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# Russian and Chinese Students: Proactive Behaviour and Economic Activity Characteristics

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**Abstract:** The relevance of the study of young people's economic behaviour features is beyond doubt, because the younger generation is the future social capital and economically active population of any country. The purpose of the presented study was to identify the specifics of proactive behaviour and economic activity (as indicators of economic behaviour), their demonstration and interrelation among Russian and Chinese students. One hundred and two Russian and Chinese students took part in the study. The following techniques were used: 1) "Proactive behaviour" Methodology by A.I. Yerzin; 2) "Questionnaire of economic activity" by E.V. Zabelina and Yu.V. Chestyunina; 3) "Questionnaire of subjective economic well-being" by V.A. Khashchenko; 4) "Monetary attitudes" Questionnaire by B. Klonts and T. Klonts adapted by D.A. Bayazitova and T.A. Lapshova. Mathematical analysis methods: Mann-Whitney U-test and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The results showed that the indicators of proactive behaviour demonstrated by the Russian students were higher than those demonstrated by Chinese students. The cognitive economic activity indicators were higher among the Chinese students. The Chinese students appeared to be more vigilant and careful with finances. The Russian students showed better results in experiencing a lack of financial resources. The specificity of economic behavior in Russian students is manifested through internal behavioral determination and constructive proactivity. Chinese students demonstrate cognitive economic activity and responsibility in relation to money. Based on the acquired results, the paper presents recommendations for the Russian and Chinese students' economic behaviour development and correction.

**Keywords:** *proactive behaviour, economic activity, attitude to money, Russian and Chinese students.*

## Introduction

The problem of studying economic behavior is one of the pressing problems of the last decade. Foreign researchers study economic behaviour through psychology of debt behaviour (S. E. Lea, P. Webley & C. M. Walker, etc.), saving behaviour (B.W. Roberts, J.B. Hirsh), consumer behaviour (J. Akerlof and R. Shiller, J. Keynes), etc. (Pozdnyakov, Zhuravlev, 2017; Gorchakova, 2021)

Russian scientists of the Moscow scientific school (A.L. Zhuravlev, V.P. Poznyakov, A.B. Kuprechenko, T.V. Drobysheva, V.A. Khashchenko, N.A. Zhuravleva) paid attention mainly to the study of economic consciousness. According to N.A. Zhuravleva, the system of values of a modern person is connected with the attitude towards money (Zhuravleva, 2023).

Scientists from the St. Petersburg School of Psychology of Economic Behavior (D.A. Bayazitova, T.A. Lapshova, O.S. Deyneka, E.V. Zabelina, etc.) research in various social groups, studying attitudes toward money against the background of value systems of representatives of different generations (Deineka, 2004; Saltykova, Deyneka, 2022).

Analysing the main directions of research within the domestic economic psychology framework in A.L. Zhuravlev's scientific school, it can be concluded that significant results have been achieved in

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studies of economic consciousness, economic values, economic identity, socialization, as well as of entrepreneurial activity. Nevertheless, noting the variety of research directions of Russian scientists, A.L. Zhuravlev and A.B. Kupreichenko pointed out the complex interrelation of economic consciousness and economic behaviour that exist inseparably from each other (Zhuravlev, Kupreichenko, 2009).

Over the past few years, there has been increased interest in the proactivity phenomenon in psychological science. As one of the fundamental personal characteristics, on the one hand, and as a complex model of behaviour, on the other, proactivity has a significant impact on the effective personality functioning in the modern world, ensuring not only their response to external stimuli, but also the manifestation of initiative in shaping one's own future (Yerzin, 2012; Yerzin, 2014; Li, Fay, Frese, Harms and Gao, 2014; Zhang, Lu and Li, 2018; Lin, Lu, Chen and Wu, 2022; Teye-Kwadjo and de Bruin, 2022).

A number of works by foreign researchers, such as Bateman, T.S. (1993), Crant, J.M. (2000), Frese, M. and Fay, D. (2001), Parker, S.K. and Collins, C.G. (2010), have been devoted to the study of the projectivity phenomenon (Luo, Huang and Gao, 2022).

Considering the degree of proactivity concept elaboration in foreign psychological science, we can talk about a fairly large number of scientific studies on this topic (Thompson, 2005; Luo, Huang and Gao, 2022). In general, foreign authors apply several approaches to the study of productivity. Thus, proactivity was considered: 1) from the standpoint of the concept of individual differences (Bateman and Crant, 1993); 2) within the framework of behavioural approach (Frese, Kring, Soose and Zempel, 1996; Parker, Williams and Turner, 2006); 3) within the framework of the concept of achieving the goal, which foreign psychological scientists began to develop relatively recently (Fay and Frese, 2001; Grant and Ashford, 2008; Bindl, Parker, Totterdell and Hagger-Johnson, 2012).

