

Public Opinion of Citizens of Modern Russia on Police Activities: Theoretical-Legal and Sociological Aspects

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Abstract:

This article examines a number of general theoretical issues concerning the concept of legal consciousness, its reflection, and its functions. Particular attention is focused on the evaluative function of legal consciousness, which helps assess the activities of law enforcement agencies in general and the police in particular. The theoretical position on the existence of a correlation between a particular attitude toward the police and the level of legal activity of citizens is substantiated by the results of sociological research.

Keywords: *legal consciousness, the subject of its reflection, the evaluative function of legal consciousness, evaluation of police activities, legal activity, results of sociological research.*

I. Introduction

Legal consciousness directly relates to various phenomena and processes of state and legal reality: lawmaking, law enforcement, and law interpretation. Legal consciousness acts as a prerequisite for one or another variant of individuals' legal behaviour (lawful or unlawful). Legal consciousness evaluates the activities of various law enforcement agencies, first of all, the police.

II. Review of Literature

When preparing a scientific article, the following methods were used:

- 2.1. General philosophical** (dialectical-materialistic), which is used in all social sciences;
- General scientific (analysis and synthesis, logical and historical, comparisons, abstractions, etc.), which are used not only by the theory of state and law but also by other social sciences;
 - Special methods (philological, cybernetic, psychological, etc.) developed by special sciences and widely used for the knowledge of state and legal phenomena;
 - Private scientific (formal legal, interpretation of law, etc.) developed by the theory of state and law.

III. Result and Discussion

3.1 The concept of legal consciousness

In scientific literature - legal and philosophical-legal - various definitions of the phenomenon of legal consciousness are given. Thus, Eduard Veniaminovich Kuznetsov understands it as an ideal phenomenon, not directly observable. According to scientists, legal

consciousness is a sphere or area of consciousness reflecting legal reality in the form of legal knowledge and evaluative attitudes towards the law and the practice of its implementation, social and legal attitudes and value guidelines regulating people's behaviour in legal significant situations [1, p. 5]. From the point of view of Sergei Aleksandrovich Komarov and Aleksandr Vasilyevich Malko, legal consciousness is an understanding of the law, a set of ideas and feelings expressing people's attitudes to both the current and the desired law. It has a common nature with the law and, by virtue of this, is secondary to existing economic relations; it is formed under the direct, objectively conditioned needs and interests of society of various social groups; it develops dynamically under the influence of changing objective conditions and processes; is part of public consciousness and therefore experiences the influence of philosophical, ideological and political views [2, p. 292]. The economic condition of the population is a condition that describes human life that has economic score (Shah et al, 2020). Economic growth is still an important goal in a country's economy, especially for developing countries like Indonesia (Magdalena and Suhatman, 2020). Valery Vasilyevich Lazarev and Sergei Vasilyevich Lipen argue that legal consciousness, being part of the legal system of society, is closely connected with its other parts: lawmaking, implementation of law, including and especially law enforcement [3, pp. 394-395].

Nikolai Andreevich Pyanov believed that legal consciousness can be defined as “a set of ideas, views, representations, feelings and emotions expressing the subjective attitude of people to law and other legal phenomena of reality” [4, p. 511]. Emphasizing that “legal consciousness reflects only those phenomena that constitute the legal side of the life of society” [5, p. 482], scholars propose an interpretation of legal consciousness according to which it “represents a system of objectified knowledge about the history of the formation and development of law as a social phenomenon, its current state, as well as a set of objectified legal assessments and specific proposals on the ways and means of improving and developing the current law” [6, p. 135].

The famous scientist Elena Andreevna Lukasheva, focusing on the legal aspect of the subject of reflection of legal consciousness, writes that “legal consciousness is characterized, first of all, by the awareness of the need to establish a certain order in society through the appropriate regulation of social relations”, “legal consciousness is always associated with the assessment of certain options for behavior” [7, p. 90, 92]. Based on these and other arguments, the author proposes the following concept of legal consciousness: “legal consciousness is a form of social consciousness, acting as a system of views, beliefs, assessments, ideas, moods, feelings of a given class or society, determined by the material conditions of their life, aimed at establishing a legal regime in society that meets the interests and goals of this class or society” [7, p. 97].

3.2 The subject of reflection of legal consciousness.

In general, agreeing with these theoretical provisions, it should, in our opinion, be especially emphasized that, given the close connection between the state and law and their interaction in a variety of forms, the subject of reflection of legal consciousness should be defined through the category of "state-legal reality (reality, life)". Indeed, legal consciousness is able to evaluate, for example, the campaign for elections to representative bodies of the state and local government bodies, appointments to certain positions in the relevant bodies, the effectiveness of lawmaking, law enforcement and law enforcement agencies, etc. Although the

term "legal consciousness" has been established in legal science for quite a long time, it seems one-sided since legal phenomena include both legal and state phenomena, which is often and, as a rule, not taken into account by most scholars-theorists of law [8, p. 7].

