










“The impact of education and family upbringing on the formation of loyalty to the state: The case of Latvia”

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THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION AND FAMILY UPBRINGING ON THE FORMATION OF LOYALTY TO THE STATE: THE CASE OF LATVIA

Abstract

This paper examines the concept of loyalty as a flexible principle and a motivational factor that influences an individual's interest in the existence and development of the state. Loyalty significantly contributes to social cohesion and national resilience, especially in the current turbulent geopolitical climate. The aim of this study is to analyze the factors influencing Latvian students' loyalty to the state, including civic engagement, a sense of being needed by the country, and education about civic responsibility. The study also examines the impact of education and family upbringing on the formation of loyalty to the state.

Data were collected through a survey conducted in 2024, which included multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions. The sample consisted of 437 students in grades 9–12 from Liepaja, Latvia. The findings demonstrate that Pearson's chi-square analysis revealed a positive association between loyalty to the state and the following factors: knowledge of state history ($\chi^2 = 33.28, p < 0.001$), teaching of civic responsibility at school ($\chi^2 = 40.24, p < 0.001$), discussing state politics with family members ($\chi^2 = 12.48, p = 0.001$), and discussing civic responsibility within the family ($\chi^2 = 16.86, p < 0.001$).

Overall, 54.1% of respondents considered themselves civically engaged, and 81.4% reported feeling loyal to the state. A multiple logistic regression analysis revealed that being civically engaged, feeling needed by the country, and receiving education about civic responsibility significantly increase the likelihood of students expressing loyalty to the state.

Keywords

loyalty, state, students, education, upbringing, civic engagement, feeling needed by the country, family, school, Latvia

JEL Classification

I21, Z13, C35

INTRODUCTION

Citizens' loyalty to the state has become an increasingly important issue in Europe, and governments have to handle the threats of extremism, polarization, and radicalization. The turbulent geopolitical situation polarizes society, and in the context of hybrid warfare, the value system of individuals is subject to revision and destabilization. The unifying factors of human and societal cohesion become particularly significant, where belonging to one's nation and state, regardless of ethnic or linguistic differences, serves as a common and unifying motive for civic responsibility. Regarding the sustainable development of the state, its societal consolidation, and the well-being of its human capital, special attention should be paid to the younger generation and its loyalty to the state.

Loyalty is a flexible principle capable of regulating the variety of interactions that can reflect on national interests. Thus, a study of the state of art with the society's loyalty, identification of the factors influencing it, and a carefully designed set of measures can strengthen loyalty

to the country, while our inaction will weaken it, moving toward disloyalty to the state. Considering the youth's human capital and its crucial role in the future societal and economic progress of a country, strengthening young people's loyalty to the state is largely an educational issue. Family, school, and other educational environments have significant potential for shaping a person's value structures, including an individual's loyalty and attitudes toward the state.

The issue of strengthening loyalty is a pressing concern in most countries. As instability in the world is growing, citizens' loyalty to the state has become an increasingly important issue in Europe to struggle more actively against processes that are splitting society. The importance of dealing with the radicalizing citizens is becoming more topical. This can be achieved by finding ways to increase their loyalty to the state, for example, by emphasizing the importance of tradition as a value. Citizens who value the state's traditions tend to have more respect for the state's culture and are also more patriotic. In addition, traditional values provide a moral foundation that supports state sovereignty, as they are vital to national security and social stability. The continuity of these values across generations helps to maintain a strong national identity among citizens, while also helping them cope with modern challenges. Although numerous papers have revealed the factors influencing loyalty to the state, the issues of strengthening it among young people, who represent a dynamic and adaptable part of society, greatly contributing to the state's economic growth and prosperity, have been overlooked in scientific investigations. Thus, defining causes and consequences of increasing and decreasing youth's trust in government and public institutions, analysis of various factors influencing the formation of loyalty in the younger generation, social cohesion, and national resilience are relevant and require special attention as a scientific issue.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

When considering behavioral consequences, loyalty is defined as a person being loyal if he/she fulfills his/her obligations to an individual, especially in times of need (Shaw et al., 2017). Loyalty to the state encompasses strong emotional ties and feelings of support toward its community, culture, and history. Citizens' loyalty is the key to preserving the country's independence. It is important that "the nature of an independent state and a democratic state system requires that the fate of the state is decided by persons who are directly interested in the existence and development of this state" (Treş & Mihailovs, 2023, p. 226). In fact, loyalty to the state is a multifaceted concept that can vary across historical and cultural contexts. It encompasses the obligations and emotional ties that individuals feel toward their nation, and is often influenced by political, social, and economic factors. Loyalty to the state promotes unity and solidarity and ensures social harmony.

