Employers' Compensation Packages for Youth - A Tool for Achieving Sustainable Development of Russia's Regions

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Abstract: The article deals with subjective assessments of young people of employers' compensation instruments in the context of employment practices. The authors substantiate the position that employers' compensation packages are potential tools not only in solving personnel problems of specific companies, but also in the implementation of sustainable development model in the region. The cumulative effect of employers' compensation aimed at solving social issues and human potential development contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. The empirical basis of the work was formed by the results of the conducted survey of young people from 15 to 25 years old in five subjects of the Siberian Federal District. The survey confirmed the hypothesis that employers' compensatory offers related to the development of human capital, as a system of benefits and support measures, are most highly valued by young people in employment. It was revealed that modern youth in their postgraduate strategies are rather focused on personal achievements, career, which correlates with the choice of the most priority support measures offered by employers. The study shows that for the implementation of measures aimed at achieving sustainable development in the region, the priority is not only solutions that contribute to the growth of wages in postgraduate employment of young people, but also focused on strengthening the social infrastructure of the region and the development of human capital.

1 INTRODUCTION

Achieving sustainable regional development in modern Russia is a priority and complex task, i.e. its solution requires the accumulation of resources and both the participation of federal and regional authorities and active work on the part of the real sector of the economy, represented, among others, by private business. One of the serious barriers to sustainable development of the country's regions is the migration problem. Intra-national flows of movement of the most active part of society - able-bodied youth - pose a direct threat to the economic development of the subjects where migration outflow has become a stable trend and has been persisting for many years.

Such regions include mainly the subjects of the Eastern part of Russia. Thus, in 2023, migration growth due to population movements with other regions of Russia in the Far Eastern Federal District amounted to (-13,699 people), in the Siberian Federal District (-20,116 people) (hereinafter SFD). For comparison, migration growth in the Central Federal District amounted to 76,869 people in 2023, and the macro-region itself, together with the Northwestern and Southern Federal Districts, are the main points of attraction for the able-bodied part of the population, including young people. Within the federal districts with a negative migration growth rate, not all regions experience problems with population outflow. For

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example, in Krasnoyarsk Krai (SFD), the increase over the period under review is 4,754 people, while in Novosibirsk region the difference between the outgoing and incoming population is also positive (1,286 people). The highest population outflow rates in the SFD for 2023 are recorded in the Irkutsk region (- 6,296 people), Omsk region (- 5,377 people), Kemerovo region (- 5,526 people). In 2022, the negative difference in migration growth in these regions was also high (according to the order in the previous sentence): (-7,499 people), (-7,388 people), (-7,167 people) (Rosstat, 2023). The task of preserving the able-bodied population within the borders of the region and providing them with decent employment is a direct way to realize the goal of sustainable development of territories.

The documents defining the strategic goals of the state in matters of sustainable socio-economic development of the country's regions recognize that intra-Russian migration and its consequence in the form of uneven distribution of labor resources is a challenge to achieving sustainable development indicators for the entire state. Special emphasis in strategic documents is placed on those macro-regions that have long faced the burden of a negative difference between the incoming and outgoing population. Documents such as the «Strategy of Spatial Development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025» and the «Fundamentals of the State Policy of Regional Development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025» directly indicate that the improvement of mechanisms for regulating internal migration is a priority task in achieving the goals of the state policy of regional development.

Improvement of migration regulation mechanisms should be achieved through comprehensive tools, including the creation of favorable conditions for attracting young, qualified specialists to local enterprises. Retaining young people with professional and higher education in the region through attractive employment is a task that is on the agenda of modern Russia. To solve it, specialized structures are being created in university complexes, i.e. organizations that, along with the educational process under the programs of higher and secondary vocational education, implement programs of additional training and retraining, which are designed to provide effective postgraduate support for graduates, including their primary employment and assistance in building a career.