It should be noted that other scholars share our position in one form or another. Thus, Vyacheslav Nikolaevich Zhukov asserts that "legal consciousness is a set of rational ideas and feelings expressing people's attitudes toward political and legal reality, as well as the mode of existence of political and legal reality" [9, p. 471]. Venir Kalimullovich Samigullin characterizes legal consciousness as follows: "legal consciousness is, on the one hand, feelings, emotions, experiences related to the sphere of understanding freedom, justice and injustice of rights and obligations, responsibility of people in society and the state, and on the other hand, views, ideas, knowledge, convictions, assessments, which objectify people's attitudes toward law (law), legal institutions and legal relations" [10, p. 33]. Elizaveta Aleksandrovna Frolova, understanding legal consciousness as a set of views, convictions, emotions, moods, and assessments in the sphere of law and the state, believes that the current state of legal consciousness at the level of our population essentially does not approve of the activities of persons involved in the state apparatus, and is sceptical of several legislative innovations [11, p. 393].

3.3 Functions of legal consciousness: concept and classification.

Among the various problems of legal consciousness (its concept, structure, types, etc.), which penetrate the fabric of legal reality and its phenomena and processes (lawmaking, law enforcement, interpretation of law, legal behaviour, etc.), in the context of the title of this article, a special place is occupied by the functions of legal consciousness—the main directions of its interaction with legal reality.

In the epistemological sense, the function of consciousness is understood as "such properties that make consciousness an instrument, an instrument of cognition, communication, practical action" [12, p. 60]. As a species phenomenon, legal consciousness carries out functions familiar to any form of consciousness, i.e. the functions of consciousness in general [13, p. 50]. In this regard, Valery Petrovich Malakhov emphasized that "the system of functions that are realized by legal consciousness is similar to the functions of any other form of social consciousness" [14, pp. 80-81].

In legal literature, scholars - theorists offer a variety of classifications. Thus, a number of authors believe that the main functions of legal consciousness are cognitive, evaluative and regulatory. At the same time, they also distinguish the functions of modelling, forecasting, education, etc. [15, pp. 296-297]. Only three functions of legal consciousness - cognitive (gnoseological), evaluative and regulatory - are analyzed by Vladimir Ivanovich Chervonyuk [16, pp. 46-461].

3.4 Evaluative function of legal consciousness

In the context of the title of the scientific article, special attention should be paid to the evaluative function of legal consciousness, the content of which is understood differently by scientists. Thus, Venir Kalimullovich Samigullin, characterizing the cognitive, regulatory and

praxeological functions of legal consciousness, is convinced that they operate in close interaction and always contain an evaluative moment, which is due to the fact that, firstly, legal consciousness gives an assessment of objective reality, current or proposed legal norms by particular views and ideas; secondly, offering the legislator and other lawmaking bodies specific models, regimes of legal regulation, legal consciousness foresees the consequences that the adoption of these models as current may lead to [10, p.37]. Anastasia Nikolaevna Golovistikova, highlighting the cognitive-evaluative function of legal consciousness, believes that this function also includes the assessment of all legal institutions, individual current norms from the point of view of their effectiveness, relevance, connection with public life, the interests of the individual, ensuring his material and spiritual needs, the degree of reflection in them of universal moral values - justice, humanism, freedom. From the author's position, "The cognitive function is also an assessment of one's behaviour, people's actions from the point of view of their legality or illegality, the quality of the activities of lawmaking, law enforcement agencies, an assessment of all other social institutions (state, parties, culture, church, etc.) from the point of view of their relationship with the law" [17, pp. 660-661]. Ekaterina Konstantinovna Borisova believes that the evaluative function of legal consciousness causes a confident attitude to various phenomena of legal life. With its help, the attitude to law and legislation, law enforcement agencies, and others' legal behaviour is assessed. 54]. Lyudmila Aleksandrovna Morozova, characterizing the evaluative function, which consists of assessing legally significant events, facts, circumstances, and documents based on their comparison with the values accepted in society or the ideas of individuals about these values, especially emphasizes that the practical implementation of the first allows for the development of a legal attitude of the individual, i.e. a predisposition to act by the assessment of the information received. The legal attitude, in turn, determines the legal orientation of the individual, which represents an internal program of action in a legally significant situation [19, pp. 401-402]. The authors, having in mind the evaluative function of legal consciousness, believing that it "brings to life a certain emotional attitude to various aspects and phenomena of legal life based on experience and legal practice" [20, p. 436], "characterizes the reaction of consciousness to the law and is expressed in the form of an emotional attitude: approval of the law, solidarity with its demands or rejection of the law (legal nihilism)" [16, p. 460], distinguish four types of evaluative attitudes: 1) to the law (its principles, norms, institutions); 2) to the legal behaviour of others; 3) to the activities of law enforcement agencies; 4) to one's behaviour in the legal sphere (self-assessment). Rustam Rafikovich Muslimov, clarifying, believes that "the assessment is carried out, first of all, with the help of the principles and norms of law and the system of axiological categories: good, kindness, benefit, advantage, harm, evil, etc. The assessment depends on the position, interests, goals of the assessing subject, the depth and completeness of the legal knowledge he possesses ... "[21, p. 93]. Depending on whether the requirements and possibilities contained in the law correspond to or contradict the position, interests and goals of the evaluating subject, he positively or negatively perceives the law as such, its corresponding aspects, parts, and forms" [22, p. 125].