Loyalty has long been considered an important part of what makes an upstanding and moral person (Berry et al., 2021). Acting with loyalty is considered morally correct behavior (Graham et

al., 2009). Therefore, loyalty has a moral character; however, each individual's perception of loyalty is unique – contrary to common belief, loyalty cannot be directly associated with patriotism, as each person has their own categories of understanding loyalty (Murray et al., 2024).

The concept of loyalty to the state can be viewed in connection with certain key relationships and associations (Kleinig, 2008). An individual's loyalty to the state stems from the role of the state in that individual's life. Indeed, a democratic state seeks to create an organized social framework for its citizens and protect their rights (Zilbershats, 2002). However, it is motivation that determines a person's loyalty or disloyalty to a state (Kleinig, 2008). Understanding the motivations underlying this loyalty and the consequences it brings becomes even more important, considering the multicultural environments in which we find ourselves (You, 2024). Loyalty and citizens' values are viewed as a part of any person's value structure, which is formed through the process of socialization; therefore, family and school have a significant potential for shaping a person's value structures, including an individual's loyalty and attitudes toward the state (Haljasorg & Lilleoja, 2016, pp. 99-100).

Family is an important, influential environment in the process of the formation of loyalty to the state (Muddiman et al., 2018). However, the formation of families in Latvia has been and is presently affected by different external factors, e.g., after the 2008 economic recession, it was affected by two main push-pull factors: labor migration (I) and regional economic disparities (II) (Griņeviča et al., 2022). Similar factors influenced Ukrainian families, who developed in a similar manner to most European countries until the full-scale invasion in 2022. Since then, several factors have emerged, including significant human losses, the destruction of the environment essential for life (housing, social and economic infrastructure, and natural environment), and forced mass migration, which have made it extremely difficult to implement the family's main specific functions (Slyusar, 2023). Nevertheless, national resilience and civic engagement became factors that have helped many Ukrainian families become stronger and have positively influenced their children. Therefore, it must be admitted that a child's loyalty depends to a large extent on his or her parents' loyalty to the state and civic engagement.

The promotion of civic engagement is crucial for all societies. Civic engagement contributes to improving the lives of community members and strengthening society's prospects (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Moreover, civic engagement has a strong correlation with both an individual's democratic life values and their knowledge, where the role of schools is significant in developing young people's civic competence (Schulz et al., 2025). Schools can foster motivation for civic engagement by teaching concepts and skills related to citizenship, providing appropriate environments for discussing issues in class, implementing a fair selection process, and encouraging students to participate through a participatory school culture (Torney-Purta, 2002). Recent research has also shown that longer duration of education is associated with greater civic engagement (Youniss, 2011). In fact, universities help students accept a social group, form a social identity by uniting through similar thoughts or actions, and support their citizenship tendencies through the environments they offer to students (Barnhardt et al., 2015). This competence is not limited to knowledge and skills, but also encompasses val-

ues and the ability to act. Civic education aims to enhance the quality of life and ensure the long-term existence of a civic society.

Civic engagement can be significantly enhanced by civic education at schools, colleges, and universities, for example, through patriotic education, which can also be emphasized in curricula, as seen in Latvia, within the National Defense Education (NDE) framework. NDE provides an opportunity "to acquire basic military skills and competences, developing civically responsible and loyal citizens of Latvia, which is vital in the context of comprehensive national defense" (The Ministry of Defence Republic of Latvia, n.d.). The NDE course consists of three modules:

- civic engagement in the context of national security;
- crisis resilience and leadership;
- national defense skills (The Ministry of Defence Republic of Latvia, n.d.).

In 2024, in Ukraine, a similar course, "Defense of Ukraine: Integrated Course," was developed for high school students as a way to form students' patriotism and loyalty to the state. It will be studied over two academic years and will focus on the fundamentals of national security and defense, first aid in combat conditions, information warfare, and one's role in the defense of Ukraine (The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024). The course is focused much more deeply on military training regarding the war hostilities started in Ukraine in 2014 and escalated in 2022. Similar basic military training will be implemented in all Ukrainian higher education institutions in 2025. Such programs are primarily developed to enhance national security and citizens' readiness to defend the state against modern challenges. They are educational tools for the personal and professional development of the youth and play a crucial role in the formation of loyalty to the state.

