

## SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY

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### Abstract

**Purpose of the study:** The article is devoted to the analysis of the possibilities of reconstruction of socio-cultural activities in the direction of solving social problems through the involvement of various groups of people in a variety of mass cultural services. The main focus of this analysis is a differentiated approach to working with various age groups that have their own pressing social problems. The authors consider ways to solve the most acute social problems of Russian society, which are directly related to the social well-being and physical self-preservation of the majority of Russian citizens.

**Methodology:** As a first step in solving this problem, it is necessary to study the traditional spiritual values of the Russian people, which formed the basis of their mentality and cultural identity. Knowledge of the spiritual life of the inhabitants of Russia should be drawn, first of all, from historical sources, as well as modern socio-cultural practices. Spiritual values of contemporaries are explored both by traditional methods of testing, interviewing, observing and analyzing mathematical-statistical data, as well as new methods. For example, reflexive methods are used as the main tool for studying A. Heger's relevant values. The work also utilized M. Smirnova's methods and psychometric research results.

**Main Findings:** The main results of the research are the determination of reference points for further improvement of skills and increasing the level of professionalism in the work of specialists in the social and cultural sphere in a broad social context. The main reference point is the mastery of social scientific knowledge and social technologies of working with the population as the main content of the training of personnel of modern social and cultural activities demanded by society.

**Applications of this study:** The results of the study are useful in the development of educational programs for training specialists in the socio-cultural sphere, the system of advanced training and retraining. The revealed new spiritual and value orientations necessitate the search for new organizational and pedagogical technologies of social and cultural activities, the study which is an important research problem of today.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** The novelty of the research lies in identifying ways to solve social problems, in particular, further rapprochement of socio-cultural activities and social work, where the main common interests of relevant specialists are to support members of society in acquiring life meanings and cultural values in everyday life, the absence of which generates the majority emerging social problems.

**Keywords:** *Socio-cultural Activities, Problem, Social Policy, Population, Age Group.*

### INTRODUCTION

There is a tendency in the modern Russian social policy to consider various leisure activities as the main resource for solving social problems. In accordance with this tendency, it is becoming more important to increase the efficiency of socio-cultural activities, as they have a wide range of methods and techniques of engagement of the population in socio-cultural activities, creative self-expression and self-development, which are socially significant ([Anufriyeva et al., 2016](#); [Davydova et al., 2018](#)).

However, the social orientation of the modern socio-cultural activities is not sufficiently analyzed in the research and methodological recommendations reflecting the problems of these activities. The most acute social problems of Russian society include the problems, which are directly linked to the social well-being and physical health of the majority of the Russian population. They include unemployment, low standard of life, social deviations and addictions, which are to a great extent the result of the first two problems, drug addiction, alcoholism, crime, amorism, etc.

Ultimately, social disharmony is the result of spiritual problems of the society, which include the loss of meaning of life, the loss of ideals and values contributing to the self-development of the person, as well as the development of their creativity and civic consciousness. Thus, there is a chain: value crisis and loss of ideals – spiritual problems – social problems – financial problems – social deviations and addictions of some members and groups of the society ([Yalom, 2015](#)). In this respect, it is urgent to form the axiological basis for everyday life and activities of the person, where socio-cultural activities play one of the most important roles.

The problem is that axiological aspects of socio-cultural activities, as well as their basic technologies, were formed in the Soviet period when communist ideas were dominant. Under modern conditions, other worldviews and values are required. They should integrate the best achievements of the spiritual life of Soviet people and the new humanist values of civilized society. Correspondingly, new spiritual values require new organizational and pedagogical technologies of socio-cultural activities. Important research and social-engineering tasks are to study them ([Ionin, 2004](#)).

## METHODOLOGY

The first step towards the solution of this task should be studying Russian people's traditional spiritual values, which form Russian mentality and cultural self-consciousness. The knowledge about the spiritual life of Russian people should be primarily acquired from history, literature and works of Russian philosophers and cultural specialists who study this problem ([Pereverzeva, & Meleshkina, 2018](#)).