The experience of interaction between employers and universities (Pavlova and Sakovich, 2024), allows us to consider as one of the tools in this matter the compensation packages that enterprises and companies use as part of their HR policies. This tool is not new, rather it is more correct to define it as a practice of socio-economic support of employees tested in time and in different economic conditions. The analysis of domestic practices of forming compensation packages, which is described in more detail in the methodology section, allows some of them to be considered as socio-economic support measures that not only contribute to the development of human resources of a particular enterprise, but also ensure the achievement of sustainable development of the region. Such compensation packages, for example, include support measures aimed at obtaining favorable mortgages or paying for employees' children to attend pre-school institutions.

At the same time, taking into account the peculiarities of modern youth, their life orientations, specifics of economic choices and social behavior, it seems relevant to address the assessments of this generational community of compensation support measures offered on the modern labor market in Russia. The research experience presented in this paper is aimed, first, at identifying the most and least valuable compensation packages for young people who complete their studies and enter the labor market; second, at determining the importance of compensation packages in the established hierarchy of youth assessments, which have a cumulative effect, contributing to the achievement of sustainable regional development goals.

1.1 Literature review

In modern Russian and foreign practice of studying sustainable development of regions and their individual territories, this issue is approached in a comprehensive manner, including linking its achievement with the task of developing mechanisms for the productive use of human capital [Golovanov, 2015; Khairullov and Ovchinnikova, 2015; Shchukina, 2015; Struzhko, 2022; Sumina, 2024; Soretz et al., 2023]. Uskova T.V. emphasizes the low results of human capital functioning in Russian regions, which are expressed in the weak innovation activity of enterprises and a relatively small number of new intellectual property objects (Uskova and Babich, 2021). O.A. Chernova writes about the contradictory impact of positive migration growth on the sustainable development of territories (Chernova, 2023). The additional inflow of labor force due to the interregional movement of able-bodied population permanently stimulates the regional authorities and businesses to adapt the labor market to the growing supply in it, which is not always possible and

generates problems in the social and labor sphere. Korshunov I.V. writes about the importance of balanced decisions in the region on the way to achieving sustainable development, the inadmissibility of bias towards economic results and indicators, with simultaneously secondary attention to the social sphere (Korshunov, 2023) Strengthening the links between educational organizations and the real sector of the economy, including through training programs for current employees of enterprises and seamless learning practices, as one of the mechanisms for achieving sustainable development of the region is revealed in the publication by Dovletmurzaev M.A. (Dovletmurza, 2023). Maslennikova E.A. (Maslennikova et al., 2024) writes about overcoming the problems with labor resources for the transition to the path of sustainable development of regions through solutions in the sphere of higher and secondary vocational education.

Productive practice of achieving sustainable development of the country through local, i.e. regional and corporate work on integration of sustainable development model into socio-economic programs is shown in the works of K. Su, S. Toniolo (Su et al., 2024; Toniolo, et al., 2023).

The study of compensation packages, including benefits and support measures of employers, has also accumulated quite diverse research experience. Among the works that are closest to the subject of our article, we should note those in which: the compensation package is disclosed as a tool that performs stimulating, developmental, personnel, social and compensating functions (Babina, 2017); the technology aimed at the development of human capital is described (Kamkina, 2019); the motivational role in the HR management system is outlined (Khoina and Burenina, 2020; Nadtochiy et al., 2022).

Foreign literature also pays much attention to the relationship between benefits provided by employers and employee motivation, directly affecting the company's performance indicators. Studies by authors who emphasize a specific measure of employee support are also common. For example, a study by Jo-Hui Lin & Jehn-Yih Wong & Ching-hua Ho examines a wide range of employer benefits aimed at providing recreation to their employees (Lin et al., 2013). As an effective retention strategy and a tool to optimize labor costs for employers, employee compensation payments for transportation costs to the workplace are considered by Paolo Latorre et al., (Latorre et al., 2024); the benefits of additional insurance guarantees by B.L. Collura, D. Adamson (Collura and Adamson, 2017).