Speaking and using the national language in all types of communication has a significant impact on the process of forming loyalty to the state. In Latvia, 81% of the population who speaks the Latvian language in the context of home and fam-

ily consider that Western countries should impose stricter sanctions against Russia, while only 18% of the population who speaks the Russian language at home support stricter sanctions against Russia (Valsts Kanceleja, 2024). Learning the state language of Latvia (the Latvian language) has become more topical since the national campaign that made the Latvian language the primary language of instruction in all schools. This process affected 129 schools, 43,000 pupils, and approximately 4,000 teachers (Latvian Public Broadcasting, 2023). It must be admitted that before this step, instruction was quite often received in the Russian language at these schools. Valdmanis (2021) highlights that “analyzing the facts characterizing the language situation, it can be seen that the greatest problem is the linguistic attitude of society, which is the basis for motivation to use the language and which is at the same time related to the level of language proficiency. Improving the linguistic attitude of society, approximating it to an optimal one, is the most important objective in language policy” (p. 7).

There is one more ostensive example of a language policy influencing loyalty to the state. The language question has been extremely sensitive for at least 20 years in Ukraine. It was used in the political environment and was extensively employed by Russia to undermine state stability and destroy state integrity and sovereignty in Ukraine. Using all possible ways of manipulation in the Ukrainian information space, Russian propaganda widely spread the idea of the necessity of making the Russian language official in Ukraine. In 2014, during the annexation of Crimea and Donbas, the state loyalty of eastern Ukrainians was challenged. People from these Ukrainian regions were considered in academic literature to be ambivalent about their identity, since they preferred to speak a language different from the language associated with their nationality. The unprecedented violation by Russia of the territorial integrity of Ukraine has dissipated the ambivalence: a significant majority of eastern Ukrainians identify themselves with the Ukrainian state. A re-configuration of the relationship between language and state loyalty (“state-building”) has taken place (Arel, 2017). Since the full-scale invasion, 81% of Ukrainians either want the Russian language removed from official communication throughout the territory or are against its use in their region

(Hrushetskyi, 2024). The shift is so profound that even children in Russian-speaking families changed their language to Ukrainian, so as not to speak the language of the aggressor. Thus, the situation in families stays different, while in Ukrainian schools, the language of instruction is Ukrainian, national patriotic upbringing, and the formation of loyalty to the state are integral parts of school education.

Different states go through different epochs and have their own unique history, but it is also obvious that the national language should be promoted and protected, especially in the conditions of constant struggle for national identity. In this case, the striving of a person to have a national language environment becomes a part of his or her loyalty to the state, as linguistic space connects to social practices and creates meaning (Burr, 1995) from the use of language in its context (Burr, 2004).

Education plays a crucial role in shaping an individual’s sense of loyalty to their state through various psychological mechanisms. It fosters civic responsibility, enhances national identity, and cultivates a sense of belonging, which collectively influence loyalty. Indeed, as Weinschenk et al. (2021) stated, education instills a sense of civic duty by encouraging individuals to participate in democratic processes, such as voting. Educational institutions also emphasize the importance of the concept of citizenship, which is considered a sense of responsibility toward the state. On the other hand, education shapes national identity by promoting understanding of cultural and historical contexts, which can increase citizens’ sense of loyalty (You, 2024). Education also fosters social norms and values that help align individual identity with national interests. It can create a civic consciousness that emphasizes democratic values rather than blind commitment, and encourages active participation rather than purely emotional attachment (Straughn & Andriot, 2011).

In spite of the presence of scientific investigations devoted to loyalty to the state, there are still unsolved issues that could shed light on the various factors shaping loyalty to the state.

Thus, the aim of the paper is to analyze being civically engaged, feeling needed by the country, and being taught about civic responsibility as the fac-

tors shaping loyalty to the state, and to reveal the impact of education and family upbringing on the formation of a person's loyalty to the state, by studying the attitudes of Latvian students.

The following research hypothesis is proposed in this paper:

H1: Being civically engaged, feeling needed by the country, and being taught at various educational institutions about civic responsibility significantly increase the odds of students expressing loyalty to the state.