However, there it is difficult to form an overview of the spiritual life of people, as indifferent works of Russian philosophers and artists it is interpreted and evaluated in different ways. It is obvious that the formation of this overview will be completed in the future. However, today, prerequisites already exist for identifying the most significant features of Russian mentality, which form the national-cultural identity of the Russian people.

In this respect, it becomes particularly relevant to study the desirable content of socio-cultural activities, which should be aimed at reducing the social strain and disharmony under the conditions of social inequality and stratification of Russian society. The possibilities of socio-cultural activities are primarily related to the formation and transmission of the humanist ideals of humanity, sympathy, and compassion as essential social attitudes toward each social group with a number of crucial problems ([Fundamentals of special psychology, 2003](#)).

It is important to note that socio-cultural activities is one of the resources used to form the state social policy not on the basis of social security approach of the USSR, when the receiver of the social security and support was only the receiver and consumer of some social benefits and services, but on the basis of mobilization of creativity and social activity of socially deprived members, who fulfill themselves under appropriate conditions provided for by the government. "Longevity Centers" established in Moscow are an example of such social policy. In these centers, people of the corresponding age group are engaged in various creative activities and meaningful social contacts. Thus, a new "philosophy of old age" is proposed. According to it, old age is not the time when people just live their last years, but it is the time of new socio-cultural opportunities ([Yaroshenko, 2013](#)). These opportunities for socio-cultural activities have been analyzed on the basis of different observations and research.

Here are some examples of the most common social addictions, which can confirm the importance of socio-cultural activities.

**Alcoholism:** There are various causes of alcoholism. However, it is possible to specify the main precondition for this addiction that is, the state of social isolation and rejection, which many members of Russian society experience. It is caused by objective factors (for example: unemployment), as well as subjective factors (for example: bad relationships in the family).

It is obvious that in this case, the most important task of the social policy is to engage the isolated people in active and creative social life. The role of the organized socio-cultural activities is extremely important for this socially deprived group.

**Drug addiction:** Different expert evaluations and observations of this addiction show that its main cause is "monotonia" caused by the lack of bright emotional impressions, festivity and variety of the received information in the routine activities.

In this respect, games, entertainments, and festivals, which break the routine and enrich everyday life have huge psychotherapeutic and socio-therapeutic potential, as they can help to achieve the "festivity" effect without the hallucinogenic drugs which pose a serious threat to health and life of addicted people.

**"Work addiction":** Today it is considered to be similar to other addictions (alcoholism, drug addiction, video game addiction, etc.), which lead to the social disharmony of any group of population. This addiction involves the conscious avoidance of activities, which contribute to health enhancement, self-improvement, and development of interpersonal contacts with close people, relatives and family. In this situation, people should be engaged in various leisure activities, which help them to overcome this addiction.

These examples have a common feature. All addictions discussed in this article are the result of the absence of social adjustment caused by the lack of experience of participation in socio-cultural activities ([Pereverzeva, & Meleshkina, 2018](#)).

## RESULTS

**Children of preschool age:** The most common social problems of this group are as follows: the absence of adjustment of many children to group activities and group interaction and failure to reveal inborn potential and predisposition,

which are the basis for the development of appropriate competences. It has a negative impact on the development of the individuality of a child, as well as various deviations in psychophysical development even within normal limits, which are mainly linked to the problems in the family relationships. In this case, the essential psychocorrective work is not enough, as it is necessary to create special social circumstances, which will compensate and eliminate the distortions in the individual development of preschoolers.

In this case, the potential of socio-cultural activities is in the development and implementation of corrective game technologies, because the game is a leading activity at this age. It actually becomes a child's way of life (Osipov, 2003). In this respect, one should note that today preschool pedagogy lacks specially designed games, which contribute to solving the above-mentioned problems of this age group.

**Even the opposite tendency exists:** The social environment of preschoolers is developed based on the example of schoolchildren, for whom the leading activity is studying. This is explained by the necessity "to prepare for school".