Based on the colleagues' methodological developments, Russian authors, such as E.S. Starchenkova (2012) considered proactivity as a coping strategy that allows managing stressful situations. A.I. Yerzin made a significant contribution to the development of the proactivity concept in Russian literature, highlighting its structure, as well as its manifestation characteristics (Yerzin and Yepanchintseva, 2016). Nevertheless, despite a sufficient number of methodological developments of the proactivity concept, the peculiarities of its manifestation remain unexplored both in different social groups and in different cultures' representatives (Yuspahrudin, Abbas, Pahala, Eliyana and Yazid, 2024).

Relatively recently, economic activity provoked interest in psychological research. Although this concept is found quite rarely in the foreign authors' works, within the framework of Russian psychology it was developed by Zhuravlev A.L., and Poznyakov V.P. (2004), Zhuravlev A.L. and Kupreichenko A.B (2009), Korosteleva T.V. and Kurdyukova N.A. (2009), Romanova N.V. (2009), Zabelina E.V. and Chestyunina Yu. V., (2020). Nevertheless, there is a lack of scientific papers devoted to the study of economic activity characteristics among representatives of various social groups and cultures. Despite the fact that a few studies have revealed the level of economic activity among young students (Zabelina, Deyneka and Yagnakova, 2020; Zabelina and Chestyunina, 2020), its characteristics and its correlation with other phenomena remain unexplored.

Speaking about the need to study the characteristics of economic activity in various social groups, it can be noted that the study of students' economic activity is particularly relevant. Students are the future social capital of society and determine its economic behavior in the future (Mikhailova, 2015; Stošić, 2017; You, 2019; Kudinov, Mikhailova, Kudinov and Farennikova, 2023). At the same time, the students' economic activity, manifested in their interaction with economic objects, is one of the factors determining their financial well-being, in particular, and their implementation in the professional and economic sphere, in general (Zabelina and Chestyunina, 2020).

Thus, the study of Russian and foreign students' proactive behaviour and economic activity will reveal the cultural characteristics of these phenomena manifestation, which determined the purpose of our study.

## Materials and Methods

The study sample consisted of 102 Russian and Chinese students aged 20 to 26 years: 51 Russian and 51 Chinese students of the 3rd – 4th year, Bachelor program and 1st – 2nd year, Master course of the Philological Department at the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia.

The empirical data were obtained using the following techniques: 1) "Proactive behaviour" method

by A.I. Yerzin (Yerzin, Antokhin, 2015); 2) The questionnaire on economic activity by E.V. Zabelina and Yu.V. Chestyunina (Zabelina, Chestyunina, 2020); 3) The questionnaire on subjective economic well-being by V.A. Khashchenko (Khashchenko, 2011); 4) "Monetary attitudes" questionnaire by B. Klonts and T. Klonts adapted by D.A. Bayazitova, T.A. Lapshova (Bayazitova, Lapshova, 2017). All the techniques presented to the Chinese students were translated into Chinese using the double-blind translation method with the participation of native Chinese speakers.

The empirical data obtained during the above methods application were processed using the Mann-Whitney U-test and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.

## Results and Discussions

The results of the data study, by A.I. Yerzin's "Proactive behaviour" method, based on average values, using the Mann-Whitney U-test, showed significant differences between Russian and Chinese students on the following scales: *forecasting certain behaviour consequences; internal locus of control; spontaneity; general index of proactivity; constructive proactivity* (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The results of the analysis of differences in the level of proactive behaviour indicators among the Russian and the Chinese students (n = 102)

Methodics scale	Average value (Russian students)	Average value (Chinese students)	Mann-Whitney U-test	p-level
Awareness of one's actions	31.4	30.4	1112.5	0.207
Predicting certain behaviour consequences	28.8	27.1	954	<b>0.020*</b>
Internal locus of control	33.7	29.4	622	<b>0.000**</b>
Spontaneity	29.6	26.0	715.5	<b>0.000**</b>
Autonomy in decision-making	30.9	30.7	1242.5	0.697
Meta-motivation	31.4	29.8	1024	0.063
Internal determination of behavior	29.6	29.6	1265	0.812
Productivity index	215.4	203.1	857.5	<b>0.003**</b>
Constructive proactivity	27.9	25.9	969.5	<b>0.026*</b>
Destructive proactivity	20.9	22.2	1158.5	0.341

Note: \* - significance level  $p < .05$ ; \*\* - significance level  $p < .01$

The differences obtained on all the scales are higher among the Russian students. Such results can be explained by the fact that it is quite difficult for international students to show predictable behaviour and prepare in advance for difficult situations in a new cultural environment.

