicators of the youth independence. In the scope of the youth studies, some scholars stress the importance of focusing on the specific domains for analysis of youth independence: notably, the following pivotal markers were suggested as a critical aspects of the independence concepts financial independence (Lee and Mortimer, 2009), leaving the parental home (White, 2002), cognitive independence (Johnson, Berg and Sirotzki, 2007). While some of the scholars seek to integrate all these dimensions in intricate conceptual framework, the others delve deeper by developing holistic set of indicators, that ensure the application of the conceptual domains for gauging youth independence. Additionally, some of practitioners and scholars pinpoint not only objective, but also subjective, socio-psychological aspects of the definition of the youth independence. (Manzoni, 2016). Thus, the academic debate on the conceptualizing and defining main independence indicators is still open.

Scientific novelty. In the context of this study, a ground-breaking contribution of this concept is marked by the development and application of the youth independence index, which has been validated based on its pilot during the rigorous research among Armenian youth. The proposed innovative index integrates both objective and subjective indicators across four dimensions: financial, economic, mental, daily life independence and civic participation. Unlike many prior studies that often focus on specific facets of youth independence, this research adopts a holistic perspective. This multi-dimensional approach offers a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the factors influencing youth independence, reflecting the complex and interconnected nature of the phenomenon. Practical recommendations and societal impact of the proposed approach is provided below:

1. **Policy implications for employment and education sectors.** The study's findings underscore that employment alone does not guarantee full financial and economic independence for Armenian youth. Policymakers in employment and education sectors could benefit from recognizing the need for targeted interventions, such as improving job-market alignment, enhancing vocational education, and fostering skills development to bridge the gap between employment and independence.

2. **Addressing vulnerabilities in youth unemployment.** The study identifies the high vulnerability of the 15-24 age group in the Armenian labour market. Employment policies and programs tailored to this age cohort could address specific challenges, such as providing targeted support for skills development, promoting job-matching initiatives, and facilitating smoother transitions from education to employment.

3. **Promoting civic engagement for comprehensive independence.** Given the lower scores in civic participation, societal sectors involved in youth development and engagement should focus on initiatives that encourage active involvement in community affairs, volunteering, and democratic processes. This could include creating platforms for youth voices, enhancing civic education, and fostering a sense of responsibility towards societal development.

4. **Encouraging long-term planning and social activism.** The positive influence of planning in advance and active participation in societal improvement indicates the importance of incorporating life skills and social awareness in educational curricula. Educational institutions and policymakers can explore ways to integrate programs that foster goal-setting, critical thinking, and social responsibility to enhance youth independence.

Methodology. The independence index serves as a tool to gauge the degree of independence among young individuals in handling economic issues (including financial aspects), navigating social organization (linked to social partnerships and fulfilling social roles), achieving self-fulfillment in the labor market, and sustaining themselves.

The independence of young people is a multi-layered and heterogeneous process, moreover, it can proceed with interruptions and develop non-linearly. Modern socio-economic transformations have "*motivated young people to redefine classic theories about indicators of independence*" (Manzoni, 2016). Therefore, youth researchers and scientists began to discuss not only the traditional directions of gaining independence, where the objective, material side was emphasized, but the non-material, subjective side - their opinion, attitude, personality traits.

Youth independence can be defined as the capacity of young individuals to arrange and manage their own lives, demonstrating self-reliance, cognitive and emotional maturity and the capability to make decisions autonomously,

Grounded on the academic and empirical research, a comprehensive youth independence index (YII) has been elaborated, encompassing the following four essential components:

- ✓ financial independence,
- ✓ economic independence,
- ✓ mental independence,
- ✓ daily life independence.

The proposed four components of the YII ensure holistic approach for understanding and measuring youth independence. Below are the main justifications, which emphasize the importance of each of the sub-indices:

✓ **Financial independence** is a key aspect of youth independence. It reflects the ability of young individuals to sustain themselves financially, make informed economic decisions, and manage their resources effectively. Financial independence empowers youth and foster a sense of overall autonomy in pursuing their goals.