**Children of primary and secondary school age:** The most common social problems of this age are as follows: failure to adjust to positive interaction with other members of the class; bad academic performance caused by personal characteristics of students not linked to their academic aptitude (for example, the absence of interest to studying, weak willpower, etc.); failure to build community relationship and cooperation in the student environment due to the absence of such experience at the preschool age.

Socio-cultural activities of children of this age group can give various opportunities, provided that there is no machinelike duplication of the regulation of educational institutions and organized leisure centers and communities are aimed at search activities (Isayeva, 2010).

**Teenagers:** The main problem of teenagers is their marginality, that is, their intermediate social status (between children and adults). The representatives of this group "say goodbye" to childhood, but they are still not accepted properly in the "world of adults". As a result, many teenagers experience social loneliness, apathy, rejection, anger with the surrounding people, low self-esteem. Educational institutions do not have the opportunities to organize proper social adaptation of teenagers, as the organization of school life itself involves minimum independence and individual creativity of students. They have to comply with the average educational requirements.

The situation is complicated, as there is neither a stable labor market-oriented at neither teenagers nor developed social amateur activities for them in modern Russian society. A particular problem of this age is puberty. It is an acute social problem, as many teenagers do not have the necessary cultural experience of sexual relationships. This experience is quite often acquired by copying the worst examples of relationships in adults' life. It initially forms a distorted behavior pattern related to teenagers' sex lives.

In this case, the special organization of various socio-cultural activities is required. It should become an alternative to the negative tendency (Avanesova, 2006).

**Young people:** One of the main social problems of this age group is the absence of creative self-expression in professional education, which they have already received or are receiving. If young people are not busy enough in their specialization, they become deeply unsatisfied with their own life, lose the meaning of life and life directions and cannot properly compensate for these problems with their leisure interests.

Another problem with young people in preparation for creating their own families and ensuring their well-being. Considering that in Russian society more than half of marriages break up, one should confirm that there is a serious social problem, which is caused by the low level of culture of premarital and marital relationships.

**People of middle age:** Representatives of this age group have their own range of social problems, which can interest the organizers of socio-cultural activities. The main problem of people of middle age is the low standard of life. This problem is particularly acute in relation to their own families. To avoid poverty, many people of middle age have to combine different jobs. They experience serious psychological and physical overwork fighting for a dignified existence.

Representatives of this age group lack free time, which cannot be compensated by watching TV and playing computer games. One more problem is the crisis of life values and meanings. It is not just "the crisis of middle age", but the disappointment in the ideas of modernization of Russian society, as only a small part of the population is able to benefit from its achievements.

All socioeconomic and psychological factors of depression and stress, which are experienced by people of this age group result in chronic fatigue syndrome. As special research shows, its causes are mainly linked to spiritual problems. It is possible to overcome these spiritual problems by organizing different kinds of social activities and family leisure activities, which will compensate for the lack of socio-cultural activity and create new life meanings and purposes.

**The elderly:** This age group includes both working and non-working retired people whose social problems are very different. However, some of the problems are common. For example, a significant reduction of a number of

interpersonal contacts, which is caused by health problems, as well as the understanding that the life cycle is about to end.

Another problem is the feeling of being unwanted with their life experience, competence, skills, and knowledge, which, as the elderly thinks, can be useful for society. The over-reliance of Russian society on different innovative projects without relying on any socio-cultural traditions and the experience of previous generations quite often lead to hasty decisions and the negative consequences for different areas of activities.

The marginality of this age group, which is artificially created, has many common features with the marginality of teenagers. People of these two groups feel unnecessary and neglected in modern society. The society is often reluctant to accept them as full members. They are given the role of social outsiders or passive receivers of social assistance.

## DISCUSSION

The above-mentioned social problems of different age groups require an appropriate improvement and, in some cases, reconstruction of the system of socio-cultural activities.

For preschool age, the focus should be shifted to the early revealing of the creative potential and adaptation to society. Today, the achievements of psychological and pedagogical diagnostics allow confirming that it is really possible to reveal the inborn potentials of a child at the early stages of development. One should note that this diagnostic is integrated. It identifies the type of personality, which is already expressed in a child when they are three years old. It can be used as the basis for the development of social adaptation programs.