The indicator of proactive behaviour on the scale of *forecasting the certain behaviour consequences* among the Russian students is significantly higher because it is more difficult for Chinese students to predict the possible situation development, since in the Chinese culture context these situations might develop by another scenario, different from the Russian reality.

Proactive behaviour indicators on the scales of *internal locus of control* and *spontaneity* among Chinese students are lower again influenced by foreign cultural environment. This is manifested in the fact that these students more often limit their needs and interests, focusing primarily on situational factors.

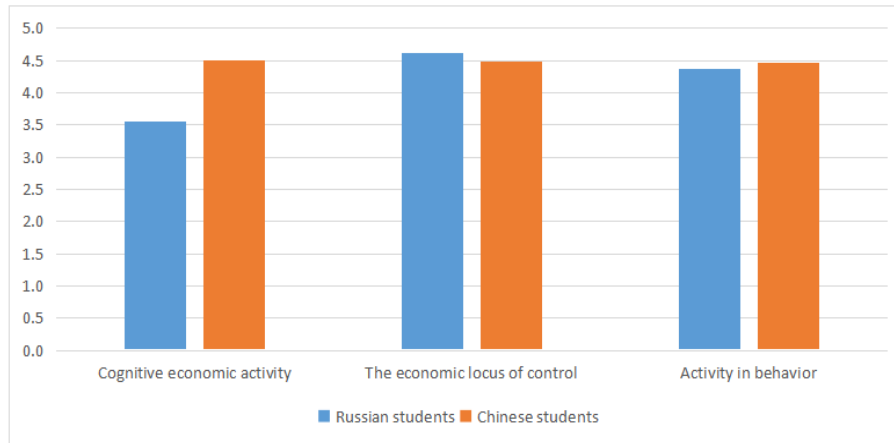
Accordingly, Chinese students demonstrated lower *constructive proactivity* because they are less focused on constructive interaction, since there are psychological and communicative barriers in communication.

Thus, the Russian students' overall level of productivity is significantly higher than that of the Chinese students and this is due to the fact that the Russian students are in their native cultural and linguistic environment. The Russian students, to a greater extent than the Chinese students, tend to act consciously under certain circumstances, and also prefer to influence difficult situations rather than adapt to them. In addition, the lower level of the Chinese students' proactivity may be related to the peculiarities of the Chinese mentality. For example, the Chinese students are more focused on following rules and regula-

tions which may limit their proactive behaviour.

However, a comparative analysis of the average values using the “Economic Activity Questionnaire” method by E.V. Zabelina and Yu.V. Chestyunina showed that the results on the *cognitive economic activity* scale among the Chinese students are significantly higher than those among the Russian ones (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Average values of economic activity indicators for the Russian and Chinese students (n = 102)



The results of a comparative analysis using the Mann-Whitney U-test also showed significant differences in the scale of *cognitive economic activity* between the Russian and Chinese students (Table 2).

Table 2. Indicators of significant differences in economic activity characteristics among the Russian and Chinese students (n = 102)

Methodics scale	Average value (Russian students)	Average value (Chinese students)	Mann-Whitney U-test	p-level
Cognitive economic activity	3.6	4.5	751	0.000**
Economic locus of control	4.6	4.5	1224.5	0.610
Enthusiasm	4.4	4.5	1290	0.944

Note: \* - significance level  $p < .05$ ; \*\* - significance level  $p < .01$

The Chinese students, to a greater extent than the Russian students, are active in searching for information related to the economic sphere. Probably, Chinese culture representatives are more involved in the economic and financial systems, being more enterprising by personal characteristics than the Russian students. In addition, they have to think more carefully about the specifics in the economic situation in a foreign cultural environment, to consider and to control their economic activity on the unknown territory.

The results of the average values on the scales of *economic locus of control* and *enthusiasm* showed no significant differences in both groups of respondents (Table 2). Still, according to the average values, the *economic locus of control* indicators among Russian students were slightly higher (Figure 1). Of course, these results are related to the fact that it is much easier for Russian students to exercise economic control in the conditions of their native country's economy.