The situational advantages in presenting employees with additional tangible rewards (gift cards and/or coupons) over cash have been shown in their work by Khim Kelly et al. (Kelly et al., 2017). The value of workers' compensation in the form of gift cards, including from employer partners, is also shown in the work of Jongwoon (Willie) Choi (Choi and Presslee, 2023). The authors prove the position that retention strategy through additional employee rewards is more effective when it emphasizes a combination of attributes rather than a strict dichotomy between monetary and tangible rewards.

In a study by Ranta M. (Ranta and Ylinen, 2023), measures of additional employee support are revealed as tools that enable companies to achieve sustainability. Based on an analysis of 26 employers' compensation packages, employee opinions collected through social media, the authors conclude that rarer benefits, such as family benefits, are often associated with the most successful companies, while more widely offered benefits are associated with low-performing companies. Some of the most commonly offered supports, as shown in the empirical portion of the study, include employee parking, as well as dental and vision health care, paid time off, and life insurance. The most infrequently offered benefits are free meals and family-related benefits such as on-site daycare, paid parental leave and daycare reimbursement, and benefits such as relocation allowance. That is, family-related benefits are offered the least frequently.

As the review of Russian and foreign literature shows, despite the relevance and multidimensional nature of the study of sustainable development, there are no works that focus on the potential of employers' compensation packages as tools that can have a direct impact on the territories' entry into the sustainable development trajectory. This fact actualizes the empirical study presented in our paper and opens the prospects for further theorization of this issue.

2 METHODOLOGY

The empirical base of our study is based on the results of a survey conducted among young people aged 15 to 25 years old who study and complete their education in organizations of secondary vocational and higher education. Data were collected in the following SFD subjects: Omsk region, Novosibirsk region, Altai region, Tomsk region, Kemerovo region. In all subjects, with the exception of the Novosibirsk region t, in 2022 and 2023 negative migration growth is observed due to the movement of the local population to other regions of the Russian

Federation. Data collection took place in the spring period of 2024 and ended on May 15. From the size of the general population established on the basis of the data of the State Statistics Committee as of January 1, 2023 - 1,049,525 people aged 15 to 25 years in the five specified regions of the SFD, N2490 young people took part in the survey.

To conduct the survey, a questionnaire was drawn up, the structure of which made it possible to group all young people who took part in the survey into two groups when processing the responses received, using the method of system analysis - decomposition of statistical data: I - young people for whom the size of salary offered by the employer during employment is the most significant condition (70.1%) and II - young people for whom the size of salary offered by the employer during employment is not significant at all (15.8%). The answers of respondents in the questionnaire for this question: “Rate the importance of the size of the salary offered by the employer at employment” were made on the following scale: “the most important condition”, ‘rather important condition’, ‘not at all important condition’. When forming sets, the extreme values - “the most important condition” and “not at all important condition” - were emphasized. The estimates of respondents who chose the answer option “rather significant condition” (14.1%) were not taken into account in data processing.

At the second stage, the statistical weight of answers to the second question of the questionnaire: “Assess the importance of employers' compensation package for employees” was determined in the corresponding data sets. When forming sets for this question, only extreme values - “the most important condition” and “not at all important condition” - were also identified, which made it possible to identify the following subgroups in Groups I and II:

I (a) - young people for whom both the size of the salary offered by the employer and the availability of a compensation package are the most important conditions for employment (67.2%);

I (b) - young people for whom the size of the salary offered by the employer is the most important condition for employment, while the availability of a compensation package, on the contrary, is not important (5%);

II (a) - young people for whom the size of the salary offered by the employer is not at all important for employment, and the availability of a compensation package is, on the contrary, important (8.1%);

II (b) - young people for whom both the size of the salary offered by the employer and the availability of a compensation package are not important conditions for employment (64.5%).