✓ **Economic independence** goes beyond financial stability and includes the

capacity to actively participate in the economic system. This component encompasses such aspects of independence as employment, entrepreneurship, and access to economic opportunities.

✓ **Mental independence** refers to the youth ability to make decisions, form opinions, and overcome challenges autonomously. This component recognizes the importance of mental well-being and socio-psychological resilience. It encompasses critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and the capacity to handle stress, contributing to a more well-rounded and self-sufficient individual.

✓ **Daily life independence** focuses on the practical aspects of everyday life such as self-care, time management, and decision-making in daily tasks. This component ensures that young individuals have skills and confidence to handle day-to-day responsibilities, have a sense of self-sufficiency and preparedness for adult life.

Simultaneously, this study recognizes the critical dimension of **civic participation** among youth, analyzed separately as an essential element of the broader landscape. Civic participation underscores the role of young individuals in societal development, emphasizing their active involvement in community affairs, volunteering, and participation in democratic processes. Although not incorporated into the YII, the analysis acknowledges that civic participation is integral to understanding the holistic nature of youth independence. It emphasizes that authentic independence extends beyond the personal realm, involving the positive contribution of youth to the broader community.

Expanding on the comprehensive approach to youth independence, the thorough examination of particular indices provides a clearer understanding of the detailed aspects of each component. After establishing the foundational comprehension of financial, economic, mental, and daily life independence, the next part looks closely at the detailed measurements utilized for their assessment.

Financial independence. Financial independence was evaluated through a metric scale that measured the ratio of a youth's monthly expenses to their monthly earnings. This particular sub-index falls under the category of analytical indices. The breakdown of expenses incurred by the young individual included:

- ✓ Utility services expenses (D1)
- ✓ Family food expenses (D2)
- ✓ Costs for essential hygiene items for the family (D3)
- ✓ Transportation expenses (D4)
- ✓ Health-related expenses (D5)
- ✓ Expenditure on clothing (D6)
- ✓ Necessary household items expenses (D7)

For a young person living in a family, these expenses were calculated per person per month. The index, denoted as **Ind_f**, was determined using the following formula:

$$\text{Ind}_f = R / [(D_1 + D_2 + D_3 + D_4 + D_5 + D_6 + D_7)/N]$$

Where, R is the monthly income of the young person,

D_i, where $i=1, \dots, 7$, represents the corresponding expenses for a month,

N is the number of family members living together.

The **Ind_f** index was scaled from 0 to 1, with the following interpretations: 0-0.25 indicated low financial independence, 0.26-0.50 denoted low average financial independence, 0.51-0.75 signified high average financial independence, and 0.76-1 represented high financial independence.

Additionally, a subjective assessment of the young person's capability to cover their own expenses served as a control indicator.

Economic independence. The Economic independence was computed based on various factors related to the economic engagement and activities of the young individual. The variables constituting the index are detailed below:

✓ E1: Did the young person engage in paid work in the last 2 weeks? (1. Yes = 1, 2. No = 0),

✓ E2: Nature of the youth's current work (1. Temporary and unregistered = 0.25, 2. Permanent and unregistered = 0.50, 3. Temporary and registered = 0.50, 4. Permanent and registered = 0.75, 5. Other = 0.25),

✓ E3: Work experience of the young person (Up to 2 years = 0.25, 3-5 years = 0.50, 6-9 years = 0.75, 10 or more years = 1),

✓ E4: Duration of youth unemployment (1. less than 6 months = 0.50, 2. 6 months to 1 year = 0.50, 3. 1-3 years = 0.25, 4. more than 3 years = 0.25, 5. never worked = 0).

The economic independence indicator (**Ind_E**) was calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Ind}_E = E_1 + E_2 + E_3 + E_4 / N_e,$$

E_i , where $i = 1, \dots, 4$, represents the variables characterizing the economic independence of a young person, and N_e is the number of variables.