The results of the analysis of significant differences by means of the Mann-Whitney U-test by V.A. Khashchenko's "Questionnaire of Subjective Economic Well-being" are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The results of the analysis of differences in the level of subjective economic well-being among the Russian and Chinese students (n = 102)

Methodics scale	Average value (Russian students)	Average value (Chinese students)	Mann-Whitney U-test	p-level
Index of economic optimism and confidence	20.1	20.5	1165	0.361
Financial Deprivation Index	14.3	15.9	877.5	<b>0.004**</b>
Index of current family well-being	12.7	11.8	1024.5	0.062
Index of subjective adequate correlation of income to the individual needs and demands	13.7	13.9	1269	0.831
Index of Economic Anxiety	21.4	19.7	1117.5	0.220
Integral (general) index	82.1	81.8	1268.5	0.830
Index of economic optimism and confidence	20.1	20.5	1165	0.361

Note: \* - significance level  $p < .05$ ; \*\* - significance level  $p < .01$

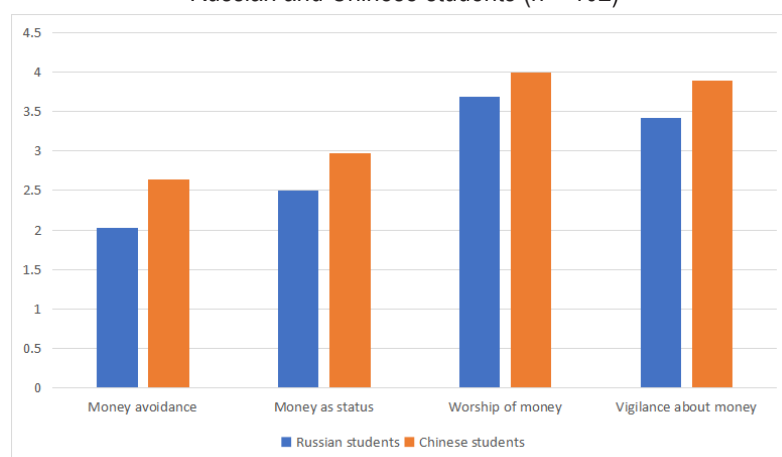
According to the results of the comparative analysis, significant differences on the *financial deprivation* scale were revealed. The values on this scale for Chinese students are close to high, while for Russian students they stay at an average level. Since the indicators of the *financial deprivation* scale have the opposite value, in this case, the Russian students are experiencing a lack of financial resources to a greater extent than the Chinese students. The Chinese students tend to assess their level of material prosperity as close to high. Perhaps, the Chinese students feel more financially secure in Russia than the Russian students. In Chinese families, parents often provide full tuition and accommodation for their children studying abroad.

Both the Russian and the Chinese students demonstrate a close to high level of expression of such subjective economic well-being indicators as *economic optimism* and *confidence*, and there are no significant differences in this indicator manifestation in the both groups of respondents (Table 3). This is reflected in the fact that the Russian and the Chinese students have a sufficiently positive assessment of the conditions, necessary for their financial well-being growth.

The Russian and Chinese students tend to assume that, in the near future, the material standard of their lives, as well as in their families' lives, will increase rather than decrease, or at least remain the same. Moreover, the both groups of students assess both current and future economic conditions in their country as relatively favourable for improving their financial well-being.

Based on the analysis of the average values obtained using the "Monetary Attitudes" methodology by B. Klonts and T. Klonts, all the methodology scales revealed differences between the Russian and the Chinese students (Figure 2).

*Figure 2.* The average indicators values by the "Monetary Attitudes" methodology (B. Klonts and T. Klonts) among Russian and Chinese students (n = 102)



The analysis of the differences' significance using the Mann-Whitney U-test revealed significant differences in the level of indicators of attitude to money (Table 4).

**Table 4.** The results of the analysis of differences in indicators of attitude to money among the Russian and Chinese students (n = 102)

Methodics scale	Average value (Russian students)	Average value (Chinese students)	Mann-Whitney U-test	p-level
Money avoidance	2.03	2.64	716.5	0.000**
Money as status	2.50	2.97	906.5	0.008**
The worship of money	3.68	4.00	1017.5	0.058
Vigilance about money	3.42	3.90	885	0.005**

Note: \* - significance level  $p < .05$ ; \*\* - significance level  $p < .01$

The indicators on the *money avoidance* scale are more pronounced among the Chinese students than among the Russian ones. The Chinese students are more likely to avoid money-related issues, which may be due to social desirability and the inherent focus on economy typical of Chinese culture representatives (Table 4).

