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# 2<sup>nd</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL RESEARCH

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**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on**

**SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL RESEARCH**

**23-24 May, 2025**

**Baku | AZERBAIJAN**

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# PLENARY TALKS

## WHAT RECOVERY MEANS AROUND THE WORLD: CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND NATURE

**Yasuhiro Kotera**

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Mental health recovery is about more than reducing symptoms-it is about enabling people to lead meaningful, satisfying and hopeful lives, even in the presence of ongoing challenges. While many mental health systems around the world have now adopted recovery-oriented approaches, what “recovery” truly means can differ significantly from one culture to another. Without a careful understanding of these cultural differences, even the most well-intentioned mental health interventions can become ineffective - or worse, harmful.

In this talk, Dr. Yasuhiro Kotera will draw on findings from his cross-cultural research in mental health recovery, integrating insights from over 250 academic publications. He will discuss how the dominant Western understanding of recovery - often focused on individual choice and autonomy - does not always align with the values and lived experiences of people in collectivist societies, where community, family and spiritual dimensions may be central to the healing process.

As part of the session, Dr. Kotera will introduce Global INSPIRE, a tool developed to identify personal recovery priorities based on the widely used CHIME framework (Connectedness, Hope, Identity, Meaning and Empowerment). Global INSPIRE has been adapted for use in multiple countries and languages, helping clinicians better understand what matters most to their patients’ recovery in culturally specific contexts.

He will also discuss the global potential of Recovery Colleges, peer-led learning environments where people with lived experience of mental health difficulties co-produce and deliver courses to others on their own recovery journeys. Originally developed in the UK, Recovery Colleges have been globally implemented in diverse settings, empowering people’s meaningful lives.

Finally, Dr. Kotera will introduce the concept of forest bathing (Shinrin-yoku) - a nature-based intervention with origins in Japan that is gaining global attention. Unlike many

psychological treatments, forest bathing is inherently low-stigma and non-verbal, making it particularly suitable for cross-cultural application without extensive adaptation. It invites people to connect with nature through mindful presence, which research has shown to reduce stress, improve mood and support emotional recovery.

This talk will appeal to students and professionals interested in psychology, psychiatry, public health, social work and global mental health. It will highlight how a deeper awareness of cultural context can enrich our understanding of recovery and how innovations like Global INSPIRE, Recovery Colleges and forest bathing can support healing across cultural boundaries.

## APPRECIATIVE APPROACH IN SOCIAL WORK

**Stefan Cojocaru**

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Based on the theory of social constructionism and the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, the appreciative approach in social intervention emphasizes success. Focusing on the problem inevitably leads to constraints on imagination and reduces the possibility of creating new practices and theories; therefore, letting go of the deficiency paradigm can contribute to the generation of new interpretations and practices in social work. Experimentation with the appreciative approach in the field of social work, especially in counseling, parenting programs, case management and supervision, demonstrates the high efficiency of this approach in changing the situation of the beneficiaries compared to the problem-centered approach. Also, the appreciative approach in parenting programs, in group interventions, leads to increased self-efficacy of parents. The appreciative approach in social work is a powerful and effective strategy for change and development, focusing on success and positives to co-generate positive outcomes, which can lead to a re-orientation of social work and way resources are managed for social services.

**Keywords:** Appreciative approach, social practices, deficiency paradigm, appreciative parenting, appreciative supervision, appreciative case management, appreciative counselling.

## **CHILD PROTECTION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: CHANGING DYNAMICS OF THE 21ST CENTURY**

**Elif Gökçearsan**

Department of Social Work, Ankara University, Türkiye

Today, the field of child protection is shaped by rapidly changing socioeconomic conditions, technological developments and cultural dynamics. Children, as both physically and emotionally vulnerable individuals, are exposed to various threats. These threats include problems such as abuse, neglect, cyberbullying and the negative effects of social media. Especially the proliferation of the digital world poses new risks that threaten the safety of children. In this context, the effectiveness of child protection systems is of great importance for both states and non-governmental organisations. Through co-operation in the fields of education, health, social services and law, comprehensive strategies need to be developed to protect children's rights and ensure their healthy growth. These efforts in the field of child protection aim to contribute to a safe, healthy and happy life for children, who are the individuals of the future.

At this point, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have the potential to offer innovative and effective solutions to child protection practices. Artificial intelligence is used in a wide range of applications from risk assessment systems to cyber security applications in order to increase the safety of children. For example, AI-based algorithms can help social workers better understand potential risks in children and provide timely interventions. In addition, AI can have an important role in ensuring children's digital safety by providing fast and effective solutions in detecting cyberbullying and malicious content that children are exposed to in online environments.

AI can also contribute to children's development processes through personalised education and support programmes, providing a better learning experience for children with special needs. All these possibilities demonstrate the potential of AI in the field of child protection and emphasise the need for ethical and safe application of these technologies. Therefore, the proper and responsible integration of artificial intelligence stands out as an important step in protecting and supporting children.

It is thought that the use of artificial intelligence by social workers can contribute to the more effective and efficient functioning of the field. Artificial intelligence, which helps to identify individuals or groups at risk by analysing large data sets, can enable social workers to make faster and more accurate interventions. It also contributes to the development of personalised services to better understand the needs of individuals, providing effective solutions to individuals with complex situations. By enabling social workers to save more time, AI helps them focus more on their face-to-face interactions and strengthens human relationships. In the field of education and



communication, AI can provide effective materials that support experts to increase their knowledge and skills. However, the use of AI can also bring some ethical issues; issues such as data confidentiality, privacy and algorithmic neutrality should be carefully considered. As a result, while AI improves social work practices, its integration in a responsible and ethical manner is critical to protect the safety and privacy of individuals.

In this study, an evaluation will be made on the ways of using artificial intelligence in the field of child protection and especially its impact on social investigation processes.

## **HUMANISTIC LEARNING IN A DIGITAL WORLD: INNOVATIONS IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION & PRACTICE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

**Eric Wing Hong Chui**

Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

This keynote examines how humanistic learning and digital innovation are integrated to shape the future of social work education and practice in Hong Kong. Over two decades of experience of research, practice and teaching are drawn upon to discuss how the evolving role of social workers has been influenced by shifting funding models and rising public expectations. The presentation highlights how technology-mediated teaching, interdisciplinary collaboration and innovative social solutions foster new skills, resilience and holistic development among social work students and practitioners. Case examples are used to illustrate how innovations, such as virtual learning and gerontechnology, have been integrated into education and frontline practice to promote sustainability and social inclusion. The keynote concludes by emphasizing the need to balance technological advancement with core humanistic values, ensuring that social workers are well-equipped to build just and sustainable communities for the future.

## **CHANGES IN VALUES AND LIFE ORIENTATIONS AMONG THE YOUNG GENERATION IN AZERBAIJAN**

**Rafail Hasanov**

Department of Sociology, Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan

The study is aimed at understanding the main values that are guidelines for the young generation in Azerbaijan, identifying the diversity of life values of modern youth, their characteristics and changes in comparison with previous generations, as well as understanding the value antinomy associated with the combination of various opposing values.

The analysis of social differentiation, well-being and life attitudes seems relevant for researchers of modern youth. This situation is largely due to the level of income and property stratification of people in the modern period. Pragmatism and preoccupation with material problems characterize the world of contemporary youth.

Our goal is to identify and analyze the modern life values of youth and their changes in comparison with previous generations, as well as to understand the features of the value antinomy of modern Azerbaijani youth.

Having made a historical excursion, we note that as a special social group of society, youth is distinguished only at the end of the 17th - beginning of the 18th century, a period associated with the beginning of the industrial revolution. The development of factories and manufactories led to the process of increasing complexity of production and in connection with this, the need for vocational training outside the family. In the traditions of society of that time, a teenager was considered an adult as soon as they started working; that is, there was a direct transition from childhood to adulthood, in connection with which young people were not distinguished as a special social group. During the period of industrialization, various social institutions oriented towards extra-family education, which included vocational schools and universities, experienced great development, which led to the need to distinguish a special social group consisting of the younger generation. Representatives of this group broke away from their families, received an education and mastered new professions of different levels; however, without gaining complete independence, which did not give them the right to consider themselves adults. Everything indicated that their situation and social status were in a transitional state, that is, they could no longer be considered children, but at the same time, they were not yet adults. It is precisely this group that is usually considered youth from a sociological point of view.

Despite the wide application of the term “youth” and the wide use of this social group as an object of study and research, there is no generally accepted concept of the term “youth”. Of course, there are a great many different interpretations, but they all depend on the methods of study and

the researcher's affiliation with various sciences. Using the term “youth” in everyday speech as a definition of a particular group of people, we often focus on age, without thinking about the fact that this concept indicates not only biological and temporal but also psychological and social characteristics of the individual.

Youth is a specific component of Azerbaijani society\*; a significant subject of social change and a huge innovative force. Their interests and cultural life differ from the interests of representatives of other age groups. Young people are actively interested in religion and fashion, painting and computers, sports and graffiti. One of the features of youth culture is its heterogeneity. Young people try to find and somehow express themselves in life, in some subculture.

According to the German sociologist K. Mannheim, youth is neither progressive nor conservative by nature; rather, it is a force ready for any undertaking. It depends on society how it will use the resource potential hidden in each young generation. In our opinion, it is this resource-based approach to youth that is the most promising in the modern sociology of youth. An appeal to a significant number of theoretical works and empirical studies by domestic and foreign sociologists allowed us to conclude that youth today is different; it has different living conditions, different value orientations and attitudes; it is becoming more and more diverse. In general, it is difficult for older people to write about youth: the socialization conditions of the generations of “fathers” and “children” were too different. Youth is a significant subject of social change and a huge innovative force.

In modern scientific literature, there are many approaches to the study of youth problems: stratification, psycho-physiological, role, sub-cultural, conflict and others. Each of the above approaches captures the features of studying youth and the phenomenon of youth in specific scientific disciplines and the corresponding scientific context.

Any social group or community relies on a special central idea inherent only to it. If this concept is destroyed or undermined, the community and civilization are doomed to radical modification. As soon as the spiritual and cultural foundations begin to weaken, we can talk about the beginning of their completion. Cultural boundaries of the unification of individuals, communities, ethnic groups, etc., not only create conditions for satisfying material needs and guaranteeing personal security but also bring a certain order to life, establish moral principles, norms, customs, canons, forms of behavior, etc. Given this diversity, individuals coexisting in a single sociocultural field experience a need for common, unshakable values, rules, attitudes and norms.

There is a direct connection between the changes taking place in society and the value system. The system of value orientations is not given once and for all: with changes in living

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\*The number of young people in 2024 was 22.6 percent of the total population of Azerbaijan

conditions and the individual himself, new values appear and sometimes they are completely or partially re-evaluated. Complex social phenomena, the heterogeneity of political and economic processes affect changes in social ideals and values. Those priorities that previously seemed unshakable are replaced by others that determine today's life realities. A new spectrum of value orientations appears, accompanied by the destruction of old ideals and traditions and the formation of a different type of personality.