The Ind_E index ranged from 0 to 1, with interpretations such as 0-0.25 indicating low economic independence, 0.26-0.50 denoting low average economic independence, 0.51-0.75 signifying high average economic independence, and 0.76-1 representing high economic independence.

Mental independence. Mental independence was determined through Likert sum assessment methodology. This index was grounded in the significance and application of specific soft skills possessed by the respondents. The composite score comprised the sum of unified grades, with higher scores reflecting greater mental independence. Assessed skills included:

- ✓ Ability to quickly orientate,
- ✓ Flexibility,
- ✓ Correct use of available opportunities,
- ✓ Formulation of problems and goals,
- ✓ Self-criticism and analysis of one's own steps,
- ✓ Perseverance,
- ✓ Ability to work in a team,
- ✓ Initiative,
- ✓ Leadership and management,
- ✓ Volunteering,
- ✓ Application of new technologies.

Additionally, the following variables were considered as well:

✓ It is important for me to plan life for the next few years and move in that direction even in difficult situations,

✓ I took an active part in improving the post-war situation in Armenia,

✓ I try to move on a wide path, which is only mine and differs from the opinion of the majority.

To calculate the mental independence index, answers were recoded, using a matrix that assigned values (from 0.5 to 2.0) based on the perceived importance and possession of skills:

The given skill for the respondent:

- ✓ Completely lacking importance and lacking the skill - 1,
- ✓ Completely lacking importance but endowed with the skill - 0.5,
- ✓ Not very important and lacking the skill - 1.5,
- ✓ Not very important but endowed with the skill - 1,
- ✓ Considered important but lacking the skill - 0.5,
- ✓ Deemed important and endowed with the skill - 2,
- ✓ Regarded as very important but lacking the skill - 0.5,
- ✓ Regarded as very important and endowed with the skill - 2.

Additional variables related with mental independence were similarly recoded:

1. Completely disagree - 0.25,
2. Disagree - 0.50,
3. I agree - 0.75,
4. I completely agree - 1.00.

The final mental independence index was derived by linearly transforming the sum of these variables, with a scale ranging from 0 to 1, where 0 indicated mental (or value) dependence and 1 indicated mental (or value) independence.

Daily life independence. The daily life independence index was computed by summing up four variables associated with self-sufficiency within the household. This measure of daily life independence is derived from evaluating the following statements:

- ✓ I consider myself an independent person.
- ✓ I am capable of managing my daily affairs.
- ✓ I can independently make important decisions.
- ✓ I can financially support myself.

The values assigned to these variables were standardized on a scale ranging from 0 to 1, where 0 signifies the absence of the given characteristic, and 1 indicates a complete alignment of the characteristic with the young person. To serve as a control variable for this indicator, a question regarding the sources of personal income for the young individual was employed. The values of the control variable were recalibrated on a 0-1 scale, where 0 indicates that the primary source of the young person's personal income is not their own earnings, and 1 represents income generated independently.

Recognizing the pivotal role of civic participation, this study delves into the assessment of young individuals' civic involvement by examining various variables. The assessment of **civic participation** was conducted through the examination of variables pertaining to the civic involvement of young individuals. Civic activity and participation is a composite index comprised of 14 distinct variables. The final calibration of the index was achieved through linear transformation within a range of [0; 1], where 0 represents minimal civic involvement, and 1 signifies the highest degree of civic activity. The civic activity indicator was specifically derived from the transformation and aggregation of the following variables:

- ✓ Did you partake in the most recent elections?
- ✓ When voting, were you familiar with the candidate you chose and the reasons behind your selection?
- ✓ Are you affiliated with any political party or political youth movement/organization?
- ✓ Before elections, do you research the platforms of political parties?