2. METHODS

This quantitative study was conducted using logistic regression analysis. Creswell (1994) defined quantitative research as a type of research that explains phenomena by collecting numerical data, especially those analyzed using statistics. In quantitative research, numerical data are collected and systematically examined with statistical calculations. Quantitative research involves the process of determining averages, estimating results, testing causal relationships, and generalizing results to the universe when applied to phenomena where quantitative values are used. Logistic regression analysis is performed to establish an acceptable model that can describe the relationship between dependent and independent variables in a way that has the best fit using the fewest variables (Bircan, 2004). Logistic regression is foremost used to model a binary (0,1) variable based on one or more other variables, called predictors. The binary variable being modeled is generally referred to as the response variable, or the dependent variable (Hilbe, 2015).

This study was conducted in accordance with Latvian national and international research ethics standards, including the COPE Guidelines on good publication practice. The empirical data were collected through a structured survey involving 437 students, representing 26.06% of the total population of 9th to 12th grade students in Liepaja, Latvia.

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, as well as from their legal guardians and the heads of the par-

ticipating educational institutions. Participation was entirely voluntary, and students were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process. All data were anonymized before analysis, and no personally identifiable information was collected or stored. Data are securely stored and will be retained for a reasonable period following publication, in accordance with data protection standards.

The survey instrument included closed-ended questions (multiple-choice and Likert-scale items) designed to assess students' civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement (Appendix A). Respondents were recruited from local schools and selected to reflect a representative sample of the target population. The frequency of observations was limited to a single survey session per participant, and only quantitative data were recorded.

All ethical principles applicable to research involving minors were strictly followed. We affirmed our readiness to provide anonymized data for editorial review or public access, where feasible, in compliance with open data policies, while ensuring the continued protection of participant confidentiality. No external funding was received for this research, and we declare no conflicts of interest.

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 26.0. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to evaluate whether the datasets conformed to a normal distribution. Correlation between parameters was investigated using the Spearman rank correlation test. The Chi-square test and Fisher's exact test were applied for nominal variable sets. Binary logistic regression models were used to obtain odds ratios for specific variables. Statistical significance was assumed if two-tailed $p < 0.05$.

This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured survey and statistical analysis to examine the impact of education and family upbringing on students' loyalty to the state. The survey was conducted in 2024, providing young people with the opportunity to complete it online using Google Forms. All variables and values are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey summary

Variable	Value	Description
Total participants	437	Number of students who completed the survey
Male participants	158 (36.2%)	Number and percentage of male students
Female participants	279 (63.8%)	Number and percentage of female students
Mean age	16.56	Average age of participants
Civically engaged	147 (54.1%) of 272	Participants who consider themselves civically engaged
Loyal to the state	201 (81.4%) of 247	Participants who consider themselves loyal to the state

Table 2. Key factors associated with loyalty to the state

Factor	Statistical Test	Result	Significance (p-value)
Knowledge of state history	Pearson’s chi-Square	33.28	p < 0.001
Teaching civic responsibility at school	Pearson’s chi-Square	40.24	p < 0.001
Discussing state politics with family	Pearson’s chi-Square	12.48	p = 0.001
Discussing civic responsibility with family	Pearson’s chi-Square	16.86	p < 0.001

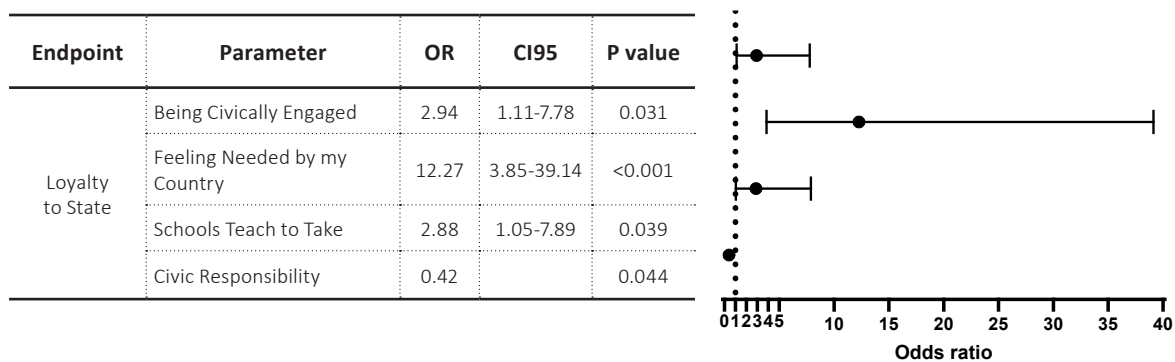
A total of 437 participants – 158 (36.2%) males and 279 (63.8%) females – were included in this study. The mean age was 16.56 (CI95 16.43–16.67); 147 (54.1%) of all participants who responded to the question (*N* = 272) considered themselves civically engaged. Next, 201 (81.4%) of all participants who responded to the question (*N* = 247) considered themselves loyal to the state. Key factors associated with loyalty to the state are shown in Table 2.