To our mind, modern youth in post-Soviet countries according to their life aspirations can be divided into conditionally different social types. Most often, there are “enterprising” people who plan to achieve success in business and wealth, “maximalists” who are confident that they will achieve success in almost all spheres of life, “hard workers” who count on a good job, “family people” whose main aspiration is to create a strong family, “hedonists” who count on a life full of pleasure and “careerists” who believe that they will achieve everything, but only at the cost of such efforts that they will not allow them to have much free time. At the same time, these models of life aspirations are influenced by the characteristics of the social environment in which the youth is formed. New priorities in the system of values, interests and social norms among young people will be reflected in their consciousness in the future and then in their behavior, activity and ultimately, in their social well-being. We consider representatives of the young generation from all strata of Azerbaijani society as representatives of modern youth.

The study of value orientations is a relatively recent development. Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck developed value orientation theory (at Harvard University in 1961), which suggests that all people, everywhere and throughout history, must overcome several problems (universal dilemmas) to survive.

The choices (underlying assumptions) vary from culture to culture. Strodtbeck and Kluckhohn's universal dilemmas are: (a) Does the culture live in harmony with nature and the environment or does it want to dominate it? (b) Is the culture focused on the past, present or future? (c) Is it a task-oriented culture or a relationship-oriented culture? Are we a “doing” culture or a “being” culture? (d) Individualistic or collectivistic? (e) The concept of physical space: is it more private or public? (f) Human nature: are humans inherently good or bad?

The richest and most methodologically sound direction of research into value concepts can be considered the studies conducted in the late 60s-70s of the 20th century in the USA by Rokeach, as well as in other countries, based on the method of direct ranking of values developed by him. Thus, the American psychologist Rokeach (1972) developed a technique of value orientations, dividing values into two types: (1) terminal/final (values-goals) and (2) instrumental (values-means). At the same time, he noted that the origins of an individual's values are reflected in social institutions and can also be traced in all social phenomena.

The results of the research of the Dutch sociologist G. Hofstede (1984) showed that the culture of society has a direct impact on the individual values of individuals and the original theory formulated by him proposed four cultural dimensions by which socio-cultural values can be analyzed: individualism-collectivism; uncertainty avoidance; power distance index and masculinity. In the course of further research, a 5th dimension was added - long-term orientation and in 2010, a 6th dimension - admission and self-restraint.

Another fundamental approach to the study of value orientations is the theory of basic human values, proposed by the Israeli researcher Sh. Schwartz (2012), according to all value orientations, can be divided into social and individual values. At the same time, the scientist noted that values are the needs of the individual, which directly depend on the mentality of a particular society.

The values and behavior of its citizens today are greatly influenced by: (a) industry (people in poorer countries, where the agricultural sector is larger than the industrial sector, tend to adhere to traditional values, while the population of richer countries with a more developed industrial sector prefers secular-rational values); (b) historical heritage (for example, Confucian societies have had a relatively secular worldview for many centuries. This situation persists there today. Communist regimes have made great efforts to eradicate traditional religious values and not without success. However, historically Catholic countries have demonstrated a relatively high resistance to secularization - this conclusion remains valid even after adjusting for the influence of socio-economic development and the communist past).

The presence or absence of intergenerational differences in the sphere of value orientations depends on whether a given society has reached a high level of socio-economic development. Describing the degree of development of this topic, it is necessary to mention the largest comparative international project on the study of values, the World Value Survey, which regularly conducts a study of value models typical for the population of individual countries and regions of the world. It should be noted that the basis of the socio-philosophical understanding of the development of youth in society is the classical position on the continuous process of renewal of social life. In the later period of development of sociology, this position was reflected in the structural-functional approach.

Thus, for modern youth as a whole, a change in the direction of life orientations from the social (collectivist) component to the individual is characteristic. Material well-being began to be valued much higher than freedom and the value of wages began to prevail over the value of interesting work. These problems, on the one hand, are interconnected and stem from objective processes taking place in the modern world - processes of globalization, informatization, urbanization, etc. On the other hand, they have their specifics, mediated by modern Azerbaijani reality and the youth policy carried out concerning youth.

# **SECTION I**

## **Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups**

### **ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR BY YOUNG PEOPLE: FACTORS, CAUSES, METHODS OF PREVENTION AND CORRECTION**

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The article is devoted to problem of antisocial behavior of young people being one of the most significant challenges of the modern society. The authors reveal etiology, genealogy and ontogeny of the phenomenon under study, define factors and reasons of the definition sought and argue ways and means to prevent and correct of the phenomenon.

Using a targeted educational impact on young people, it is necessary to include legal preventive measures in the consciousness of the teenager, which should become part of his beliefs and experience. Antisocial behavioral attitudes of young people can be destroyed by applying methods of mutual trust and respect to them. The surrounding social microsphere, the psychological climate in the family, the conditions of upbringing, relationships with parents and teachers - all this affects young people and should become a determining factor in upbringing.

The problem of antisocial behavior of adolescents and young people has been and remains the most acute problem of modern society. Recently, statistics have recorded a steady increase in the number of young people brought to justice, which indicates the criminalization of the youth environment.

Human behavior is his way of life, his actions in relation to society, people, from the point of view of morality and law. It is axiomatically believed that all behavior is socially conditioned, all of it is social, but it can also be asocial. Asocial behavior is considered to be behavior that violates social norms, such as: criminal, administrative, family. Asocial behavior is unacceptable for individuals and society as a whole, since it contradicts the foundations of human life, his activities, customs, traditions and moral standards. The closest to the concept of "asocial behavior"

is the term “deviant”. “Deviant” is recognized as abnormal behavior that deviates from the social norm. According to Krylov (2009), one can look at asocial behavior from the point of view of adaptation/maladaptation. Then social behavior is adaptive and asocial behavior is maladaptive.

Close to asocial behavior are the terms “criminal”, “criminal” behavior and immoral behavior. Asocial behavior is a type of aggressive behavior that is expressed in destructive actions with the ultimate goal of harming a person. Aggression in people is expressed physically or verbally, actively or passively, directly or indirectly. Young people whose behavior deviates from the rules accepted in society are called difficult, difficult to educate, with deviant, deviant, asocial behavior (Belicheva, 1994).

Theories based on the achievements of various disciplines can explain the asocial behavior of young people. Moffitt's psychopathological model of development distinguishes two types of asocial youth: with a constant way of life and a limited way of life. A person with a limited way of life behaves normally in childhood, but is prone to crimes such as vandalism, dromomania. Young people with a stable lifestyle from childhood are characterized by behavioral disorders and in adolescence they participate in more serious crimes. The public health model emphasizes the influence of the environment and other external factors. The priority of this model is preventive strategies and violence is considered subject to systematic, scientifically justified, continuous intervention.

The third model examines asocial behavior of a person inside and outside the family. According to this theory, harsh, neglectful treatment of a child, violence in childhood, insults and violence in adolescence, all this makes a person, ultimately, asocial and leads to violent crimes, delinquency, suicide or premature death. However, none of these theories provides a complete explanation for the occurrence of asocial behavior.

There are several clinical signs of asocial behavior that must be recognized and the necessary measures taken to correct them. The most common pathologies associated with aggressive behavior in adolescents are mental retardation, moderate speech disorders, mental disorders (attention deficit, hyperactivity, depression, anxiety, personality abnormalities). Conduct disorder and oppositional defiant behavior are psychiatric diagnoses caused by antisocial behavior. These diagnoses are characterized by attention deficit, hyperactivity, increased criminality, abuse of psychoactive drugs and criminal behavior. The causes of antisocial behavior in young people are seen in the peculiarities of the relationship between a person and the environment, the social environment and themselves and are the result of individual circumstances of birth and socialization of a person.

Numerous researchers of antisocial behavior, such as: P.G. Velsky, L.S. Vygotsky, A.S. Makarenko, D.I. Feldstein, A.V. Mudrik, S.A. Zavrashnov, L.K. Fortova and others, among the causes of such behavior, highlight heredity, social environment, training, education and social



activity of the person himself. All of the listed factors affect the individual directly or indirectly, but there is no direct relationship between the negative consequences and the nature of human behavior. That is why researchers such as T.R. Alimkhanova, Yu.A. Kleiberg, A.V. Misko highlight only three main factors: biological, psychological and social.

The biological factor lies in the physiological characteristics of the individual, the psychological factor - in the characteristics of temperament, character accentuation, O. social - reflects the interaction of a person with society (family, educational institution, environment). In general, according to statistics, the most common causes of antisocial behavior include the following:

- 1) Most often, antisocial behavior occurs in teenagers whose families have mental disorders, other illnesses or consequences of illness;
- 2) If young people are addicted to drugs, alcohol and antisocial behavior in society;
- 3) If the relationship between parents in the family is based on misunderstanding, disrespect for each other and such parents show hostility towards children. A factor influencing the antisocial behavior of a teenager is the system of punishments and rewards practiced in the family. Both parental cruelty and excessive love are equally dangerous in raising a teenager;
- 4) There is no paternal upbringing;
- 5) An authoritarian method of upbringing or excessive care for the teenager prevails in the family.

Authoritarianism, cruelty and excessive dominance of the mother are especially dangerous. And if a child has a weak type of nervous system, this can lead to neuropsychiatric diseases and ultimately, irreparable defects of the emotional sphere, lack of empathy, aggressiveness and committing offenses. Antisocial behavior can be expressed in the following forms:

1. Deviant behavior - manifests itself in the violation of social norms, established rules of behavior in the family and educational institution. Most often, deviant behavior manifests itself in the form of aggression, unwillingness to study, demonstration of one's negative attitude to one's environment. Such behavior can be expressed in leaving home, vagrancy and even suicide, alcoholism, drug use.

2. Delinquent behavior is expressed in the established stable behavior of young people, entailing violations of public order. Most often, such behavior manifests itself in the form of insults, beatings, arson, extortion, petty thefts.

3. Addictive behavior is characterized by running away from oneself, from one's problems. Such escape can be accompanied by the following deviations: bulimia, anorexia, workaholism, constant playing of computer games, religious deviations, drugs and suicide (Zmanovskaya, 2008).

Today, the state is undergoing serious changes that lead to the restructuring of human psychology (especially the young), their views, habits, beliefs, moral values and social roles. Not

all of them can adapt to these changes and transformations in their lives. Young people are the stratum of the population that is most sensitive to social and psychological stress. It is among young people that there is a sharp increase in conflict, undisciplined people who do not know how to control themselves.

The main task of solving the problem of antisocial behavior of young people is preventive measures to prevent deviations in behavior, prevention and psychological and pedagogical correction (if necessary). Since the formation of any personality occurs in the environment, this is of decisive importance for the upbringing of a person.