Another important problem is the development of the creative abilities of children. When organizing socio-cultural activities for this age group, one must remember that it does not fully benefit from the Russian and world experience of artistic pedagogy (for example, the concept of C. Orff), which is extremely popular as an alternative to the practice of “drilling” school subjects in order to prepare pre-schoolers for school. Today, it is still the main content of preschool pedagogy in non-educational space.

There is a certain range of tasks concerning children of primary and secondary school age. This age group is involved in search activities. One should note that these search activities should be considered not as a problem, but as a certain age norm. It is necessary to consider this norm in organizing socio-cultural activities. It is advisable to organize not only school performance groups for children of this age, but also various situational playing and creative communities for preparation of mass festivities, games and theatrical performances (Baklanova, 1992; Gagin, 2005). Folk music groups and shows can play an important role. It is quite easy to join them and they involve the participation of many children in the show regardless of their performing abilities (Anufriyeva, 2013; Davydova et al., 2018).

Teenagers are one of the most “abandoned” age groups in relation to leisure activities. The situation is paradoxical. On one hand, there is a developed leisure industry for teenagers. On the other hand, they are often overlooked by cultural facilities and supplementary education establishments. The problem is that today life directions and values of this age group are significantly different from the life directions and values, which can be suggested by “the world of adults”. Teenagers are very influenced by western culture. They usually prefer leisure activities, which exist outside of the current system of cultural services.

This problem can be solved if the existing personal potential of the socio-cultural development of teenagers is considered by pedagogues while organizing socio-cultural activities. First of all, this involves the development of amateur theater activities integrating different kinds of art and physical activities, which are especially important for this “high-risk group” for the medical purpose (Zharkov, & Chizhikov, 1998; Kadsson, & Schaefer, 2001).

It is relevant to create various self-organizing young people’s teams, where the organizational technologies, which have not used in socio-cultural activities, play a special role. These technologies include the technologies of social amateur activities, the club form of self-organization as a form of self-management, the creation of innovative sites for implementation and testing of the modern forms of leisure activities (Kipnis, 2002).

In this respect, the main directions of socio-cultural activities include the organization of psychological assistance to the family in solving family problems, as well as the therapeutic programs with the use of achievements of artistic and game culture: art therapy, bibliotherapy, music therapy, drama therapy, etc., which can have a special role in it. It can be a promising idea to establish a creative alliance of psychologists and organizers of socio-cultural activities for the development of general psychotherapeutic and psych corrective programs.

After the rejection, the Soviet ideological heritage was not properly replaced by new national ideas and values. Moreover, many cultural, political and socio-economic achievements of the Soviet people have been unjustly forgotten. This has caused enormous damage to the country, which lost clear future perspectives. The resulting absence of worldview and values had a negative impact on the state of socio-cultural activities. They became drained of their contents and were left without axiological foundations. The absence of axiological foundations can be considered as the main social problem, which is still waiting for its researchers.



## CONCLUSION

After consideration of possibilities of further improvement of socio-cultural activities as an instrument of social policy, one can conclude that it is necessary to reconstruct the content and forms of these activities for the enhancement of their social targeting. The main focus of socio-cultural activities should be placed on their sociality, as the task is to restore and develop the modern directions of interaction and solidarity, which are urgently needed in the modern society (Kamenets, 2015).

It is necessary to continue the convergence of socio-cultural activities and social work because the success of social work depends on the development of its cultural component. In other words, it is necessary to continue the enhancement of the “sociality” of socio-cultural activities and the “cultural conformity” of the social policy. This task also involves a significant reconstruction of the training of specialists in socio-cultural activities. The main direction of professional training should include a block of socially-oriented scientific knowledge: sociology, socio-cultural design, social engineering, social diagnostics, sociology of culture, social anthropology, social psychology, social pedagogy, etc. (Bourdieu, 1993; Berger, & Lukman, 1995; Zharkov, 1998). In this case, professional training will keep up with the spirit of the times and will be able to face today’s main challenges.

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