- ✓ Do you maintain an interest in political events and issues occurring at both the national and global levels?
- ✓ In the past year, have you engaged in activities such as distributing leaflets, displaying political banners, or otherwise participating in a political campaign in support of a party, leader, or candidate?
- ✓ Have you participated in discussions with politicians, representatives of local or national bodies, or candidates in the last year?
- ✓ How frequently have you been involved in civil movements?
- ✓ How often have you participated in charitable events?
- ✓ How frequently have you taken part in public discussions or meetings in your district/school or workplace?
- ✓ How often have you attended city events?
- ✓ How often have you participated in charity fundraisers?
- ✓ How frequently have you been involved in signature collection?
- ✓ How often have you participated in volunteer activities?

Youth Independence index. The ultimate independence index was computed as the mean of the sum of four sub-indices. The calculation is expressed through the following formula:

$IY = (Ind_f + Ind_e + Ind_m + Ind_l) / 4$, where

Ind_f - represents the sub-index of financial independence,

Ind_e - represents the sub-index of economic independence,

Ind_m - represents the sub-index of mental independence,

Ind_l - represents the sub-index of daily life independence,

The index is measured on a scale from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating that young people have no independence at all, and 1 representing a very high level of independence. To assess the robustness of the YII and ensure the consistency of its measurements, we conducted a **reliability test**¹, a crucial step in establishing the credibility and validity of our composite index.

The **Cronbach's Alpha is 0.83** for the above mentioned 4 sub-indices indicate acceptable reliability. It suggests that there is a moderate to good internal consistency among the sub-indices, meaning that they are measuring related aspects of youth independence consistently.

Data collection. The following data collection sources and methods have been used to measure independence of youth in Armenia:

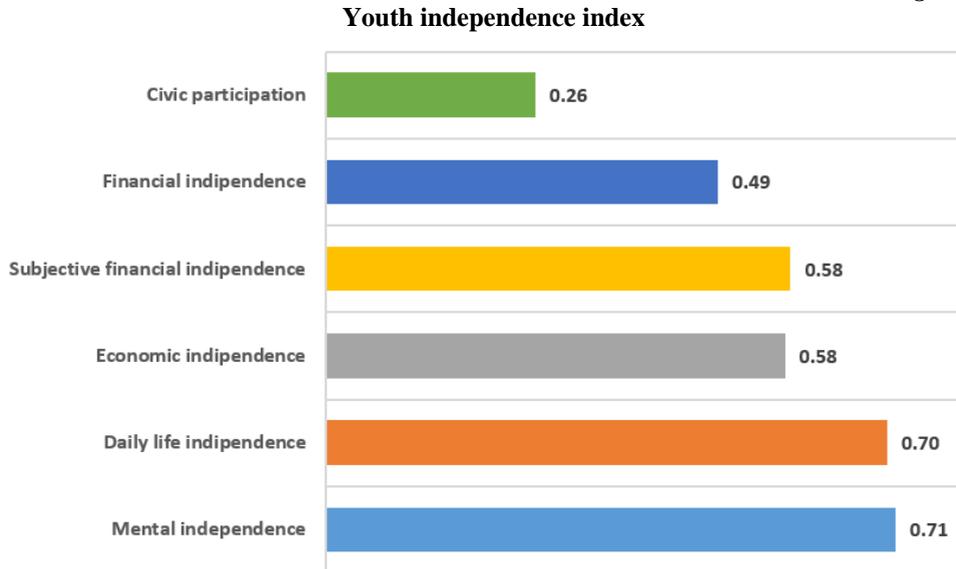
- Quantitative interviews among 625 young people aged 18-35,
- 8 focus group discussions among different social groups of young people
- 12 in-depth interviews with young people,
- 10 expert interviews with national and international experts,
- Document analysis - legal acts, statistical data, sectoral analysis, reports.
- Academic literature review

Analytical Insights. Analysis of the data reveals that among the five components of the composite independence index, civic participation yields the lowest sub-index score

¹ The purpose of conducting reliability tests is to assess the consistency and stability of the measurements within a scale or index. In this case, it ensures that the chosen sub-indices reliably measure the intended constructs related to youth independence.

at 0.26. Conversely, mental and daily life independence exhibit the highest scores at 0.71 and 0.70, respectively. These findings suggest that while young individuals demonstrate notable independence in mental and daily life aspects, there is room for improvement in civic participation.