The main role in the formation belongs to small groups: family, educational institutions, informal communication groups. Difficulties in the formation of an individual's behavior, as a rule, are due to the characteristics of the group in which the person is. In our opinion, the most important role in the process of socialization and prevention of antisocial behavior of young people belongs to educational institutions, as the main official institutions of upbringing, which are called upon to instill in young people the norms, rules and moral values accepted in society. In addition, young people spend most of their time in educational institutions and learn many norms of behavior in society.

The professional staff of an educational institution is not only a specialist in the field of certain subjects, but also in the field of education and personality development. Correction of antisocial behavior is a socio-pedagogical and psychological complex of procedures aimed at establishing the value behavior of an individual, capable of correcting personal qualities that characterize the attitude to social actions and deeds.

Back in the 30s of the twentieth century, the famous scientist Kashchenko (2000) developed a classification of correction methods. He proposed to combine these methods into two groups: pedagogical and psychotherapeutic (Kashchenko, 2000).

The pedagogical methods included methods of social influence (correction of active-volitional defects, correction of fears, the method of ignoring, correction of obsessive thoughts and actions, correction of vagrancy, self-correction), special or specifically pedagogical methods (correction of behavioral or nervous deficiencies), the method of correction through work.

The psychotherapeutic methods included: suggestion and self-suggestion, hypnosis, the method of persuasion, psychoanalysis. Correctional work in youth groups consists of the following stages:

1. Designation of the socio-pedagogical and psychological problem.
2. Determination of the causes of antisocial behavior.
3. Diagnostics.
4. Determination of correction methods and technologies and their use.

5. Development, implementation and monitoring of the effectiveness of the correction program (Hillenbrand, 2007).

Today, most scientists are of the opinion that antisocial behavior of young people is caused by destructive socio-political processes occurring in society (errors in the implementation of socio-economic reforms, a decline in the standard of living of citizens, a crisis of the traditional value system). Therefore, economic measures for reforming social relations, the need to increase the material standard and social protection of citizens are put first in solving the issues of preventing antisocial behavior of young people. Research into the problem of antisocial behavior of young people shows that material wealth and high social status of parents are not a guarantee of compliance with social norms by young people. Therefore, it is necessary to note the shortcomings of educational work with teenagers and young people among the reasons for the growth of antisocial behavior.

The best prevention of antisocial behavior of young people is a clear, purposefully organized educational impact. It is important to note that preventive educational opportunities are more effective than other means, since legal preventive measures usually begin to act when the act has already been committed. Using a targeted educational impact on young people, it is necessary to include legal preventive measures in the consciousness of the teenager, which should become part of his beliefs and experience. Antisocial behavioral attitudes of young people can be destroyed by applying methods of mutual trust and respect to them. The surrounding social microsphere, the psychological climate in the family, the conditions of upbringing, relationships with parents and teachers - all this affects young people and should become a determining factor in upbringing.

**Keywords:** Antisocial behavior, deviant behavior, delinquent behavior, prevention, correction.

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## **EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY OMANI FAMILIES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AS PERCEIVED BY CAREGIVERS AT THE NATIONAL AUTISM CENTER IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN**

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Autism is widely regarded as one of the most complex developmental disorders due to the ambiguity surrounding its causes and the presence of maladaptive behavioral patterns. Characterized by severe withdrawal, self-absorption and significant deficits in communication and social skills, autism affects key aspects of a child's development. According to the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), the impact of autism persists across the individual's lifespan, thus requiring continuous, intensive care and support.

Existing literature indicates that families of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) face multifaceted challenges, including securing appropriate educational opportunities, accessing early intervention services and dealing with widespread societal misunderstanding of the disorder. These challenges often lead to social isolation and stigma. Additionally, the high cost of healthcare and rehabilitation services, coupled with insufficient institutional support, exacerbates the psychological and financial strain on families.

Caregivers, positioned between therapeutic systems and family dynamics, offer critical insights into the daily struggles faced by families. They observe that families often experience a dual burden: managing the child's behavioral symptoms and navigating societal stigma and limited public understanding. Many caregivers also note a lack of awareness among families regarding effective strategies for dealing with autism, which contributes to feelings of frustration and helplessness in everyday life. Furthermore, caregivers emphasize the need for sustainable psychological support programs to help families cope with the chronic stress and tension associated with caregiving routines.

In light of these concerns, caregivers advocate for comprehensive training and awareness programs targeting families, along with social and health policies that are responsive to the unique

needs of families with children on the autism spectrum. Listening to the voices of caregivers can significantly inform the development of more effective community-based responses and enhance collaborative care among families, professionals and relevant institutions.

This study aims to explore the primary challenges encountered by families of individuals with autism spectrum disorder in the Sultanate of Oman. Specifically, it seeks to assess the services provided by institutions specializing in autism and to identify key recommendations for overcoming these challenges.

Employing a qualitative research design, the study utilized semi-structured interviews with caregivers and family members of individuals with ASD at the National Autism Center - the only governmental institution of its kind in Oman. A total of seven professionals were interviewed. The interview guide covered various themes, including familial, psychological, social and economic challenges, as well as the services offered by the center to individuals and their families.

The findings revealed that families face numerous challenges. Family-related issues include a lack of awareness about effective caregiving practices, denial of the diagnosis, difficulty accepting the condition and anxiety about the child's educational, social and independent future. Social challenges include limited societal awareness and difficulties in peer integration. Economic burdens stem from the cost of treatment and rehabilitation and difficulties related to transportation to the center. Psychological challenges include maternal stress due to minimal paternal involvement and pervasive familial anxiety and tension.

The study proposes several recommendations to enhance and expand services, including: launching early screening awareness campaigns to facilitate timely diagnosis and intervention; geographically expanding services by establishing new branches of the center across Oman to reduce waiting lists; developing specialized training programs for caregivers and therapists nationwide and providing ongoing psychosocial support sessions to enhance coping skills and reduce anxiety among families.

**Keywords:** Autism, family, caregivers, challenges.

## THE GLOBAL MIGRATION CRISIS AS A WELFARE STATE CRISIS

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Since the second decade of the 21st century the migration crisis acts as a “geopolitical front line” that has a profound impact on the traditional rules of the game in international relations, as well as on the domestic and foreign policies pursued by Western states to this day. The migration crisis is turning into a crisis of the political, legal, economic, ideological, socio-cultural policies of the West, observed at all levels, into a process of bankruptcy of international justice, liberal human rights and the values of multiculturalism. The world community can achieve a solution to the migration crisis only by adhering to the principles of international justice and law. The above, in turn, determines the need to study the causes of the political aspects of the migration problem.

In today's international migration scene, access to welfare rights is one of the central issues. The interface between nation-state governance of immigration and the question of access to welfare rights, with a primary emphasis on Europe-West. Esping-Andersen's theory (1990) of ‘Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism’, issues such as welfare state sustainability, inclusion and cohesion is used as a main frame of reference for the analysis. The main argument is that against the backdrop of the global migration crisis and the problems it creates there is no unitary relationship between immigration and the welfare state worldwide. The impact of newcomers depends on the economic, institutional and political features of particular welfare and labor regimes in different countries.

Never in history has so much attention been paid to human movement. Global migration yields demographic shifts of historical significance, profoundly shaking up world politics - as shown by the “refugee crisis”, the rise of White nationalism in the United States and the spreading of the populist right in Europe. Global migration is one of the defining issues of the 21st century, challenging the fabric of Western societies, remodelling the essence of sovereignty and changing the way we think of borders and boundaries.

The so-called ‘migration crisis’ facing the EU divided EU Member States and caused a rise in populist and racist discourses. The causes of the crisis are many: migration flows are increasing rapidly year by year. The changing character of migration and demographic crisis in Western countries is another reason for the perceived migration “crisis”. Until recent decades, migration consisted mainly of labor workers. Today, however, family migration presents the largest share of migrants in the West - more than 50% when excluding refugees and asylum seekers. And of course

other main reasons relates to dramatic geopolitical changes, wars and bloody conflicts, ecological and climatic disasters. Population migration in each country is a factor influencing socio-economic development. People fleeing wars and conflicts mostly head to neighbouring and other countries, which creates a number of political, social and economic problems for the countries that are forced to accept them. Often, the host country is unable to solve the problem of migrants due to socio-economic instability, which leads to the emergence of new problems for the country.

Since the early 1990s, immigration has recurrently been framed as a “threat” to welfare states and immigrants’ claims of welfare benefits as fraudulent and burdensome to host societies. Assertions like this have been made by numerous politicians and parties in Europa. The belief that immigration and a strong welfare state are incompatible is currently represented by the but also mainstream parties in Europe.

Much has been written about crises and welfare states. Rather than rehearse arguments elaborated in detail elsewhere, here we outline only the key themes.

Browsing through the pages of any social science dictionary we can realize how the category of crisis marked the millenary events of human history, assuming with time the meaning of a transition period, of a revolutionary or restoration crisis, quickly becoming a term shared by a plurality of disciplinary fields (religious, military, political, cultural, economic and so on) and often determining the change indicated by its original Greek etymology of crisis. “Crisis is a term used to indicate far-reaching historical phenomena (crisis of industrialization, crisis of secularization), historically circumscribed but not less complex phenomena (crisis of democracy) or technically delimited processes (government crisis in the context of constitutional rules, economic crisis that can be defined with precise indicators)” (Borghini & Campo, 2015).

The idea of the crisis of the welfare state, that is, the systemic existential threats it is exposed to (rather than crises to which the welfare state responds) has its intellectual roots in the 1970s when severe economic challenges raised questions from across the political spectrum concerning the fiscal sustainability of welfare states and their structural compatibility with capitalism. Some authors added weight to these arguments by suggesting that the inability of the welfare state to reconcile economic efficiency with social justice undermines legitimacy and stokes political tensions between opposing social classes that are ultimately impossible to smooth. Although these critiques were offered by the left, a similar set of arguments emerged from the right. Because for economic liberals the private sector is always more efficient than the public sector, the diversion of resources towards the state undermines growth, profits and investment which in turn, leads to unemployment and pressure on governments to do more. The range of interconnected extensive and existential threats to human and planetary survival - characterised variously as ‘permacrisis’, ‘polycrisis’ or ‘omnicrisis’ - are ones that the welfare state, based on work and economic growth, inevitably struggles to resolve (Farnsworth & Irving, 2024).



While the claim that immigration is detrimental to welfare states' viability is thus relatively dominant in the public debate, less agreement can be found in the academic literature on the topic. To assess the impact immigration has on welfare states' viability, previous studies have mainly focused on social expenditures as a percentage of GDP, with inconclusive results. While some obtain that immigration increases fiscal pressures, other studies find no evidence for a burdening effect. Some even argue that immigration positively contributes to the viability of welfare state arrangements. Less research however exists that explicitly analyses the association between immigration and the generosity of policy. Researchers instead often frame changes in spending as an indicator for a change in policy. It is argued that decreases in spending are indicative of preceding cuts in generosity of policy (Soroka *et al.*, 2016) or that increases in spending and generosity are both indicators for increased welfare state effort (Fenwick, 2019).