Vladimir Nikolaevich Kartashov rightly noted that "the basis for assessments are the most diverse phenomena and processes that can reveal the degree of necessity and usefulness of legal phenomena. Since their value is primarily associated with the satisfaction of certain interests and needs of subjects of social relations, the degree of this satisfaction serves as one of the most

important criteria. Moreover, naturally, we are talking about satisfying the objectively necessary and reasonable needs of citizens and organizations" [23, p. 54].

3.5 Citizens' attitudes towards law enforcement agencies.

It is easy to see that among the assessments of legal consciousness, the authors invariably name the attitude towards law enforcement agencies. In this case, first of all, we are talking about the activities of the police as an agency whose employees are more numerous and most often come into contact with the population. Roman Vladimirovich Cherkasov emphasizes that many years of experience in conducting sociological research by the group of the Federal State Budgetary Institution "All-Russian Research Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia" in Western Siberia shows that the personal experience of citizens remains the determining factor in forming an opinion about the activities of internal affairs agencies and has a more differentiated influence on the formation of public opinion than interpersonal communication and the media. A survey conducted by this group in December 2011 among 300 Omsk residents, whose results have remained relevant today, showed that, on average, 30% of the population base their ideas about the police on personal experience. Meanwhile, direct contact with employees of the internal affairs bodies is most capable of influencing the revision of established stereotypes in the assessment of police work towards a more competent, unbiased and reliable judgment about police work [24, p.56].

So, what is the population's attitude towards police work today? In 2023, the All-Russian Research Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia conducted a public opinion study on indicators for assessing the activities of the Russian Federation's police. During the survey of the population in 85 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, the sample size was 47,115 people, corresponding to the main socio-demographic characteristics of the country's adult urban and rural population in the context of its constituent entities.

The results of sociological surveys in 2019 - 2023 indicate a continuation of the trend of increasing indicators for assessing police work by citizens of the Russian Federation in 2023.

Dynamics of indicators for assessing the performance of the Russian police (share of positive responses, in %)

The indicator for assessing citizens' protection from criminal attacks in 2023 compared to 2022 increased from 58.5% to 59.0%; the level of protection of citizens from criminal attacks on transport facilities increased from 56.7% to 57.9%.

For the period from 2019 to 2023, the growth of these indicators was 13.3 and 12.7 points, respectively.

Assessment of the activities of the police of the Russian Federation

Question name 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023.

Generally speaking, do you feel protected from criminal attacks on your life, health, property, etc.? 45.7%

(+3.5) 51.1%

(+5.4) 52.1%

(+1) 58.5%

(+6.4) 59.0%

(+0.5)

Do you feel protected from criminal attacks on your life, health, property, etc., at railway, water and air transport facilities? 45.2%

(+3.3) 51.6%

(+6.4) 52.3%

(+0.7) 56.7%

(+4.4) 57.9%

(+1.2)

Generally, do you trust internal affairs agencies to protect your personal and property interests? 41.9%

(+2.5) 44.9%

(+3) 45.4%

(+0.5) 51.7%

(+5.7) 53.3%

(+1.6)

How effective do you think the activities of the internal affairs agencies are in protecting your personal and property interests? 40.0%

(+1.8) 43.8%

(+3.8) 44.4%

(+0.6) 49.2%

(+4.8) 51.3%

(+2.1)

Have you personally been subjected to criminal attacks in the last 12 months? 8.5%

(+0.3) 8.8%

(+0.3) 8.8%

8.0%

(-0.8) 9.2%

(+1.2)

The indicator of the effectiveness of the internal affairs bodies of the Russian Federation (from 49.2% to 51.3%) and trust in police officers (from 51.7% to 53.3%) shows a trend of improving the population's assessments of the police's work in 2023 compared to 2022 [25].