Figure 1



Financial independence. The sub-index for the financial independence of young individuals stands at **0.49**, showing no significant gender-based variations. Financial independence is, however, influenced by factors such as place of residence, employment status, educational attainment, and age. The highest financial independence index is observed among 23-29-year-old girls in Yerevan and 30-35-year-old boys in rural areas, both scoring 0.56. On the other hand, the lowest indicators of financial independence are identified among 30-35-year-old girls in rural areas and 23-29-year-old boys in rural areas, scoring 0.36 and 0.39, respectively. Employment status also plays a role, with employed youth exhibiting a higher financial independence index (0.51) compared to unemployed youth (0.47). The subjective assessment further adds nuance, with boys aged 23-29 in Yerevan reporting the highest perceived financial independence (0.66), while girls aged 23-29 in cities have a lower subjective assessment (0.54). These results suggest a complex interplay of age, gender, location, and employment status in shaping the financial independence of young individuals, highlighting the need for conducting deeper analysis or targeted interventions and policies to address specific challenges in different demographic groups.

Examining the disparity between **objective and subjective assessments of financial independence**, it's noteworthy that the most significant difference occurs among rural boys aged 23-29. The objective index of 0.39 suggests that these individuals face tangible challenges in terms of income, employment opportunities, or financial resources. This could be influenced by the economic landscape in rural areas, which may limit job prospects and income potential for this demographic. On the other hand, the higher subjective assessment of 0.55 among the same group indicates a more optimistic

perception of their financial situation. Additionally, social and cultural norms could play a role in shaping the subjective assessment, influencing individuals to perceive their financial situation more positively despite the objective challenges. Conversely, for urban girls aged 23-29, the objective and subjective assessments of financial independence almost align, with scores of 0.52 and 0.56, respectively. Essentially, young women in urban areas aged 23-29 tend to provide a more realistic assessment of their financial independence.

The highest level of financial independence is observed among girls aged 23-29 living in Yerevan and boys aged 30-35 from rural areas, with both groups achieving a financial independence index of 0.56. Higher financial independence for girls aged 23-29 in Yerevan, could be explained with the better access to educational and employment opportunities, a more diverse job market, and a higher concentration of industries, leading to increased income-generating possibilities. The lowest measure of financial independence is identified in the demographic of rural girls aged 30-35 and rural boys aged 23-29, with respective indices of 0.36 and 0.39. Rural areas often face challenges such as a lack of diverse job markets, lower-paying employment options, and limited access to educational and professional development resources.

Economic independence. The economic sub-indicator stands at **0.57**, with a distinct influence based on the place of residence: for young people in the capital, it is 0.66, for those in rural areas, it is 0.51, and for those in urban areas, it is 0.53. Gender-wise, there is a slight difference in the indicator, with a score of 0.56 for girls and 0.59 for boys. The higher economic independence in capital is higher than in rural areas, this could be attributed to increased access to diverse job opportunities, educational resources, and a generally more robust urban economy.

Economic independence also differs based on marital status, with a score of 0.62 for married young people and 0.54 for unmarried ones. Married individuals experience increased economic stability for several reasons:

- Marriage often involves combining financial resources, leading to a potentially higher household income. marriage may also influence career decisions and financial planning. The commitment and responsibilities associated with marriage can motivate individuals to pursue stable and higher-paying employment opportunities.
- Married individuals may also be more inclined to invest in long-term financial goals, such as homeownership and savings, contributing to an overall higher economic independence score.
- In contrast, unmarried individuals might face different economic challenges. They may be solely responsible for their financial well-being, potentially managing individual expenses without the shared resources that marriage provides. Career choices and financial decisions may also differ for unmarried individuals, affecting their economic independence.