Researchers attribute the main problems associated with immigration to the potentially ever-increasing burden on state social security systems, including the large influx of refugees; the negative impact on the economy and labor market; threats to political stability and public order; as well as the threat of terrorism and the impetus for the development of extremism, etc.

In history, alongside political state and national state structures, for the first time, the form of a social state was also brought to life in Europe.

Today, the society that receives migrants tends to view the migrant class as a heavy burden on the social security and welfare system, especially those who receive social assistance, benefits and funds, as the culprits of all the problems. Western countries have not been able to fully solve the problem of integrating migrants into society. Even the United States, characterized as a "country of immigrants", takes the most extreme position regarding migration processes. Welfare states significantly tighten migration conditions and make changes to social protection policies.

Researchers attribute the main problems associated with immigration to the potentially ever-increasing burden on state social security systems, including the large influx of refugees; the negative impact on the economy and labor market; threats to political stability and public order; as well as the threat of terrorism and the impetus for the development of extremism, etc. The demands for changes in the state's socio-cultural policy towards migrants have proven to be difficult, which has led to a leading trend of political-ideological processes, phobias and support for extreme positions. Working with people in such a situation is becoming a primary task for Western political forces.

As is known, three main directions of fundamental human rights have developed in the West. In addition to the right to choose, people have two main categories of rights: social rights, which concern people's well-being (including human health, education and civil rights) and personal freedoms and civil rights. Due to the catastrophic scale of migration, legislation is currently being tightened regarding the implementation of migrants' rights in all three areas. The fact that the status



of “citizenship” does not apply to everyone means that laws also apply to certain social groups. More and more people now live in countries where they do not have citizenship.

Benhabib considers that in developed democratic countries, a person's social and civil rights are linked to his or her citizenship, not to his or her permanent place of residence. As a result, new situations have arisen regarding citizenship and the nation state. “Migrants are like travelers from another time and with a different set of ideas, navigating an unknown territory with the help of old maps” (Benhabib, 2005).

Thus, if a state is home to a large number of citizens with different rights and forms of citizenship, citizenship no longer functions as an all-encompassing mechanism that unites the population and forms the basis of a common identity. This does not mean that all residents of the state have equal rights and obligations. In addition, different categories of rights are also separated from citizenship status. Political, social and civil rights are now differentiated between members of groups/communities with different statuses.

The arguments that migrants are a burden on the social system of the destination country are one-sided. Thus, this conclusion can only be true for categories of migrants who are unable to find employment and who receive targeted assistance. However, as is known, a small proportion of migrants cannot work. The topic of migrant labor in the creation of innovations, inventions and other technologies that change the face of modern civilization is widely discussed and well known (Liebig & Mo, 2013).

According to a study by the International Monetary Fund (2016), large-scale international aid to migrants does not hinder economic growth in Europe, but rather promotes it. However, the impact of this positive dynamic may differ in the short and long term. Over a short period of time, refugee immigration (arrival) increases GDP on average. Mostly because while the expenses of the state in supporting the beneficiaries of protection increase, the number of consumers and those in the workforce increases as well.

Another reality is that migrants who are recipients of social assistance have difficulty entering the labour market in the host country. The jobs they could take are therefore already occupied by other immigrants. Research shows that in countries where immigrants make up a significant proportion of all immigrants (e.g. in the Scandinavian countries), the social assistance they receive makes a contribution to their long-term labour force participation by “substituting” for benefits. At the same time, the provision of what some consider to be “generous” social services to migrant’s causes discontent among the local population, which does not consider such a policy to be correct. For example, in Belgium, Italy, France, Sweden, Germany, Hungary and the UK, majorities of the population claim that immigration policy puts strong pressure on the distribution of social services and that immigrants make employment opportunities difficult for locals.

From the Welfare State to “Welfare Chauvinism?” - In recent years, xenophobic tendencies towards migrants in Europe have reached unprecedented levels. These tendencies are most often expressed through welfare chauvinism. In this context, the deep-rooted differences between the welfare state and migration in Europe are widely discussed in terms of the phenomenon of “welfare chauvinism”. “Welfare chauvinism” is the idea that social benefits and services, such as unemployment benefits, social housing, education and health care, should only be available to 'native' people and not to migrants, refugees or ethnic minorities. The basic principle of welfare chauvinism is welfare for ‘us’, but not for ‘them’. Welfare chauvinism is a winning formula for the radical right - explains Eick (2024), an assistant professor of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam. ‘Welfare chauvinism is based on the misconception that newcomers usually abuse the welfare state. The fear is that the biggest tax profiteers are the newcomers, not the native people. This perspective can be found not only in public opinion, but also in election campaigns or laws that exclude newcomers’ (Eick, 2024).

This situation is especially evident in countries with relatively large flows of migrants, where the local population holds migrants responsible for depriving them of social security. In other words, welfare chauvinists oppose social assistance to migrants within the framework of the welfare state. According to their logic, the services provided by the European welfare state lead to more migrants coming to Europe every day, which creates endless problems.

Eick (2024) continues her thought by writing, the redistribution of welfare resources to migrants continues to polarise society. Not only politicians from the radical right but also from more mainstream parties are capitalising on the idea of ‘welfare for our kind’ or welfare chauvinism. “Welfare Chauvinism in Europe, constructing an extensive overview of welfare chauvinism’s causes and consequences, sheds light on the multidimensionality of welfare chauvinist attitudes across countries, time, social policies and different migrant groups. Unveils hidden nuances regarding welfare chauvinism that are frequently overlooked in current discourse, particularly concerning socioeconomic cleavages in Europe. Using high-quality data on public attitudes and macro-level conditions, author investigates the common misperception that higher levels of education universally lead to more tolerant attitudes and argues that governments and welfare institutions play a crucial role in shaping public opinion.

Researches identifies a number of reasons for increased welfare spending as a response to immigration. One argument claims that immigration increases expenditures because immigrants depend on unemployment and social assistance benefits more often than the native born. On average, immigrants tend to have lower educational levels than the native born population. Immigrants also on average have lower recognized work experience, less language proficiency of the language spoken in the country of destination and less relevant networks. Furthermore,

immigrants also face risks of discrimination in the labor market and they often work in sectors that are hit hardest by unemployment during cyclical downturns (Römer, 2023).

It can be noted that, welfare chauvinism, manifesting itself in five basic forms - temporary, selective, functional, cultural and in its most extreme form, unconditional chauvinism - is a form of opposition to welfare policy that has received a lot of attention over the past decade (Leruth *et al.*, 2024). Welfare chauvinism, that is, the exclusion of non-citizens who live permanently within a state from social benefits and services, has become a mainstream form of welfare policy opposition advocated by some political parties and members of the public.

So, we can conclude that the global migration crisis has also led to the emergence of a trend such as the crisis of the welfare state. Anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia are not only driven by profit-driven rhetoric. Expressions aimed at excluding migrants from society due to their cultural and ethnic differences or scapegoating them are often heard from politicians and ordinary citizens, with demands to deprive them of social benefits. It should be noted that the most important of the common features and fundamental principles of welfare state models is the observance of the principle of social justice. The global economic crisis of recent years has given new impetus to the “blows” to the welfare state.

The expectation that the foundations of the welfare state will remain untouched by anti-immigrant policies is also deeply mistaken. Because this is impossible in a situation where the principle of social justice, which is the historical basis of the welfare state, is violated. The only measure that can lead the Western model of the welfare state out of the current crisis and save it from collapse is the policy of selective migration - the “brain drain”, which is currently being implemented unilaterally.

Attracting the most creative and socially enterprising “brains” from around the world seems to be the only way for developing Western countries to both gain an advantage in the technological civilization and to obtain significant additional financial resources to solve their internal problems. Increasing the share of income from innovation in GDP does not allow the foundations of the welfare state to be completely undermined. The one-sided “brain drain” continues as the latest form of colonialism in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Migration crisis, global scale, welfare state, social policy, welfare state, “welfare chauvinism” theory, tendencies.

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# **FACTORS RELATED TO THE RECRUITMENT AND EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS - A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

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This literature review tackles the factors concerning the recruitment and exploitation of children in armed conflict, focusing on the structural and agential reasons behind the occurrence of this phenomenon. This literature review will also look at the political and economic reasons behind this phenomenon. Attention is also paid to the question of whether children can voluntarily join militia organizations out of their own will or whether it is not possible for children to exercise their own judgment in such matters. This systematic literature review will also deal with the factors that may enable the perpetuation of this phenomenon, such as the difficulties involved in attaining the process of pacification in countries affected by internal conflict. Special emphasis will also be directed towards lack of human development and the socio-economic inequalities that prevail in the Global South as factors that influence the continuation of the phenomenon of the recruitment and exploitation of children.

## **The importance of the study**

The importance of this study rests on the fact that in the last decade, an approximate ten million children have been killed as a result of armed conflict. The literature on the subject indicates that children are vulnerable to the negative implications of armed conflict. Children suffer more than adults because they tend to remain unattended by adults. Moreover, this study is also important because it shows the manner in which the fundamental rights of children are infringed in cases concerning the onset of conflict. Many of children that participate in armed conflict are left with injuries, psychological trauma and significant disabilities. Children are affected by conflict in direct and indirect ways, with many of them being taken away from their families and places of origin. The high level of trauma created by this situation is, in many cases, responsible for perpetuating the cycle of violence in countries affected by intergenerational conflict.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The best way to address the problems that stem from the participation of children in warfare is by preventing conflict and ensuring that those countries that have gone through a period of internecine warfare are able to heal from the consequences of having used children in armed conflict. It is recommended that international institutions and organizations such as the United Nations put in motion mechanisms for the purpose of deterring previously warring parties from seeking conflict as an instrument for resolving outstanding issues. The best manner of bringing about this situation is by enforcing the protections included in the Geneva Convention, which give special status to children in times of warfare, along with the enforcement of the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect, which requires national governments to give protection to civilians in times of internal conflict. In any case, the enforcement of these legal provisions can only come about through the auspices of a multinational peacekeeping force capable of dealing with the possible effects of armed militias seeking to destabilise the internal order and to acquire power through force. The undertaking of constabulary duties for the purpose of enforcing international law is, therefore, the best way to prevent the participation of children in warfare in years to come.

**Keywords:** Child exploitation, armed conflict, global south, structure, agency, child soldiers.

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## **THE VALUE OF INCLUSION IN HUMAN POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (The case of people with disabilities' employment)**

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The paper addresses a gap in the study of human potential (HP) as a multi-level concept closely linked to inclusion. It proposes, based on empirical data, to consider inclusion in business organizations as a key element in the development of HP. In this context, HP acquires three levels of measurement:

1. Micro-level, which includes characteristics such as agency, motivation and autonomy;
2. Meso-level, which reflects, for example, commitment to inclusion values;
3. Macro-level, which demonstrates the presence of inclusive growth in society.