3. RESULTS

Multiple logistic regression analysis reveals that being civically engaged, feeling needed by the country, and being taught about civic responsibility significantly increase the odds of students expressing loyalty to the state (Figure 1). Thus, the role of schools in the context of citizenship, en-

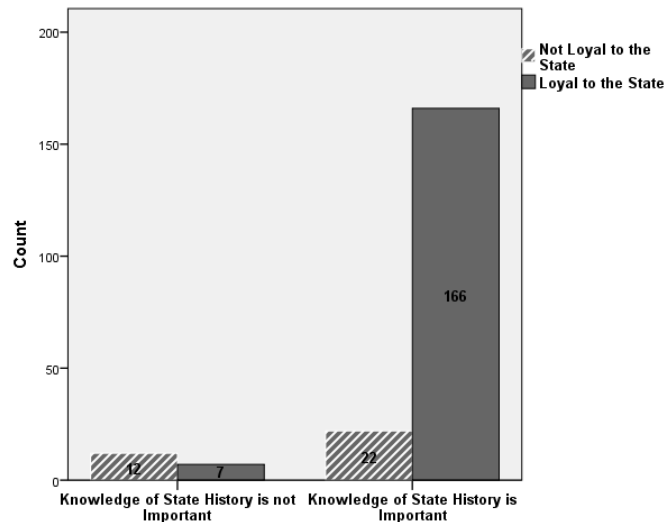
agement, and loyalty becomes crucial both in the context of the existence of nation-states and in terms of shared democratic values, particularly in light of geopolitical threats, where the civic consciousness and ability of future generations to defend their country become decisive factors. In addition to the significance of educational institutions in shaping students’ civic engagement, it is essential to emphasize the pivotal role of teachers. By employing diverse pedagogical approaches and strategies, teachers can nurture students’ fundamental potential, creativity, love, and respect for their country (Liunesi et al., 2025).

Pearson’s chi-square analysis reveals that knowledge of state history is positively associated with feeling loyalty toward the state (chi-square 33.28, *p* < 0.001) (Figure 2). The study of history in school curricula is important: it provides data about the problems



Note: *N* = 437. OR (Odds ratio); CI95 (95% confidence interval).

Figure 1. Multiple logistic regression model of civic engagement parameters affecting loyalty to the state



Note: $N = 437$.

Figure 2. Association between the opinion that knowledge of state history is important and the feeling of loyalty toward the state

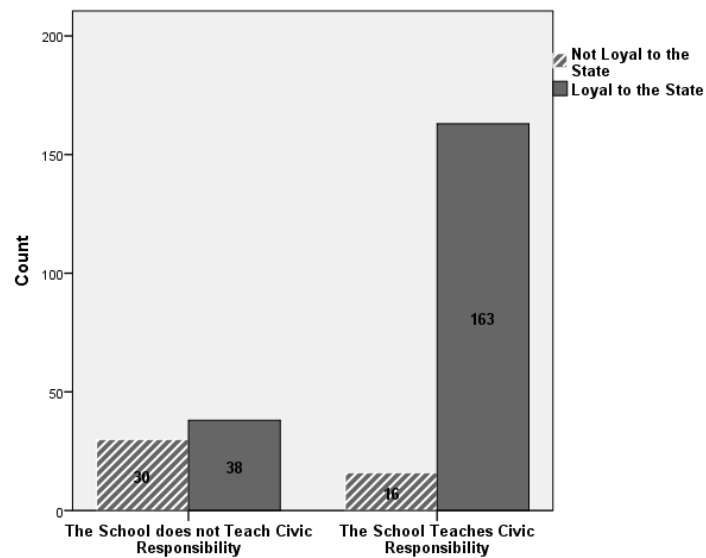
and important values of citizens of the state. It also teaches how changes affect the lives of citizens' responsible public behavior and how to become a community leader and informed voter (Collins & Stearns, 2020). Thus, the better the knowledge of history is, the higher the loyalty scores are, which can be supported by the theory of psychological attachment. The theory of psychological attachment emphasizes the emotional attachment and bonding that develop between an individual and their environment. As a result, individuals who feel emotionally connected and secure are more likely to demonstrate loyalty to their country. Furthermore, Pasco Fearon and Roisman (2017) indicate that children's attachment contributes to their socio-emotional development, fostering a sense of security. This underscores the critical role of civic education in shaping students' civic identity, including the development of a sense of historical belonging.