Young people with a higher level of education show higher economic independence: those with primary and secondary professional education have an indicator of 0.56, while those with a bachelor's degree score 0.64, and those with a master's degree reach 0.78. In contrast, those who graduated from high school demonstrate lower economic independence, with a score of 0.47. This pattern suggests that higher education equips individuals with the skills, knowledge, and qualifications necessary for accessing better employment opportunities and higher-paying jobs, ultimately contributing to increased economic independence.

The highest levels of economic independence are observed among individuals aged 30-35, both among girls and boys residing in Yerevan, with indices of 0.73 and 0.8, respectively. The lowest economic independence is found among rural girls and boys aged 18-22, with indices of 0.38 and 0.36, respectively.

Mental independence. Mental independence stands out as the leading sub-indicator at 0.71, surpassing other sub-indicators. Notably, this sub-indicator exhibits a remarkably uniform distribution, remaining consistent across gender, age, place of residence, and other variables among all young individuals. Urban boys aged 23-29 demonstrate the highest level of mental independence at 0.75, while rural girls aged 23-29 exhibit the lowest at 0.66. These variations may be influenced by a range of factors, including cultural norms, access to educational opportunities, and socio-economic conditions in urban and rural settings. For instance, urban environments may offer more diverse experiences and exposure to different perspectives, contributing to higher levels of mental independence. In contrast, rural settings may present unique challenges that could influence the perception of mental independence among young individuals, especially for girls.

Daily life independence. Among young people, the daily life independence sub-indicator attains a high score of 0.70, surpassing other sub-indicators. However, it's evident that this particular sub-indicator is significantly influenced by several variables, including gender, employment status, education level, and place of residence.

The index for daily life independence is 0.62 for girls and 0.76 for boys. Among employed youth, the index is notably high at 0.95, whereas among unemployed youth, it is 0.52. These results are attributed to the stability and structure that employment often brings to one's routine. Employed individuals tend to have a regular income, which allows for better planning and management of daily life activities. Additionally, employment may provide a sense of purpose, routine, and accomplishment, contributing to a higher level of daily life independence.

The indicator varies based on the level of education: it stands at 0.72 for those with secondary education, 0.66 for individuals with primary and secondary professional education, 0.77 for those with bachelor's education, and 0.83 for those with master's education. Individuals with higher levels of education tend to have acquired a broader set of skills, critical thinking abilities, and problem-solving capacities, which can enhance their ability to navigate daily life independently. Additionally, higher education often opens doors to better employment opportunities, which can contribute to financial stability and a greater sense of control over one's daily life.

The level of daily life independence varies according to the place of residence, as youth in other urban (0.66) and rural areas (0.68) exhibit lower scores in comparison to their counterparts in Yerevan.

The highest score for daily life independence is attributed to rural boys aged 23-29, achieving a remarkable 0.91, while the lowest score is recorded among rural girls aged 18-22, with a notably lower score of 0.42.

Civic activism and participation. Notably, the civic activity and participation sub-indicator stands out as the lowest among all sub-indicators, measuring at 0.26. This sub-indicator is influenced by various factors, including gender, age, education, and place of residence.

Among girls, the indicator records 0.28, while for boys, it is slightly lower at 0.25. The indicator also shows variation based on age: for youth aged 18-22, it is 0.23, for

those aged 23-29, it increases to 0.27, and for those aged 30-35, it rises further to 0.29.

In terms of education, the indicator displays differences: it is 0.30 for youth with secondary education, 0.24 for those with primary and secondary professional education, 0.31 for those with bachelor's education, and 0.36 for those with master's education.

Examining civic activity based on residence, city-dwelling youth score 0.25, rural-dwelling youth score 0.23, while Yerevan-dwelling youth have a higher score of 0.29.

The highest level of civic activity is evident in 23-29-year-old girls from Yerevan, with a score of 0.34, whereas the lowest level is found among 18-22-year-old rural boys, recording a score of 0.17. The lower civic activity among rural boys aged 18-22 might stem from a combination of limited opportunities, educational resources, and perhaps a traditional outlook that may not emphasize civic engagement. Challenges such as limited access to community organizations or fewer extracurricular activities in rural areas might contribute to lower levels of civic participation among young men in this demographic.