The authors state that inclusion transforms business structures into actors advancing inclusion values not only within the business community but also in society as a whole. As a result, a more diverse HP is formed in terms of its sociocultural and activity components, which, in turn, will contribute to the adaptation of social institutions to inclusive values and the development of stable inclusive norms. The paper focuses on micro- and meso levels of HP development in business organizations.

### **The structure of HP: projection onto people with disabilities and inclusive employment**

The structure of HP, after certain simplifications, is most often reduced to four components: socio-demographic, socio-economic, socio-cultural and activity potential of society (Zaslavskaya, 2005). Each of them contains elements that provide grounds for turning to inclusion as a value important for the development of HP, primarily at the micro level - in an organization. If we focus on the inclusive employment of people with disabilities (PWD) as an embodiment of one of the options for inclusion in an organization, then such elements of socio-demographic potential as the state of physical and mental health, the level and quality of education, being projected onto PWD, demonstrate a serious “failure” of this component of HP, including due to the unbalanced institutional structure of society. The socio-economic component of the HP in relation to persons with disabilities will reflect their maximum vulnerability and inequality in relation to their level of qualifications, demand in the labor market, the degree of realization of business and intellectual resources, chances for success in life and social security

At the level of the socio-cultural component of HP, the possibility of inclusion of disabled people in Russian society will probably be demonstrated most vividly, since this component is connected with the process of socialization, with the level of morality and ethics, with the motivational complex and types of behavior. It must be acknowledged that the level of acceptance of disabled people in Russian society leaves much to be desired, although it shows certain positive dynamics. At the same time, especially taking into account the previously mentioned inertia of HP, it is difficult to expect that the socio-cultural component of HP will actively introduce inclusion into society as a way and norm of life.

An argument in favor of this thesis can be seen in an analysis of the prevailing values of Russians, which shows that, for example, in 2008 it was possible to imagine “the average Russian as a person who, when compared with residents of most other European countries included in the study, highly values security and protection from a strong state; he is less committed to the values of novelty, creativity, freedom and independence. <...> A strong focus on personal self-affirmation leaves less room in his consciousness for concern for equality and justice in the country and the world, for tolerance, for nature and the environment and even for concern and care for those who directly surround him” (Magun & Rudnev, 2010). Despite the fact that by 2020 the value orientations of Russians have undergone statistically significant changes, such values as social orientation, altruism, tolerance, equality, justice, concern for nature and the people around them have not yet taken a dominant position (Magun & Rudnev, 2021). Thus, the values of inclusion, including that of persons with disabilities, will still have to pave the way for themselves before they can become the basis for the development of the HP, including its socio-cultural component.

There are methodological grounds to believe that inclusion in an organization for people with disabilities, understood as attitudes at the level of the organization’s rules and regulations, actions at the level of professional competencies and practices, as well as shared values and meanings invested in inclusion (inclusive corporate culture), aimed at achieving equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of their health characteristics, in order to ensure their full active participation in work and other spheres of life, as well as in the decision-making process (Antonova, 2013; Yarskaya, 2012; Yarskaya & Yarskaya-Smirnova, 2015), is becoming an element of the development of HP at the micro- and meso-levels.

### **Inclusive employment and its value for HP development**

Using the results of the qualitative stage of the study “Social inclusion and diversity management in Russian companies in the context of global challenges (a view from HR managers)”, we will demonstrate the value of inclusion for private enterprises using a case of inclusive employment. An analysis of data from semi-structured interviews with 30 HR managers

of Russian and transnational small, medium and large businesses (IT, retail, FMCG, oil and gas, consulting, construction business, pharmaceuticals, hospitality (HoReCa), multifunctional holdings, etc.), conducted from April to June 2021, made it possible to study the current values of HR managers and their attitude towards the strategies, barriers and positive effects of inclusive employment, as well as to see how HR managers use this knowledge when making decisions in support of inclusive employment (Antonova *et al.*, 2021).

Firstly, the discussion of the possibilities of inclusive employment was connected with the problems of hiring people with disabilities, among which were possible resistance, first of all, from line managers, who fear a decrease in productivity or the emergence of organizational or communication problems (the prevalence of stereotypes has an effect), as well as the unwillingness of company managers/owners to accept people with disabilities, even if a candidate with a disability fully met the requirements of the vacancy. The value of inclusion demonstrated in inclusive employment for the organization itself and for the development of the HP, in this case is expressed: in overcoming stereotypes and organizational, systemic discrimination that have developed in society (for example, opportunities for career growth for people with disabilities); in changing personal attitudes and moving to perceiving inclusion “as a norm of life”; in expanding the experience of interaction with people with disabilities and acquiring new skills and professional competencies (“working on mistakes”: for example, hiring a person with an autism spectrum disorder is always an experiment for a company, not necessarily a successful one, etc.). The above changes at the level of expanded characteristics of the HR, such as professional qualifications, competencies, cultural and value orientations, adaptability to the social infrastructure of society, will lead to the development of the socio-economic, socio-cultural and activity components of HP.

Secondly, formal declaration of inclusion in an organization, adoption of regulations and codes, even adherence to quotas for hiring people with disabilities will not lead to overcoming stereotypes and accepting the values of inclusion. As HR managers of companies noted, “We must give all people the opportunity to be with each other. And create these conditions, so that we can work with these people (people with disabilities)”; “This is a big, long-term, I would say, permanent job”. The value of inclusive employment in a company for the development of HP is expressed primarily in the formation of an inclusive culture in the organization, which is the main condition for the dissemination of inclusive values. It is also important to find new talented employees from among the disabled, to introduce new creative ideas, the authors of which are, among others, employees with disabilities.

Third advantage of inclusive employment is that businesses no longer understand it as an exclusively charitable gesture and part of the company's corporate social responsibility, but begin to articulate the presence of employees with disabilities in the team as a business case.

The value of inclusion for the company is expressed then: in a renewed view of inclusive employment as an indicator of the “readiness, maturity” of the organization and its organizational culture to accept people with disabilities into the organization; in the fact that inclusive employment ceases to be an act of charity and becomes part of the company's business processes (for example, in a large oil company, employees with Autism were entrusted with training neural networks, which significantly increased the effectiveness of this activity); in improving relationships in the team and in the organization as a whole; in improving the image, forming an inclusive brand of the company.

If the businesses exist that are truly (and not just for show) developing inclusion in relation to one or several socially excluded groups, the content and environment of the HP also begin to become more inclusive, offering new opportunities for the development of the PE, which is expressed not only in economic but also in humanitarian advantages.

If we summarize the social effect that inclusion, implemented at the level of a business organization, can have on the development of HP, we can assume the following. Inclusive employment opens the way to the recognition of inclusion as a “norm of life”, which means that the values shared by society in relation to PWDs will gradually change and the socio-cultural component of HP will receive a “booster vaccination” with such values as altruism, tolerance, social orientation, care for one's neighbor and nature, equality and justice, which, in turn, will affect the renewal of the system of social institutions responsible for the formation of HP, as well as a greater balance in the social group structure - inclusive employment leads to a revision of the personal values and attitudes of the HR manager / HR director to his / her own life and ultimately helps to reduce the stigmatization of people with disabilities

This paper demonstrates on the basis of empirical data that inclusion in an organization is the most important element of HP development, helping business to become actors on the path of promoting the values of inclusion in the business community and in society as a whole, thereby further enriching HP in terms of its socio-cultural and activity components, which, in turn, will facilitate the adaptation of social institutions to inclusive values and the development of stable inclusive norms. And this will have a positive effect on the formation of conditions for inclusive growth and inclusive development.

**Keywords:** Inclusion, human potential, people with disabilities, business, inclusive employment.

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## TEXT MINING IN DISABILITY STUDIES AND SOCIAL WORK: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

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The emergence of big data and computer-aided Analysis technologies provide new opportunities for using large-scale text-based materials as data sources in scientific researches. While the current disability researchers intend to address the disability as a socially constructed phenomenon to be approached in sociocultural contexts rather than understanding it as an individual-centered medical issue, this paper argues that the methods of analysing large volumes of unstructured texts with computer-aided methods can open additional avenues for disability researchers and social workers working with persons with disabilities. In this sense, the paper discusses the contributions of text mining methodology to disability studies and social work practices targeting persons with disabilities. In the first section of the paper, the basic character of the text mining methodology and its role in uncovering the meanings of social phenomena are discussed. In the subsequent paragraphs, the paper examines the role of text mining methodology in revealing the complex sociocultural meanings of disability and its contributions to disability studies and social work.

The paper aims to draw attention to the complementary and supportive nature of the text mining method to traditional research methods in disability studies and social work practice.

### **Text mining and its role in deconstructing disability**

Text mining is a method that involves extracting valuable information from textual data using computational techniques. With the rise of digital communication and the rapid increase of textual content available online, researchers are increasingly utilizing text mining to analyze and interpret these large data sources. By harnessing extensive volumes of text from diverse sources, text mining helps to uncover social representations of facts, patterns, trends and insights (Caputo *et al.*, 2016). Social media platforms and online forms provide rich sources of textual data that can be analyzed to study social phenomena such as public opinion or cultural trends (Moessner *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, text mining techniques have been used to analyze survey responses, interview transcripts, case reports, archival materials and other qualitative data, enabling researchers to derive meaningful insights and identify themes.

In order to retrieve the most accurate data responding the need of researchers and analyze such data properly, as well as allowing researchers to efficiently process large amounts of text and discover hidden patterns and relationships, so many techniques have been developed in utilization of text mining methodology. As shown by Gaikwad et al. (2014), such techniques can be classified in terms of the ways of retrieving and analyzing the data in text mining methodology. In information retrieval phase, basically there are four methods that can be employed. Such methods are termed as Term Based Method, Phrase Based Method, Concept Based Method and Pattern Taxonomy Method. In analyzing the gathered data on the other hand, Information extraction, Summarization, Categorization, Clustering and Information visualization techniques are the most frequently used techniques. These methods can capture intricate linguistic structures and semantic connections within textual data.

The most important advantage of text mining is that it transforms unstructured sources such as case study reports, social media posts, which contain valuable data but cannot be analyzed with traditional statistical methods into usable data sources for researchers (Lee *et al.*, 2020). According to Goh et al. (2021), free texts can be more beneficial than structured texts in discovering the psychosocial factors that form the background of the phenomena and directly affect the well-being of individuals. A study by Spasić et al. (2019) demonstrated the additional contributions of using text mining together with qualitative and quantitative methods in discovering patients' experiences.

While text mining offers significant opportunities in unlocking the social phenomena by using relationship patterns contained in unstructured sources, it also poses several challenges. As stated by Gaikwad et al. (2014), one of these challenges is the ambiguity problem, which is a result of the natural language of the unstructured sources that the text mining methodology is based on. In natural language, the same expressions can have different meanings in different contexts, which can create ambiguity. The existence of ethical problems such as written consent and confidentiality in the use of text mining is another topic of discussion. In addition, the reliability of the sources used to obtain data in text mining is also questionable issue. Despite these challenges, text mining provides remarkable opportunities for disability researchers and social workers to develop practices for persons with disabilities.