According to the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center (from now on referred to as VTsIOM.-VK), over the past decade, the level of trust in the police has almost doubled - from 35% in 2012 to the current 66%. Nevertheless, exactly a quarter of respondents will not rely on the police. In 2023, 66% of respondents trust their region's police officers - the highest figure ever. At the same time, every fifth person speaks of this with complete confidence (19%). From

2012 to 2018, the level of trust in former police officers increased by 1.6 times - from 35% to 57%. In 2022, this figure was at 62%[26].

3.6 Law-active behaviour of citizens in the law enforcement sphere

Scientists are increasingly aware of the fact that the attitude of the population to law enforcement agencies and the degree of trust in them can have a significant impact on the crime situation. In particular, they have identified the following pattern: the higher the assessment of the activities of the internal affairs agencies, the higher the degree of trust in them, the more willing citizens are to seek help from them, strive to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, provide all possible assistance in solving and investigating crimes, maintaining law and order at their place of residence [27, p. 8]. In this case, we are talking about the law-active behaviour of citizens as a type of lawful behaviour which involves positive, purposeful, conscious, often creative and intensive activity of the individual, exceeding the usual requirements for possible and proper behaviour, both provided for and not provided for by legal norms, but not prohibited by them, aimed at strengthening democracy, legality and law and order [28, p. 22]. In this case, we are talking about the law-active behaviour of citizens, which is considered a particular legal aspect in which attention is focused on the law-active behaviour of witnesses, victims, and other participants in criminal proceedings.

The theoretical position on the existence of correlations between one or another attitude toward police activity and the law-active behaviour of citizens in the law enforcement sphere is confirmed by empirical data.

According to VTsIOM data for 2019 (a survey of 1,600 Russian citizens; the survey method was a telephone interview), almost 90% of Russian residents are ready to come to the aid of the police and provide assistance to them. Over seven years, the number of citizens willing to become witnesses and provide details of an emergency if they became eyewitnesses has increased (from 45% in 2012 to 72% in 2019). 68% expressed their willingness to provide information about someone interested in the police, 55% expressed their willingness to take part in the detention of an offender, and 47% of respondents expressed their willingness to help maintain law and order [29].

In fairness, it should be noted that there are different views on the problem of interaction between the population and the police in Russia: Russians do not trust the police, and the willingness of citizens to cooperate with law enforcement officers continues to decline. The sociologists of the Levada Center, working on behalf of the foundation for combating police brutality, Public Verdict, came to such disappointing conclusions for the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The study was conducted on the eve of the second anniversary of the reform of the department and the entry into force of the federal law On the Police. As of March 1, 2013, the "police trust index" is seven points out of a possible hundred, emphasizes the Levada Centre sociologists, who surveyed 1.6 thousand respondents in different regions of the country. The data of independent researchers completely diverged from the surveys of the Public Opinion Foundation (the FOM sample was 120 thousand people), conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Internal Affairs itself. For example, according to FOM, citizens, on the contrary, began to trust

the police more (54%), and 63% had a positive attitude towards them. The same conclusions, emphasized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, were reached by sociologists of the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center, who conducted the study at their own expense. The experts interviewed by Izvestia also had different opinions: some consider the independent study to be biased since not all of the participants in the sample had personal experience of communicating with police officers. In contrast, others consider it quite realistic and logical and more similar to the truth than the reports commissioned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs [30]. The position of the former is more justified, given the importance of citizens' personal experience with law enforcement agencies in shaping public opinion about their activities.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion then, this article's content concerns the issues of legal consciousness, its functions, especially the evaluative one, public opinion on the activities of the police, and the legal activity of citizens in the law enforcement sphere, some of which are supported by the results of sociological research, one should agree with the opinion of Roman Vladimirovich Cherkasov, who believes that "it is necessary to constantly inform the population about the results of sociological research conducted on the relationship between society and the police so that the population knows that their opinion is not only paid attention to but is actively used. As a result, the self-esteem of the population rises, its legal activity increases, support and assistance to the police in various forms of interaction" [21, p. 57].

1. Considering the close connection between the state and law and their interaction in various forms, the subject of reflection of legal consciousness is state-legal reality, including the activities of law enforcement agencies in general and the police in particular.
2. Among the various functions of legal consciousness (cognitive, educational, regulatory, etc.), a special place is occupied by the evaluative function, which involves four types of assessments: a) to the law (its principles, norms, institutions); b) to the legal behaviour of others; c) to the activities of law enforcement agencies; d) to one's behaviour in the legal sphere (self-assessment).
3. Citizens' public opinion about law enforcement agencies is formed first of all by assessing the police's activities as a body whose employees are more numerous in comparison with other law enforcement officers and who most often come into contact with the population.
4. Sociological studies confirm the theoretical position that there is a correlation between citizens' attitudes toward police activities and their legally active behaviour in the sphere of law enforcement.

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