The obtained differences allow us to assume that financial status and socio-economic status are more important for the value system of Chinese students. In Chinese culture, the assessment of a person's status is quite high. Russian students are more vigilant in using money. This is explained by their caution in using money in Russia.

The specifics of the Russian students' economic behaviour are expressed in the multiplicity of significant correlations between the *cognitive economic activity* scale and the scales of *awareness of one's actions*, *forecasting certain behaviour consequences*, *internal determination of behaviour*, *constructive proactivity* and *general index of proactivity* (Table 5).

**Table 5.** The results of correlation analysis on the "Proactive Behaviour" test, "Economic Activity Questionnaire", "Subjective Economic Well-being Questionnaire" and "Monetary Attitudes Questionnaire" in the group of Russian students (n = 51)

Methodics scale	Awareness of one's activities	Forecasting certain behaviour consequences	Inner control locus	Spontaneity	Autonomy in decision-making	Meta-motivation	Inner behaviour determination	Constructive proactivity	Destructive proactivity	General index of proactivity
Cognitive economic activity	<b>.327*</b>	<b>.306*</b>	.149	.224	.198	.244	<b>.351*</b>	<b>.340*</b>	.262	<b>.400**</b>
Economic locus of control	.165	.09	<b>.398**</b>	-.008	<b>.320*</b>	.08	.115	.232	.007	.202
Enthusiasm	.058	.115	.056	.224	<b>.412**</b>	<b>.306*</b>	.184	<b>.300*</b>	<b>.293*</b>	.117
Index of economic optimism and confidence	.273	.147	.25	.253	.176	.103	<b>.392**</b>	<b>.292*</b>	.035	<b>.401**</b>
Index of Financial Deprivation	.122	.09	.012	.083	.126	.192	<b>.290*</b>	.193	.191	.067
Integral (general) index of subjective economic well-being	.256	.089	.167	.069	.107	.122	<b>.352*</b>	.211	.138	.252

Note: \* - significance level  $p < .05$ ; \*\* - significance level  $p < .01$

Much of the Russian students' economic behaviour can be explained by the internal behaviour determination as evidenced by the significant intercorrelations of the *internal behaviour determination*

scales, *economic optimism* and *confidence index*, *financial deprivation index* and the *integral index of subjective economic well-being*.

The specificity of the Russian students' enthusiasm is expressed by significant connection with such indicators as *autonomy in decision-making*, *meta-motivation*, *constructive proactivity* and *destructive proactivity*. The correlation of *economic optimism and confidence index* with the scales of *internal behaviour determination*, *constructive proactivity*, and *the general index of proactivity* characterize the Russian students as a group whose economic behaviour is associated with internal psychological conditions conducive to constructive activity and a general active and responsible position independent of external circumstances.

It should be noted that in the group of Russian students, there were no correlations between the "Monetary attitudes" scales by B. Klonts and T. Klonts with the scales of other methods.

Unlike the group of Russian students, the indicators of the Chinese students' economic behaviour specifics have their own pronounced interrelations (Table 6).

**Table 6.** The results of correlation analysis on the "Proactive Behaviour" test, "Economic Activity Questionnaire", "Subjective Economic Well-being Questionnaire" and "Monetary Attitudes Questionnaire" in the group of Chinese students (n = 51)

Methodics scale	Awareness of one's actions	Forecasting of certain behaviour consequences	Internal control locus	Spontaneity	Autonomy in decision-making	Meta-motivation	Internal behaviour determination	Constructive proactivity	Destructive proactivity	General index of proactivity
Cognitive economic activity	.336*	.312*	.176	.444**	.286*	.535**	.484**	.517**	.406**	.280*
Economic locus of control	.325*	.300*	.383**	.099	.079	.160	.319*	.317*	.240	.310*
Enthusiasm	.353*	.389**	.295*	.503**	.515**	.444**	.628**	.628**	.351*	.428**
Integral (general) index of subjective economic well-being	.184	.125	.326*	.321*	.269	.302*	.124	.359**	.189	.150
Money Avoidance	.095	.386**	.198	.069	-.050	-.017	.254	.221	-.060	.515**
Money as status	.139	.451**	.262	.225	-.049	.067	.297*	.259	-.027	.503**
The worship of money	.089	.384**	.202	.367**	.076	.223	.220	.176	.031	.277*
Vigilance about money	.255	.256	.385**	.011	.122	.000	.275	.162	.061	.101

Note: \* - significance level  $p < .05$ ; \*\* - significance level  $p < .01$

The results illustrated in Table 6 show that in the group of Chinese students, the correlation of the *cognitive economic activity* scale with the scales of other methods are much more pronounced. The connections of the *cognitive economic activity* scale with such scales as *spontaneity*, *meta-motivation*, *internal determination of behaviour*, *constructive proactivity*, *destructive proactivity* are especially obvious.