Pearson's chi-square analysis reveals that the teaching of civic responsibility at school is positively associated with feeling loyalty towards the state (chi-square 40.24, $p < 0.001$) (Figure 3). Thus, the importance of teaching responsibility in both formal and non-formal learning environments becomes essential. It should be noted that the results of the empirical research confirm the theoretical findings that active citizen engagement in state governance is a fundamental social and democratic value (Jurs & Samuseviča, 2020). Civic virtues, such as self-regulation, courage, loyalty, compassion, tolerance, honesty,

resilience, and a commitment to social justice, fortify the moral foundations of democracy. In the context of today's complex and multifaceted challenges, several aspects become particularly pertinent: (I) the cultivation of each individual's sense of civic responsibility and patriotism; (II) the promotion of deliberate, purposeful, and meaningful civic engagement; (III) the development and implementation of civic education curricula within both family and educational institutions. Addressing these areas prompts a critical inquiry: how can we effectively guide our children to become responsible, civically active citizens who are equipped to uphold and advance the values inherent in a democratic society? (Jurs & Samuseviča, 2020).

Pearson's chi-square analysis reveals that discussing state politics with family members has a positive impact on feeling loyalty toward the state (chi-square 12.48, $p = 0.001$) (Figure 4). This finding may be significant, especially considering that students are more likely to describe themselves as apolitical. Traditionally, young people have been relatively less interested in politics or involved in political processes. This means that it is probably the family that is the source and basis for the higher desire of young people to be directly involved in political processes.

Finally, we analyzed the relationship between discussing civic responsibility within the family and the feeling of loyalty toward the state. Pearson's chi-square analysis revealed that dis-



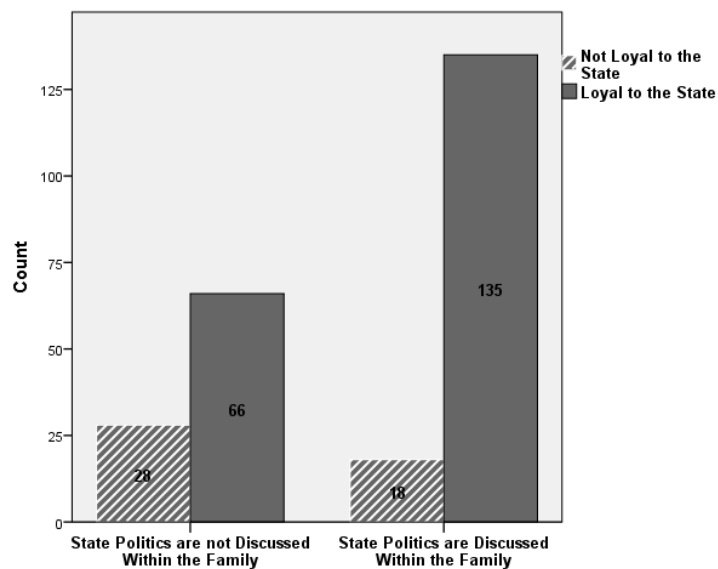
Note: N = 437.

Figure 3. Association between teaching civic responsibility at school and the feeling of loyalty toward the state

Discussing civic responsibility within the family is positively associated with feeling loyalty toward the state (chi-square 16.86, $p < 0.001$) (Figure 5).

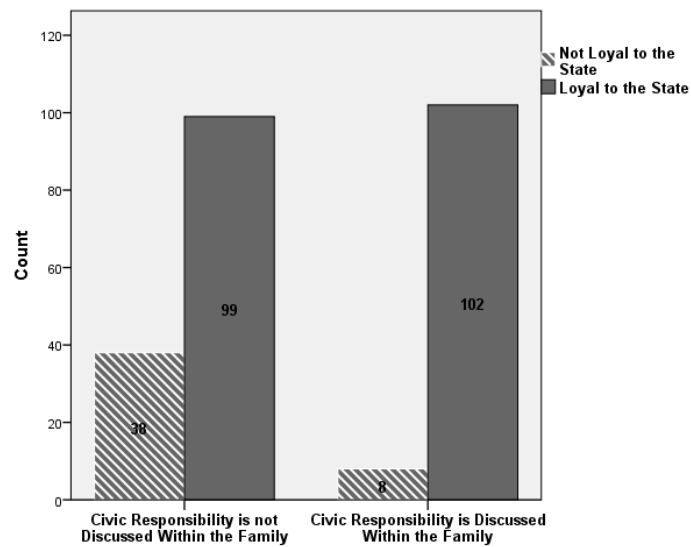
Empirical research reveals the importance of the family in fostering young people’s loyalty to the state. Young people’s civic participation

is an important prerequisite for caring for the well-being of communities and for taking action to address or bring positive change (Do et al., 2024), so the family plays a huge role in the context of personal development, helping the younger generation to become civically responsible people.