When viewing the disability in the historical perspective, it is seen that the medical and individual-based understanding of disability had been dominant in political and social discourse. A series of social and political developments have replaced this medical understanding with a social constructivist approach. When viewed from a social constructivist perspective, disability is understood as a phenomenon produced by historical, political and cultural contexts.

The social perspective posits that society itself creates barriers that disable individuals, rather than their impairments (Aydın & Yıldız, 2023). Language plays a critical role in this construction, as it reflects and shapes societal attitudes.



There are many studies in the literature addressing the strong relationship between the social positioning of individuals with disabilities and the discourses directed at them. As stated by Haegele and Hodge (2016), the language used to define disability also determines the nature of social reactions towards individuals with disabilities. A discourse that defines disability as a weakness will pave the way for individuals with disabilities to be treated as objects of help. It is clear that disability discourses are of critical importance in shaping social attitudes as well as policies that directly affect the well-being of individuals with disabilities.

Another important point in the exploration of the disability discourse and social construction processes is the reflections of these discourses on the mental worlds of individuals with disabilities. Because individuals with disabilities are affected by the discourse directed at them by the society they live in when defining their identities (Aydın & Yıldız, 2023). Social contexts dominated by negative and alienating discourses have the potential to urge persons with disabilities to have a negative self-perception. This threatens the psychological well-being of individuals with disabilities.

### **Implications for Social workers and Researchers**

Analyzing the discourse defining disability through natural language contained in the social media, traditional media and other unstructured sources can provide some benefits in terms of practical social work applications. The success of social workers in analyzing the social construction processes of disability helps them use more effective language with clients with disabilities. By analyzing social construction processes and discourse effectively, social workers can develop more effective practices aimed at eliminating the biased and prejudice-based approaches to which individuals with disabilities are exposed. The analysis of social construction processes also paves the way for more effective participation of social workers in policy development processes.

Data obtained through text mining can facilitate the implementation of rights advocacy practices in accordance with social realities. In analyzing how implemented policies are perceived by society and whether they produce the desired results, using sources reflecting natural language helps to produce more reliable results.

Text mining techniques can analyze the language used in various texts, revealing how disability is understood and responded in a given society. It offers valuable insights about the narratives and social understandings surrounding disability. By this way, it enables researchers and social workers to uncover hidden patterns and biases reflect public perceptions towards persons with disabilities.



Text mining is a methodology that is extremely suitable for the interdisciplinary nature of disability studies. By collaborating with experts from different fields such as data analysts, social work researchers can contribute to the expansion of the scope of disability studies.

**Keywords:** Content analysis, text analysis, text mining, disability studies, social work with persons with disabilities.

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## **SOCIAL WORK WITH CULTURAL ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS: A GUINEAN AND SIERRA LEONEAN MANIFESTATION**

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Albeit traditionally, devoted cultural belief was the solid foundation of attention and help for cultural elderly individuals in Guinea and Sierra Leone, pressures of global development, social transformation, industrialization and the economic adverse winds battering these nations have crumbled this ancient family structure. The mutual connections which flourished between social associates of the binuclear clan and their elderly relations, who represented as chiefs, patriarchs or matriarchs for the clan or household groupings, have been weakened, thus exhibiting them to powerlessness. Also worsening their condition is the collapsed and basic reality of social protection initiatives for elderly individuals in these nations. Subsequently, elderly individuals in Guinea and Sierra Leone are prone to poverty, disease, forsaking and disregard and mistreat and so on. This is problematic, considering that life span should be acknowledged as one of the valuable accomplishment of present times. Elderly individuals are therefore social victims of long-lived, thus depriving cultural society of this social population gain. This research article examines conventional and non-conventional social structures of care for elderly individuals in Guinea and Sierra Leone, via a relational contact. The article is established on literature casing and review of policy records or papers as its principal methodology.

**Keywords:** Social work, Guinea, elderly individuals, manifestation, Sierra Leone.

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## SENSE OF SECURITY AND SELF-CARE BEHAVIOUR AMONG OLDER ADULTS IN RUSSIA

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### Problem statement

The personal perception of security is very important for establishing a high quality of life in modern risk society, which is characterized by complexities and uncertainty, increasing of the environmental, technological and health-related dangers. Sense of security is crucial for well-being of older adults. The feelings of insecurity strongly affect their mental health status, subjective well-being and the level of engagement in social life (Knuutila *et al.*, 2024). Older adults' sense of security is correlated with the confidence in social institutions, the trust in family and friends and functional ability (Fagerström *et al.*, 2011). Feelings of insecurity increase with age and depend on gender, number of children and perceived ageism (De Donder *et al.*, 2012).

Population aging is one of the most widespread and significant demographic trend worldwide. In Russia in 2024 the population above the working age was 34.6 million of people. Geopolitical tension, increase in prices, economic sanctions made Russian older adults more psychologically and socially vulnerable in 2022–2024 than before. Therefore, the study of subjective perception of security among older people in Russia today seems extremely relevant.

### Materials and Methods

This study uses data from 16 semi-structured face-to-face interviews with persons (both men and women) aged 64 to 89 years (purposive sampling) living in three large cities in Russia (Perm, Novosibirsk, Nizhny Novgorod). The interview guide outlined the following thematic blocks: individual understanding of security; factors of the feeling of security; actions and needs related to security. The analysis of the interviews was conducted through open coding of the transcripts.

### Findings

The main indicators of security for older adults were as follows: physical health and functionality, financial stability and independence, social support, environmental well-being and psychological balance.

The meanings of safety are built on the opposition to fears. The fear of illness and dependency gives rise to the awareness of safety as the ability to manage one's life independently

(to move around, take care of oneself, etc.). Woman 1, 68 years old: *"I try to do a lot by myself; it makes me feel more comfortable knowing that I can still do something on my own without burdening anyone"*. The fear of poverty and need leads to discussions about safety as stable income. Woman 2, 68 years old: *"...it would be good to have a financial situation that is more, let's say, stable, so that I feel more independent from other circumstances"*. The rise in prices exacerbates this fear. Woman 3, 75 years old: *"Prices keep going up, up and up every year. It's just a nightmare"*... The fear of loneliness increases the importance of social connections and family as guarantors of social security. The fear of being scammed (phone scams, internet scams) is speaking out while discussing the external sources of insecurity. The fear of losing control over any situation emphasizes the importance of psychological balance and resilience as factors that contribute to overall safety.

The fear of war stands out distinctly; it is contrasted with all other fears, which are seen as minor and manageable. In front of the war, elderly people feel helpless. Woman 4, 78 years old: *"...I won't complain. The war is going on. It's very dangerous there. Where the war is happening, in the regions, in the cities, it's dangerous for the people. And if it comes here - God forbid"*. Woman 5, 66 years old: *"...thank God we are in a region where this war doesn't threaten us for now. But of course, it's very worrying that these hostilities are already spilling over into Russian territory. I wish it would end"*. Man 1, 67 years old: *"...God forbid, a serious war starts, because something terrible and completely incomprehensible is happening in the world. It feels like, well, let's say, there are some pre-war sentiments that are present, in general, inside"*... Woman 6, 78 years old: *"The fears are only from the side of the war"*.

Protective behaviour of older adults is targeting physical and mental health and personal security. Interviews reveal that participants make an effort to follow specific precautions. For example, they take necessary medications and undergo medical check-ups, regularly exercise and avoid going outside on icy days (Man 2, 70 years old: *"...if I see a strong ice, I will turn around and go home, ending my walk because there might be a danger of twisting my ankle or something"*) or during dark hours. Environmental threats prompt them to check if the doors in their apartment are locked, not to answer phone calls from unknown numbers (Woman 3, 75 years old: *"...for me, this is a real problem. I think, what if I answer and it's some kind of scammer"*), seek help from younger relatives and acquaintances regarding internet use and protection from online threats and follow traffic rules and safety protocols.

In general, the protective (self-care) behaviour of the older adults is characterized by prudence and caution, a focus on security, personal and family and dependence on external factors (support from loved ones and the state). The choice of behaviour strategy is primarily related to individual circumstances, personal experience and beliefs of the person. It is important to note here that the informants were born and lived a significant part of their lives as citizens of the Soviet

Union, which largely determines their sense of security and ideas about the role of the state in ensuring it. Woman 1, 68 years old: *"...I can say that at a time when our country was still called the Soviet Union, that the feeling of safety and security was much stronger"*. Woman 5, 66 years old: *"... in the Soviet Union, even if something was bad, but somehow it was felt that for people they at least pretended to care about people. Nowadays, things are going worse"*.

The main factors influencing the sense of security and self-care behaviour of the older Russians are as follows. Firstly, social factors, including social support and connections (their presence increases the sense of security, giving confidence in the availability of help if necessary. The opposite situation leads to a feeling of loneliness and vulnerability). Woman 4, 78 years old: *"The family is very large. So we have security on all sides, they [family members] support us"*. Rather important are the crime rate (if it is assessed as high, then the sense of security of the environment decreases), government policy and social security (insufficient support from the state causes uncertainty and defencelessness, which is expressed in the need for greater government participation in the lives of vulnerable groups of the population, which include older people). Woman 2, 68 years old: *"...I would like more. Especially in relation to the most vulnerable segments of the population, to lonely pensioners <...>. And here, of course, the state needs to use more efforts to protect those like them. After all, they have worked for the state all their lives, but it turns out that the state cannot always protect them"*.

Secondly, economic factors, such as financial stability (lack of money to meet basic needs causes anxiety, stress and a feeling of insecurity), availability of medical services and medicines (their high cost increases the uncertainty of older people about the future and fear for their health). Woman 4, 78 years old: *"Medicines are expensive <...>. And you live only in anticipation of your salary and pension. It doesn't make you feel safe"*. Woman 7, 64 years old: *"...if you get sick, these medications will even cost a lot. It's also kind of... Important"*.

Thirdly, psychological factors, such as personal characteristics, for example, level of anxiety (people with increased levels of anxiety are more likely to experience fear and worry). Woman 8, 68 years old: *"...I believe that a person should always be in this state, be on guard"*. Cognitive abilities and memory, which often diminish with age, are also crucial. Woman 4, 78 years old (talking about factors of subjective security): *"The brain works worse. Memory is the same"*. When observing psychological and mental health problems, older people experience anxiety and fear. Man 3, 89 years old: *"Only, I say, the only thing is, so as not to interfere, someone, for example, turned it on and forgot, because there was no memory either. Then things are bad, so you always try to be on alert, so that if you do something, say, turn it on, don't forget to turn it off"*.