This nuanced understanding of the youth independence sets the stage for recognizing the critical interplay between the study and the broader context of youth social adaptation in Armenia. The study provides a comprehensive perspective on the challenges and opportunities young individuals face in Armenia.

In contemporary post-war Armenia, young individuals are confronted with various challenges and issues related to social adaptation, including:

- Crisis of trust: a diminished confidence in the future, detachment from the community, government, and state institutions, and a low level of participation,
- Educational needs: concerns about the quality of education, inclusivity, limited involvement in non-formal education programs, and lack of community education services,
- Health related needs: mental health challenges, a deficiency in a culture of healthy lifestyles, and the prevalence of harmful habits,
- Lack of opportunities to organize time and space for self-establishment, identity formation,
- Limited opportunities for full engagement in the labor market.

To address the aforementioned challenges, Armenian youth commonly employ the following social adaptation practices:

- Escape: young people have either altered or desire to change their primary place of residence, workplace, or profession.
- Digital retreat: following the war, young people have limited their interactions with people, particularly on social media.
- Ritualism: they do not accept the current situation in Armenia but are unwilling to alter their goals and methods of achieving them, employing micro-strategies.
- External locus of control: feeling powerless to change anything in post-war Armenia, they await external changes to resolve the situation.
- Scaling back: young people have reduced their aspirations and goals after the war, no longer striving to achieve them, and are observant of unfolding events.

Factors shaping the social adaptation practices of youth encompass:

- Independence,
- Engagement and personal initiative: taking the lead and setting goals,
- Acknowledgment of the present circumstances,

- Aspiration to alter the current situation - recognizing their influence,
- Foreseeing the future.

Drawing on the research findings, a cluster analysis was conducted to explore further into the factors impacting the social adaptation practices of young individuals. Based on the study results, the following groups of young people were identified:

- Innovative leaders,
- Sustainability supporters,
- Conformists / Ritualists,
- Discouraged persons,
- Self-sustaining persons.

These groups of young people are characterized by different indicators of independence. The groups employing the most proactive adaptation strategies - innovative leaders, sustainability advocates, and self-affirmatives - demonstrate elevated levels of intellectual, economic, and financial independence. Conversely, those who conform or express feelings of despair lack prominently high indicators of independence.

Conclusions. As a result of the research, the following conclusions were made:

Measuring the independence of young people with five indicators: financial, economic, intellectual, daily life independence, civic participation and activism shows that the Armenian youth is polarized. A part of the youth is only economically, financially, intellectually independent, and a small part is actively involved in institutional and non-institutional participation platforms.

A variety of factors significantly influence the landscape of youth independence. The interplay between independence and involvement in the labor market is particularly noteworthy, revealing substantial differences in the average independence index between employed and unemployed young individuals. Those actively engaged in the labor market consistently demonstrate greater independence, underscoring the pivotal role of employment status in driving independence.

Age and residence are important for independence. Education also plays a pivotal role, with higher levels of education consistently linked to enhanced independence.

On average, males showcase higher independence levels, and age emerges as a significant factor, revealing a positive correlation between age and independence. Along with age, the YII increases. Boys and girls aged 30-35 are independent financially, economically, as well as in daily life and intellectually. Boys and girls aged 18-22 have a lower rate of independence, rural girls and boys of this age are especially vulnerable.

According to the results of data analysis young people can serve as resources for post-war recovery, rather than being seen as a vulnerable group or a target beneficiary group.

Although the methodology employed to construct the YII is thorough and well-justified, a significant methodological limitation emerges due to the possible exclusivity in choosing the five sub-indices. Relying solely on these specific components might not encompass the complete array of factors that contribute to youth independence, thereby posing constraints on the index's overall representativeness. The potential omission of certain indicators could become a focal point of discussion within the field of youth sociology in Armenia, prompting consideration and debate about which additional indicators should be included to offer a more comprehensive assessment of youth independence.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.