Note: N = 437.

Figure 4. Association between discussing state politics within the family and the feeling of loyalty toward the state



Note: $N = 437$.

Figure 5. Association between discussing civic responsibility within the family and the feeling of loyalty toward the state

4. DISCUSSION

The analysis is based on an interdisciplinary context, considering the issues of social science, political science, and education. It reveals the factors that can strengthen national resilience and societal cohesion, which are crucial in modern, turbulent times. The impact of education and family upbringing on the formation of a person's loyalty to the state described above evidences that there are practical and effective ways of supporting the internal cohesion of a state, involving its community, education, culture, and history. There is a direct link between a citizen's loyalty and values, the latter being formed through the process of socialization that takes place in various environments, primarily in family and educational institutions. Both parents and educators can serve as guides for the youth in shaping their value structures. Haljasorg and Lilleoja (2016) also confirm this view and emphasize that loyalty and citizenship values are developed through the socialization process and are part of each individual's value structure. Chua and Sim (2017) also supported this result. It was revealed that attending courses on citizenship education helps one understand the formal aspects of patriotism and become more familiar with the government's expectations in this regard (Chua & Sim, 2017).

However, within the family and education areas, which impact the formation of loyalty to the state, are also affected by internal and external influences. The research hypothesis coincides with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, according to which a child's development is a "complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment": microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. It is important to note that the microsystem is the most influential level, encompassing the child's immediate environment, such as family and school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Guy-Evans, 2025), resulting in our research question of measuring the impact of the family and education environments on the formation of loyalty to the state. The child should be an active contributor to this bidirectional relationship. The communication and attitudes of both family members and the education process participant may become positive or negative factors in constructing a person's loyalty or disloyalty to the state. Because while the family plays an important role in instilling social values in children (Elsayed, 2024), in addition to education, the school also has the mission of developing character, and they achieve their character education role through subjects and targeted activities (Pešikan & Lalović, 2015).

As discussed, loyalty to the state can be a complex and multifaceted concept. It is closely connected

to a person's system of beliefs, values, and motivation, as well as their interest in the existence and development of the state. The concept of loyalty to the state involves people's attitudes toward different aspects of the state, such as its people, its culture, or its institutions. It is a crucial part of national identity and national governance, especially during the present turbulent times. Under the influence of the geopolitical situation and hybrid warfare, society tends to become increasingly polarized and radicalized. Regarding such processes in society, strengthening civic engagement and responsibility and human and societal cohesion becomes an issue of national and international significance. Because national identity is about a citizen's psychological attachment and behavioral loyalty to the national community of which he/she is a part, it forms the basis of his/her rational choices, sense of belonging to country, national identity, acceptance of the values of his/her country, national pride and participation in the national construction process as an active citizen (Ji & Zhang, 2023). Indeed, citizens living in a country feel a sense of loyalty to their state through their national identity and demonstrate a willingness to strive for the country's goals. This sense of loyalty develops in individuals through socialization (Druckman, 1994).

Family and educational institutions are those environments that have a high potential for shaping a person's value structures, including an individual's loyalty and attitudes toward the state. The results of our empirical analysis demonstrate that being civically engaged, feeling needed by one's country, and being taught about civic responsibility significantly strengthen students' expressed loyalty to the state. Brown (2014) also touches on this issue and states that citizenship feelings, such as national pride, are developed through active participation; thus, an individual's sense of belonging and loyalty to the state is strengthened. Citizen participation ensures that citizens living in the country are included in governance and thus, their sense of belonging increases. Because citizens whose voices are heard by the state feel more connected, their democratic values are strengthened, and the social contract between them and the state is strengthened (Firek, 2023). Citizen participation is vital to state loyalty because it ensures that citizens are influential in administrative decisions,

thereby fostering harmony between state actions and public interests (Guzmán et al., 2023).