## Conclusion

Independence is a central category in the older adults' narrative about sense of security. Russian older adults consider social connections, primarily family and financial stability as resources for ensuring a stable, calm and safe life. This group expects significant support from the state in the field of security. Special military operation in Ukraine is a significant factor of destabilization of the respondents' general sense of security. In general, when the participants answer the question of whether they feel safe now, almost everyone answers in the affirmative, especially when comparing their feeling with the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, but "the threat of war" becomes the trigger that disturbs their calm. Factors influencing the sense of security are interconnected and determined by the cultural and historical contexts in which the respondents' life experiences were formed. The main protective strategy of the older adults can be called "prudence", which can be especially serious if the respondent has experience of serious illnesses.

**Keywords:** older adults, security, safety, sense of security, sources of security, self-care behaviour.

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## **MIGRATION IN RUSSIA: IMPACT ON HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES**

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Russia is among the leading countries in receiving international migrants. According to official data, as of September 1, 2024, almost 6.2 million foreigners were registered through migration procedures. However, the total number of migrants is significantly higher due to the presence of a substantial number of illegal migrants in the country. Most migrants come from the countries of the former Soviet Union, namely Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (Federal State Statistics Service of Russia, 2023). Migration plays a crucial role in Russia's socio-economic development, significantly influencing the formation and transformation of human capital. Given demographic challenges, labour shortages and globalization, Russia's labour market is dependent on migration flows. However, migration also brings various social challenges, including issues related to integration, vulnerability and social support. This paper examines the impact of migration on human capital development in Russia and suggests ways to optimize migration policy, with a special focus on social vulnerability and support needs for migrants. The study is based on an analysis of sociological research on migration and human capital, as well as official statistical data and expert interviews.

In contemporary sociological analysis, the concept of human capital holds a special place, becoming a key element for understanding the development of society and its economic structure. A substantive analysis of human capital allows for a deeper understanding of how knowledge and skills affect social structure and dynamics. From the sociological perspective, human capital can be viewed as a product of social structures and relationships. For example, access to quality education and health care often depends on the social status and economic position of individuals. In this regard, migrants can be classified as vulnerable groups of the population, since their legal and social status is usually lower than that of the native population.

The study of migration inherently involves examining inequality and related aspects such as ethnic and linguistic differences, as well as the unique cultural characteristics of national groups. These factors contribute to inequality, which determines either advantages or disadvantages in life opportunities. The lack of resources among migrants often leads to stigmatization and discrimination within existing social stratification systems. For example, insufficient qualifications create significant barriers in the labor market, leading to the concentration of a large



number of migrants in low-paid jobs. This, in turn, affects their standard of living and that of their families (Kingston *et al.*, 2015). The results of the study demonstrate that human capital in the context of migration processes is a crucial factor in understanding societal dynamics. On the other hand, research on this topic indicates that social policy in welfare states is often used as a form of control or deterrence against migration by establishing barriers and conditions for migrants' access to social services and benefits. This phenomenon has been referred to as the “welfare state boundary”, as proposed by Bendixen and Näre (2024).

Among the key issues related to migration, the following can be highlighted: controlling migration flows and ensuring migrants' access to social services and benefits. On the one hand, migrants are attracted to countries of developed welfare states due to significant social security benefits. On the other hand, welfare regimes and labor markets themselves shape migration patterns, as labor shortages in certain sectors force states to accept migrant workers.

Studies examining the interaction between migration policy, welfare regimes and the labor market are particularly relevant. These studies reveal both differences in migration practices across welfare states and differentiated access to social benefits depending on a migrant's legal status. Ratzmann and Sahraoui (2021) provide examples of restrictive and incentivizing social policies towards migrants, highlighting the complexity and ambiguity of social policies and practices regarding migrant well-being and opportunities in developed welfare states. The positive impact of immigration on human capital in Russia is associated with compensating for labor shortages in various sectors, particularly in construction, housing, utilities and agriculture. Migration contributes to the development of a multicultural society, fostering cultural diversity, improving the business environment and enhancing social tolerance (Lee & Kurbatskii, 2024). However, migration also has negative effects on human capital, particularly when migrants have low qualifications. A portion of labor migrants lack sufficient education and professional skills, which can reduce overall labor productivity and increase the burden on social infrastructure. Additionally, migration creates social tensions and integration challenges. Language barriers, cultural differences and the absence of clear adaptation mechanisms increase the risk of social isolation and conflict with the local population.

Migration is often associated with heightened social vulnerability, as migrants face numerous challenges in adapting to a new environment. These challenges include limited access to public health and social services. Many migrants struggle to access healthcare, education and housing due to legal restrictions, lack of registration or financial constraints (Borodkin, 2024). Labor discrimination is another critical issue, as migrants are often employed in low-paying jobs under poor working conditions. Employer abuse and workplace discrimination are common, making migrants more vulnerable to social and economic exploitation. Furthermore, migrants frequently live in overcrowded, low-quality housing due to high rental costs and discrimination in the housing

market. These poor living conditions can negatively impact their health and well-being. Bureaucratic complexities often push migrants into informal employment, limiting their rights and access to benefits. Psychological and emotional stress is another significant issue, as migration can lead to social isolation, anxiety and depression. The absence of adequate mental health support and integration programs exacerbates these problems, increasing the risk of social exclusion.

To improve the integration and well-being of migrants in Russia, it is crucial to implement targeted social policies that ensure their access to essential services and protection. Key recommendations include expanding healthcare access, protecting labor rights, establishing language and education programs and improving mental health and social support services. By addressing these issues, Russia can maximize the positive effects of migration while reducing social tensions and improving the quality of life for both migrants and the local population.

In conclusion, it should be noted when studying migration-specific inequalities, it is necessary to consider both resource scarcity and various forms of discrimination. The institutional framework of the welfare state acts as a system of stratification that can either create or mitigate inequality and disadvantage for migrants. There is a complex interaction between immigration regimes and social policies, which in turn produces patterns of social stratification for migrant rights. Additionally, integration policies should account for the diversity of migrants in terms of their country of origin, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, language proficiency and socio-economic status. Social programs must be culturally sensitive, considering the diverse needs of migrants as well as the expectations and traditions of the local population.

Migration has both positive and negative effects on human capital development in Russia. A well-balanced migration policy that focuses on attracting skilled professionals, creating favorable adaptation conditions and preventing brain drain can significantly enhance Russia's global competitiveness. At the same time, addressing the social vulnerability of migrants is essential to ensuring their successful integration and minimizing negative consequences such as social tensions. Implementing robust social support systems will help foster a more inclusive society where migration contributes positively to economic growth and social cohesion.

**Keywords:** Migration, human capital, labour market, social support, welfare state.

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## ISSUES OF UTILIZING THE LABOR POTENTIAL OF ELDERLY PEOPLE IN THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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### **Introduction**

In recent years, due to both the decline in birth rates and the increase in human longevity, the role of elderly and senior citizens in shaping and utilizing the workforce has been growing across all countries worldwide, including the Republic of Azerbaijan. In turn, this plays a positive role in ensuring the social protection of elderly and senior individuals.

According to the classification of the World Health Organization (WHO), individuals aged between 60 and 74 are considered elderly. Meanwhile, according to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Social Services”, individuals who have reached the age of 70 are classified as senior citizens. One of the primary functions of the state is to organize social protection for the population, ensure the fair distribution of material wealth, prioritize the social orientation of domestic policies and continuously improve the well-being of citizens. Based on this principle, the Republic of Azerbaijan has set forth the goal of establishing a “social welfare” state.

As a rule, when describing the foundations of social protection for elderly individuals, two main functions are emphasized: social security (pension payments, benefits) and various social services (providing essential life support services). These are based on the Bismarck and Beveridge models of social protection. In addition to these, within the framework of social protection for elderly individuals, their active participation in the socio-economic life of society and the effective utilization of their long-term life and professional experience for socialization should also be considered.

When considering the role of elderly and senior people in society, their distinct characteristics should be taken into account. Given their accumulated knowledge, skills, experience and other human qualities, they can be productively utilized to create benefits that generate value for both individuals and society as a whole. Rightfully, elderly people are often referred to as the human capital of society.

It is believed that there is a need for an entirely new social model of aging. This model should not only focus on extending human life expectancy and improving living conditions but also ensure that individuals’ personal potential is utilized for the benefit of society. Naturally, two conditions

must be taken into account when utilizing such potential: the individual's own desires and the socio-economic conditions established by the state.

The European Social Charter (<https://e-qanun.az/framework/5409>) stipulates that:

- Everyone has the right to enjoy benefits that ensure their health;
- Everyone has the right to appropriate opportunities in professional training;
- Everyone should have the opportunity to earn a living through free choice of profession and employment;
- Anyone lacking adequate financial means has the right to receive social and medical assistance;
- Everyone has the right to benefit from social services;
- Everyone has the right to be protected from poverty and social exclusion.

Article 23 of the Charter states that every senior citizen has the right to social protection. For this purpose, adequate resources must be provided to ensure that seniors can lead a dignified life and actively participate in public, social and cultural activities (<https://e-qanun.az/framework/5409>).

Thus, modern society must effectively utilize the labor potential of its elderly population. This is explained by the fact that many individuals, through long-term professional activity, have accumulated extensive experience and they are willing to apply this experience in various sectors of the economy, state governance and to pass it on to younger generations.

Thus, society can derive certain benefits by utilizing the human capital of the older generation. At the same time, these individuals face various challenges and difficulties when trying to realize their labor potential in the job market. All these factors highlight the importance of a comprehensive study of the utilization of elderly and senior citizens' labor potential in our republic.

### **Main part**

In scientific and economic literature, the concept of “potential” is generally used to refer to available resources, sources, as well as the capabilities of an individual, a group of individuals or society in a given context. All existing components of potential form a unified, powerful and holistic synergistic system. The potentials of individuals, employees, workforces and collectives differ from one another (Volovskaya, 2001).

A key element of production potential is the labor potential of the worker. Labor potential encompasses all working capacities of both individuals and various labor groups within society. It is shaped by factors such as the ability and willingness to work, initiative, business acumen, entrepreneurial spirit, creativity and other qualities.

In many cases, labor potential is described as a “production factor and condition”, a “set of labor abilities”, the “realization of a worker’s physical and intellectual potential” or as the “professional and qualification level of the population” (Guliyev, 2001).

Since the late 20th century, the term “human potential” has increasingly appeared in economic literature. According to these concepts, human potential is considered society’s primary wealth and the main driving force behind economic growth (Muradov, 2004).

Thus, elderly and senior individuals can be regarded as part of the labor or human potential that possesses valuable human capital and can make significant contributions to the country’s economic development.

In recent years, the number of elderly and senior citizens within different age groups of the population in the Republic of Azerbaijan has been rapidly increasing. This can be observed in the following table.