The general index of Chinese students' proactivity, as well as that of Russian students, correlates with the scale of *cognitive economic activity*. This is reflected in the fact that Russian and Chinese students tend to actively influence circumstances and strive to improve their knowledge in the economic field. The correlation analysis shows that the Chinese students' results are a lot correlated in the *economic locus of control* scale with other scales of methods (*awareness of one's actions*, *forecasting certain behaviour consequences*, *internal locus of control*, *internal determination of behaviour*, *constructive proactivity*) (Table 6).

The Chinese students' economic activity expressed by the *enthusiasm* scale demonstrated a much greater number of correlations with the scales of other methods. The results obtained allow us to assert that the Chinese students' economic behaviour specifics are expressed more actively than that of Russian students in terms of the economic locus of control, enthusiasm and attitude to money.

Interesting results were obtained in the group of Chinese students on the correlation of scales in

the “Monetary Attitudes” methodology by B. Klonts and T. Klonts with scales of other methods. Significant correlations of *money avoidance* scales and *money as status* with *forecasting certain behaviour consequences* scales and *general index of proactivity* were found. Chinese students are more conscious and responsible about money. In addition, in the group of Chinese students, significant correlations were found between the scale of *money worship* and the *forecasting certain behaviour consequences* and *spontaneity* scales, which indicates inconsistency in their attitude to money in proactive behaviour indicators. The results obtained suggest that Chinese students’ indicators of economic behaviour are more significantly expressed by cognitive economic activity, economic locus of control and enthusiasm, compared with the Russian students. The Chinese students are much more clearly demonstrating their attitude towards money in terms of proactive behaviour and economic activity.

Probably, predicting various scenarios in the monetary sphere, the Chinese students strive for saving and avoid discussing financial issues that could potentially harm them, as well as choose those models of financial behaviour that could ensure their financial success.

## Conclusion

Summarizing the results of the study, we can note that despite the lower rates of proactive behaviour among the Chinese students, they are prone to cognitive analysis and choose a behaviour model that will allow them to achieve the desired result. This may be due to the fact that it is more difficult for Chinese students to predict future events since they study abroad.

Among Chinese students, it is more common to believe that some situations in one way or another depend not only on their actions and behaviour. The Chinese students are less focused on interacting with others than the Russian students. These differences may be due to the Chinese students’ life specifics in a different culture.

Despite their more pronounced proactive behaviour, Russian students are less likely to analyse their economic activity than Chinese students. Despite worries about financial well-being, the Russian students show less activity aimed at economic awareness and a more rational attitude towards money. The Russian students are probably less involved in the economic and financial systems.

Based on the results obtained in our study, we can offer the following recommendations for the students’ economic behaviour development and correction:

1. Conducting psychological work to increase the level of proactive behaviour in Chinese students studying in Russia. This can be implemented within the framework of measures for the Chinese students’ adaptation in Russian educational institutions, their international communication and economic literacy development.

2. Increasing the Chinese students’ constructive proactivity level within the framework of students’ professional associations, as well as through the inclusion of Chinese students in various extracurricular activities aimed at both communication and expanding their knowledge about Russian culture.

3. Development of the cognitive economic activity level, financial literacy and entrepreneurship among Russian students. To this end, it is possible to hold educational events where students learn about the importance of studying the economic sphere for everyday life and for their personal success. It would be reasonable to organize various lectures and seminars where students can learn about current issues in the economic sphere and get practical recommendations for managing personal economic well-being.

4. Psychological services at the universities need to monitor possible problems that students face in the economic sphere when trying to improve their financial situation, as well as to provide students with psychological assistance in resolving these problems both in groups and via personal consultations.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, Mikhailova O.B. and Farennikova E.S.; methodology, Mikhailova O.B. and Farennikova E.S.; formal analysis, Mikhailova O.B. and Farennikova E.S.; writing—original draft preparation, Mikhailova O.B. and Farennikova E.S.; writing—review and editing, Mikhailova O.B. and Farennikova E.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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