Pearson's chi-square analysis has also revealed that the opinion that knowledge of state history is important is positively associated with feeling loyalty toward the state. The same is true for discussing state politics within the family. However, the communication between parents and children that develops the civic competence of the latter forms a sense of loyalty and belonging as a certain behavioral model based on democratic values and awareness of their potential for promoting civic significance in society. Alcantar et al. (2023) also stated that families provide essential support for civic engagement. Parents serve as role models for children by demonstrating civic behaviors that children typically imitate, thus fostering a sense of civic duty (Lanaca et al., 2022; Muddiman et al., 2020) and significantly influencing young people's propensity to participate in civic activities (Muddiman et al., 2018). For example, they are often instrumental in providing primary civic education and motivating individuals who are voting for the first time.

A difference between families and educational institutions is in the openness of these microsystems regarding their potential to change. The family is not as changeable as an educational institution, as it usually holds strong traditions, special types of communication, assigned or shared responsibilities, and a certain worldview that may be similar or different among its members. A child's worldview may be imposed or contributed to by parents or constructed in a child's own way, depending on both parenting style (authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive) and the parents' and children's qualities and other external factors, including education. An educational institution is a much more open microsystem, as it constantly changes under the influence of state law, societal demands, staff, students, and, to some extent, parents. Each school or university, including its curriculum and study processes, has a lot of common norms and features; at the same time, each is unique as each uses various ways of building students' values and beliefs system, national identity, trust in government, and civic engagement, each of which is closely intertwined with loyalty to the state. As emphasized by Tursunkulova (2021), in this process,

schools are responsible for instilling patriotism in students, which is an important value in shaping ideological and moral maturity, while educational curricula generally emphasize citizenship education and aim to develop a sense of loyalty and responsibility toward the state. Schools, which are vital in promoting patriotism and national identity, provide this process through courses such as history, social studies, and literature, which are effective in promoting patriotic beliefs.

Loyalty to the state is not always a positive concept. In totalitarian countries, where people have few rights, little power, and no opportunity for the development of critical thinking and alternative worldviews, loyalty to the state can be used to justify

violence and oppression. Thus, being critical of the state and holding it accountable for its actions is extremely valuable for a person. However, in democratic countries, e.g., the states of the European Union, the concept of loyalty to the state and its formation in a person are inseparably linked to the European values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities (European Union, 2016). Civic engagement in such states contributes to the formation of loyalty to the state by involving citizens in the community and giving them a feeling of having a voice in their government, believing that it is working in their best interests and they are benefiting from its policies.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to reveal the impact of education and family upbringing on the formation of Latvian students' loyalty to the state and to analyze the role of such factors as being civically engaged, feeling needed by country and being taught about civic responsibility in this process. We considered the notion of loyalty a flexible principle and motivation which determines a person's interest in the existence and development of the state.

The findings of this study align with previous research emphasizing the role of civic education and family influence in shaping loyalty to the state. The results showed that civic education significantly enhances civic identity and engagement, as evidenced by the strong association between being taught civic responsibility and loyalty to the state. Family discussions on politics and civic responsibility play an important role in fostering civic values and participation. The positive correlation between knowledge of state history and loyalty supports the fact that historical education strengthens civic identity. This is further reinforced by the psychological attachment theory, which suggests that emotional bonds to national history and culture enhance loyalty.

The study reveals that over half of the respondents consider themselves civically engaged, and this may reflect a shift in youth attitudes in response to geopolitical instability.

These results underscore the critical role of both formal (schools) and informal (families) educational environments in shaping civic identity and national loyalty. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on civic education and national resilience, particularly in post-communist and geopolitically sensitive contexts like Latvia.

However, the study is limited to a single city and age group, which may affect generalizability. Future research should explore longitudinal trends, include diverse geographic regions, and compare findings across countries with different political and educational systems. There are also factors that strengthen loyalty to the state, such as engaging youth in national or international project activities aimed at promoting European values, civic engagement, social cohesion, and other aspects that contribute to the development of the state's resilience, power, and prosperity. This impact is explained by the fact that projects aim to solve issues that are key to modern democratic society. One of such examples is the Erasmus+ Programme, one of the European Union's most visible success stories, supporting profes-

sional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport and contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion; driving innovation; and empowering European identity and active citizenship, civic engagement and, at minimum, indirectly strengthens loyalty to the state. Altogether, this prevents extremism, polarization, and radicalization and makes society more resilient and consolidated.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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