To determine young people's assessments of the compensation packages offered by employers, we analyzed open data from the job bank on HH.ru, «Jobs of Russia» and sections of company websites dedicated to HR policy. Organizations (companies) were selected only among employers whose production and/or industrial infrastructure is located in at least one of the following SFD subjects: Omsk, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Kemerovo, Altai regions. Support measures for 17 employers with the number of employees of 1,000 or more were analyzed.

As a result, three different labor remuneration systems were aggregated and measures of support and benefits provided to employees beyond those provided by the current labor legislation of the Russian Federation and reimbursement of costs incurred by the employee directly independent of the performance of their labor and job duties were identified. When operationalizing the questionnaire, they were aggregated for evaluation by young people into 17 compensation packages.

At the third stage, to assess the monetary incentives for youth labor, respondents were asked to choose one of the three systems of labor remuneration as a priority for them:

(1) Salary of more than 100,000 rubles for the planned volume of qualitatively completed work without additional incentive, compensatory, social and other payments.

(2) Salary from 80,000 rubles + incentive additional payments according to the KPI system (employee's labor indicators affecting the bonus) without additional compensatory, social and other payments.

(3) Salary from 50,000 rubles + incentive additional payments under the KPI system (employee labor indicators affecting the bonus) + additional compensatory, social and other payments.

When forming the sets for this question, we also selected (1) and (3) options of the remuneration system, as it was important for us to compare the assessments of youth oriented to high wages without expectation of additional support measures from employers and youth whose median choice in remuneration for labor is complemented by the value of compensation packages.

Respondents were asked to rate each of the 17 compensation packages presented on a three-point scale, where 1 means that the compensation content presented is a decisive employment advantage for them; 2 is an advantage but not decisive; and 3 is not an advantage. Only the first ratings were selected to

justify the assumptions and interpret the results of the study, i.e., the compensation content presented has a decisive employment advantage for the respondent.

Limitations of the study: the online format of the youth questionnaire; with the increase in the number of employers, including companies with fewer than 1,000 employees, the variability of compensation measures is likely to increase; only the most frequently occurring support and benefit instruments were included in the evaluation system.

2.1 Hypothesis of the research

When compiling the questionnaire based on the literature and the measures of support, benefits and cost recovery identified during the employer analysis stage, we categorized some of the measures selected for the youth assessment as compensations that directly contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the region.

First, those aimed at strengthening social infrastructure, which we included: preferential mortgages/compensation of mortgage costs/availability of the «Young Family» program; availability of kindergartens (compensation of services); availability of departmental housing (for temporary residence); compensation of utility bills; transfer to the place of work/compensation of gasoline/car expenses.

Secondly, aimed at the development of human resources: payment of vacation expenses/vouchers to a sanatorium; availability of vouchers to a health camp for children; free transportation to the place of recreation (and for other needs); compensation of training expenses; medical care at the company's expense; free access to gyms/payment of subscriptions to sports clubs/fitness clubs.

The following hypothesis was formulated to verify the analysis of respondents' answers, taking into account the presented grouping of compensation packages: it seems that compensation aimed at the development of human capital rather than social infrastructure will be more preferable measures of support and benefits from employers for young people.

3 RESULTS

The survey showed that compared to employers' compensation packages, the size of salary is the most important condition for the majority of young people when looking for a job: (51.5%) vs. (70.1%) respectively. At the same time, the importance of compensation packages is higher among those young people who also attach high importance to the size of salary.

As can be seen from the distribution in Tables 1 and 2, regardless of the importance of wages and compensation packages, the majority of young people choose to receive a high salary (from 100 thousand rubles), and to a lesser extent they are ready to compensate the median wage with additional measures of support and benefits from the employer.

However, in evaluating each of the 17 measures of employer support and benefits, the following observations are established:

1) In Group I youth (see Table 1), employer-sponsored health care arrangements are the decisive employment advantage, regardless of compensation value and preferred wage.

Table 1: Distribution of answers of young people (Group I), for whom the size of salary offered by the employer is the most important condition for employment.

Compensation packages	Group I (70,1 %, n=1745)			
	Compensation package is…?			
	the most significant condition (subgroup I (a)) 67,2 %, n=1082)		no significant condition at all (subgroup I (b)) 5,0 %, n=88)	
	50,000 rub. +KPI +Compensations (16,6 %, n=180)	100,000 rub. without Compensation (55,3 %, n=598)	50,000 rub. +KPI +Compensations (8,0 %, n=7)	100,000 rub. without Compensation (56,8 %, n=50)
	evaluating compensation packages as a decisive employment advantage (%)			
Free transportation to the place of vacation (and other needs)	62,6	68,46	42,9	38
Transfer to the place of work/Compensation of gasoline/vehicle expenses	64,1	74,15	0	38
Medical care at the company's expense	87,7	90,2	71,4	60
Organized meals at work	70,3	79,4	42,9	42

Free access to gyms/payment of subscriptions to sports clubs/fitness clubs	60	74,46	42,9	50
Discounts on services of the organization and partners	65,6	74,15	28,6	38
Preferential mortgage/compensation of mortgage costs/availability of the «Young Family» program	70,8	84,2	28,6	30
Availability of departmental housing	61	76	42,9	24
Availability of kindergartens (compensation of services)	52,3	65,69	28,6	26
Availability of health camp vouchers for children	55,4	68,31	14,3	28
Payment of expenses and vacation packages	69,2	78,92	42,9	48
Payment by the employer for cellular communication	36,4	58,62	0	26
Compensation for payment of utility bills	46,7	70,77	42,9	26
Presence of «relaxation» zone in the company	66,2	77,38	28,6	52
Reimbursement of online/virtual/network gaming expenses	32,3	55,54	14,3	12
Reimbursement of expenses for participation in cyber sports/cyber championships/tournaments				
Compensation of training costs	81	82,9	57,1	56

2) All Group I respondents also value compensation for training costs as a decisive advantage in employment.

3) For young people in Group I, the most valuable benefits and support measures are compensations aimed at strengthening human capital. Thus, the five most important compensation packages for both subgroups I (a) and (b) include training expenses, medical care, and vacation/vouchers to a sanatorium. The following difference was found in assessments of measures aimed at strengthening the region's social infrastructure: young people in subgroup I (a) consider a preferential mortgage and/or compensation of mortgage costs/, including the availability of the «Young Family» program, as the most significant employment advantage. Among youth in subgroup I (b), this measure of employer support is significant for less than one-third of respondents.

4) Among young people in group II (see Table 2), compensation for expenses related to online games and cyber sports is of much greater value than for group I.

Table 2: Distribution of answers of young people (Group II), for whom the size of salary offered by the employer is not a very important condition for employment.

Compensation packages	Group II (15,8 %, n=394)			
	Compensation package is …?			
	the most significant condition (subgroup II (a)) 8,1 %, n=32)		no significant condition at all (subgroup II (б) 64,5 %, n=254)	
	50,000 rub. +KPI +Compensations (15,6 %, n=5)	100,000 rub. without Compensation (71,9 %, n=23)	50,000 rub. +KPI +Compensations (15,0 %, n=38)	100,000 rub. without Compensation (59,4 %, n=151)
	evaluating compensation packages as a decisive employment advantage (%)			
Free transportation to the place of vacation	60	34,8	18,4	14,6

(and other needs)				
Transfer to the place of work/Compensation of gasoline/vehicle expenses	60	34,8	10,5	13,9
Medical care at the company's expense	40	17,4	5,3	11,3
Organized meals at work	40	17,4	15,8	12,6
Free access to gyms/payment of subscriptions to sports clubs/fitness clubs	20	21,7	18,4	14,6
Discounts on services of the organization and partners	40	21,7	10,5	14,6
Preferential mortgage/compensation of mortgage costs/availability of the «Young Family» program	40	21,7	7,9	12,6
Availability of departmental housing	20	39,1	18,4	11,9
Availability of kindergartens (compensation of services)	0	34,8	21,1	17,9
Availability of health camp vouchers for children	20,0	47,8	21,1	17,9
Payment of expenses and vacation packages	40	34,8	15,8	15,2
Payment by the employer for cellular communication	20	26,1	36,8	22,5
Compensation for payment of utility bills	20	34,8	18,4	15,9
Presence of «relaxation» zone in the company	40	8,7	10,5	13,9
Reimbursement of online/virtual/network gaming expenses	0	43,5	42,1	29,1
Reimbursement of expenses for participation in cyber sports/cyber championships/tournaments	0	43,5	47,4	28,5
Compensation of training costs	60	13	5,3	13,9

The survey has shown that the content of compensation packages, as a decisive advantage in employment, is rated higher by young people in Group I than in Group II. This may be due to the fact that for Group II respondents, material working conditions are generally not a key aspect of employment. At the same time, this is a minority position among the surveyed youth, so in order to implement measures in the region aimed at achieving sustainable development, it is equally important to create conditions both for wage growth in postgraduate employment of young people and to develop measures of additional support aimed at strengthening the social infrastructure of the region and the development of human capital.

The higher value (significance) of support measures and benefits aimed at human capital revealed in young people's assessments shows that today's youth in their post-graduation strategies are rather focused on personal achievements, including the value of building a career. Accordingly, the period of creating a family and planning children is postponed to a later date. Therefore, in all analyzed groups of respondents, training costs are one of the most valuable measures of compensation by the employer. The following logic in life strategies of young people can be traced in the obtained

distribution: the priority of getting (improving) education and solving the housing issue.

The importance of education opens the prospect for the development by regional universities and employers of joint, including network, educational programs and entry into the practice of seamless training, which should favorably affect the effectiveness of postgraduate employment.

For the enterprises of the regions with negative migration growth, the study of subjective assessments of compensation packages by young people is an important source of information within the framework of HR management, since in this case the value of the compensation package means its advantage for the job seeker in employment, i.e. willingness to accept offers on labor conditions and guarantees. It seems that obtaining up-to-date information on employers' assessments of youth compensation will allow employers to update the structure of support measures, including the optimal allocation of company resources allocated for their financing; expand the compensation portfolio by means of support measures relevant to youth and revise the corporate policy on their formation.

For federal and regional authorities, the study of young people's subjective assessments of compensation packages is also an informative source for finding optimal solutions in the socio-economic management of the territory's development, including the development of joint tools with employers to support young professionals in finding a job.

5 CONCLUSION

The data analysis shows that Russian young people aged 15 to 25 attach the greatest importance to such measures of support and benefits from employers that are related to the development of human capital, i.e. additional compensation measures that are key to the sustainable development of regions and the country. Next, with a slight lag behind each other, come labor-related and social compensations. The lowest value among young people, as a decisive advantage, was given to compensation package instruments related to the satisfaction of digital needs, but ignoring these support measures in the context of achieving sustainable development of regions is not acceptable. For young people, cyber sports, for example, are becoming an important part of their leisure time, replacing traditional sports activities and sometimes providing them with additional income. Young people see the development of their skills in this relatively new social practice as the development of their personal potential.

The distribution of respondents' answers shows that for young people the development of their personality in professional terms, solving the housing issue, and preserving their health are the most important values. At the same time, it was found that material incentives for labor activity (guaranteed, high wages) are more important for young people in employment than measures of support and benefits beyond the current legislation of the Russian Federation and not directly dependent on the performance of labor duties of employees. In our opinion, this is a signal to employers and regional authorities responsible for employment and sustainable development not to reduce benefits and support programs, but to optimize their content.

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