**Table 1.** Population composition by age groups in the Republic of Azerbaijan thousand people

Indicators	2000	2010	2020	2024 (early in the year)
Total population	7949.3	8997.6	9974.0	10180.8
Working age population	4465.9	6167.9	6741.5	6995.4
60-64 years old	266.8	209.7	514.9	585.8
65-69 years old	192.8	138.5	306.1	429.4
70 years old and over	226.7	396.5	406.1	500.9

Source: [https://azstat.gov.az/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=994&tblId=DT\\_AA\\_002](https://azstat.gov.az/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=994&tblId=DT_AA_002)

As seen from the table data, between 2000 and 2024, the total population increased by 28.1%, the working-age population by 56.6%, the number of people aged 60-64 by 2.2 times, the number of those aged 65-69 by 2.2 times and the number of individuals aged 70 and above by 2.2 times. Additionally, during the analyzed period, the proportion of elderly individuals (aged 60-69) within the total population rose from 5.8% to 10.0%, while the share of senior and old-aged individuals (aged 70 and above) increased from 2.9% to 4.9%.

At the same time, it is observed that the number of elderly individuals is growing at a faster rate compared to the overall working-age population. In 2024, this group’s population was 2.2 times higher than in 2000, reaching 1,015.2 thousand people. Their share of the total working-age population rose from 10.3% in 2000 to 14.5% in 2024.

Thus, as seen globally, the number of elderly people in our republic is increasing at a faster pace compared to the general population. Although, at present and in the near future, considering

certain demographic factors, the number and growth of the working-age population in our country do not raise significant concerns, in 10-15 years, the rapid rise in the number and proportion of elderly individuals may lead to a labor force shortage in the job market.

Taking all this into account, a long-term action plan should be developed and implemented to ensure the effective utilization of the labor potential of elderly individuals in our country. First and foremost, it is necessary to study the current situation in this area.

Currently, the employment of elderly individuals depends on the demand for labor and is determined by several factors:

- Firstly, a shortage of skilled labor in certain professions and specialties.
- Secondly, changes in the nature of employment in modern times, particularly the shift towards the service sector and the gradual reduction of physically demanding labor.

In today's economy, jobs are becoming more automated and less physically strenuous. The widespread use of computer technologies in management, engineering and similar fields makes employment more accessible for elderly individuals compared to job seekers 30 years ago.

A study of the labor market shows that today, elderly individuals, particularly retirees, are mostly offered the following job positions: cashier and salesperson in small stores, courier, postman, cleaner, kiosk operator, museum attendant, librarian, dispatcher and elevator operator. There is a constant shortage of staff in registration departments of polyclinics and kindergartens. Retired men, especially those with experience in security agencies, find it easier to secure jobs in security services. Former teachers often work as private tutors in childcare institutions or lead creative clubs. Many retirees work in labor-intensive positions that do not require heavy physical effort.

An analysis of the current labor market situation in our country indicates that elderly individuals, possessing valuable human capital and often superior skills compared to their younger colleagues, objectively have broad opportunities to continue their professional activities. Approximate calculations suggest that 20-25% of elderly individuals who wish to work continue their employment. It should also be noted that, due to various objective and subjective factors, men are employed more frequently than women. Additionally, elderly individuals living in urban areas tend to continue working at a higher rate compared to those in rural areas.

As seen, elderly individuals in our country have sufficient opportunities to realize their labor potential and continue their productive employment and a significant portion of employers benefit from their capabilities.

In the Republic of Azerbaijan, the social protection of elderly and senior citizens, as well as individuals belonging to various vulnerable groups, is one of the priority directions of the state's social policy. Various social security measures have been established for citizens in this category and a comprehensive social protection system has been created, including social services and

social assistance. Special measures and programs are being implemented to ensure the employment of participants in the Patriotic War and their family members. Currently, large-scale reconstruction and rebuilding efforts are underway in the liberated Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur economic regions and the “Great Return” project is being carried out to facilitate the return of internally displaced persons to their ancestral lands. As part of these efforts, a special program has been developed to ensure employment opportunities for the population.

The state possesses a wide range of tools to facilitate the employment and social protection of elderly individuals. Let’s examine some of the most impactful instruments:

- **Legislation:** Laws against discrimination, legislation on employment protection, pension and social assistance laws, etc.;
- **Financial instruments:** Taxes, subsidies, compensations (including in-kind benefits);
- **Awareness campaigns:** Changing societal (including employers' and trade unions') attitudes toward elderly workers, particularly through media campaigns;
- **The state as a major employer:** The government serves as an example for other economic sectors in demonstrating how to engage with elderly employees through hiring practices, career development opportunities, vocational training and more (Koloslitsyna & Gerasimenko, 2014).

The legal foundations and system of measures for the social protection of the elderly, senior citizens, war veterans and family members of those killed or injured during the war are reflected in legislative documents in our country. As a result of all these efforts, a large number of elderly individuals and other vulnerable groups have been provided with employment. This ensures that their valuable potential is utilized in various sectors of the economy while also allowing them to generate income and improve their financial well-being, as well as that of their families.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Alongside all these considerations, it is important to note that utilizing the labor potential of elderly individuals across various sectors of the economy and enabling them to realize their capabilities come with certain challenges and difficulties. These problems include:

- Discrimination (gender inequality) and ageism (age-based discrimination);
- Limited job search opportunities for elderly individuals;
- Consideration of educational qualifications during hiring processes;
- Health-related issues among elderly individuals;
- Difficulty in adapting to modern digital technologies;
- Low levels of computer literacy and language skills among many job seekers.

As seen, the challenges arising from the use of elderly individuals’ labor potential can be classified into two groups. The first group includes problems that arise directly in the work process (related to the psychophysical characteristics of elderly workers), while the second group consists



of challenges associated with their participation in the labor market (such as professional qualification levels and cases of discrimination).

Addressing these issues can lead to the more effective utilization of the growing elderly workforce. The resolution of these problems largely depends on both employers and job seekers, as well as working individuals themselves. Furthermore, ensuring the employment of elderly individuals and prolonging their professional activity should remain a key focus of the state. This demographic must always feel the care and support of the government.

In our view, a mechanism should be established to support the professional development of elderly and senior individuals, ensuring their access to decent jobs and stable employment. Such a system should be based on the following principles:

1. Creating conditions for elderly individuals to fully exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms;
2. Providing opportunities for the development of their individual abilities, professional skills and creative potential;
3. Developing a socio-economic mechanism within the framework of public-private partnerships to encourage large and medium-sized businesses to employ, retrain and provide medical-social support for elderly workers;
4. Establishing an additional vocational education system through employment centers and vocational schools, focusing on professions that are in demand in the labor market and suitable for elderly individuals;
5. Facilitating voluntary employment opportunities and enabling “work-from-home” arrangements where possible.

**Keywords:** Elderly workers, labor potential, employment, social security, legislation, social protection.

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## **REHABILITATION OF WAR-AFFECTED INDIVIDUALS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL: EFFECTIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION APPROACHES**

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The aim of this study is to investigate the role of psychological support and effective intervention methods in the social-psychological rehabilitation of war-affected individuals and military personnel. During the research, a theoretical analysis method was employed based on scientific sources, clinical guidelines and types of therapy. The psychological rehabilitation of war-affected individuals and military personnel is crucial for addressing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological problems. Therapies such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), group therapy and EMDR, which are applied in international practice, are reviewed. Simultaneously, post-war psychological rehabilitation measures and their impacts in the Azerbaijani context are examined. As a result of the study, the necessity of applying complex and multidisciplinary approaches to eliminate PTSD and other war traumas is emphasized and the importance of integrating international and local experiences is noted.

Traumatic experiences such as war and violence significantly affect an individual's psychological and emotional state. Individuals in war conditions, as well as civilians, face psychological problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety disorders. Research shows that war trauma can leave long-lasting psychological imprints on both military personnel and civilians. In particular, individuals who face death, loss, violence and a constant sense of danger during war experience weakened emotional resilience and other psychological difficulties. Therefore, there is a need for complex and multidisciplinary approaches to rehabilitate victims of war and violence.

Studies conducted on individuals participating in war conditions indicate that serious changes can occur in their brain structure. In particular, it is known that the amygdala and hippocampus play a significant role in the strengthening of traumatic memories (Shin *et al.*, 2006). PTSD is the most commonly observed psychological disorder in war-affected individuals. This disorder manifests with symptoms such as nightmares, fear and high levels of anxiety (Resick *et al.*, 2012). In addition to the development of PTSD in military personnel, problems such as decreased empathy, aggressive behavior and increased alcohol or drug use begin to emerge (Hoge

*et al.*, 2004). These negative effects complicate individuals' daily life activities and social relationships and lead to an increase in psychosocial problems in society.

There are several international psychosocial rehabilitation programs for the therapy of PTSD and its resulting psychological difficulties. In the United States, the Psychological Assistance Program for Experienced Military Personnel has confirmed its effectiveness by reducing PTSD and depression symptoms by more than 40% (Schnurr *et al.*, 2007). At the same time, psychosocial support programs implemented in Scandinavian countries help process traumatic memories and facilitate social adaptation (Litz *et al.*, 2009). These programs provide support to war-affected individuals at both the individual and social levels. Such rehabilitation measures allow people to adopt a more humane attitude towards themselves and reintegrate into society.

Recent research also shows that the deep psychological traumas caused by the ongoing war in Ukraine have further increased the importance of social-psychological rehabilitation for affected individuals and military personnel. In this context, research conducted by Tsurkan-Saifulina (2022) comprehensively examines the psychological effects of war and effective intervention methods. The research notes that international experience, especially American and British experience, plays a significant role in the rehabilitation of affected individuals and military personnel. This highlights the importance of both medical and psychological and social support for the reintegration of affected individuals and military personnel into society.

Psychological support for individuals affected by traumatic experiences such as war and violence is carried out through various psychotherapy methods. These methods include:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): A widely used psychotherapy method in the treatment of PTSD and depression. CBT helps individuals reassess traumatic experiences in a more realistic and constructive way (Resick *et al.*, 2012).
- EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing): This psychotherapy approach helps process traumatic memories and reduce emotional burden. EMDR reprocesses trauma-related memories with rhythmic eye movements between the brain's right and left hemispheres (Shapiro, 2001).
- Group Therapy: Sharing war traumas and listening to others' experiences has a therapeutic effect for many people. Group therapy enables individuals to receive support from each other and strengthen their social relationships (Foa *et al.*, 2009).

After the 44-day Patriotic War in Azerbaijan, our state implemented large-scale measures to restore the psychological health and reintegrate war-affected individuals into society. Special social-psychological support programs were implemented for veterans and civilians in rehabilitation institutions under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, providing services such as diagnostics, psychocorrection and monitoring. Additionally, individual and group therapies were organized for 9,000 people to support martyr families and war-affected

individuals and an online psychological assistance line was launched. These measures made a significant contribution to eliminating the psychological traumas caused by the war and helping people adapt to normal life (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, 2024).

Studies show that structured and scientifically based therapy methods are effective in treating PTSD and other psychological disorders. Psychosocial support programs conducted in individual and group forms increase the emotional resilience of affected individuals and help their social adaptation. In this regard, Azerbaijan's post-war rehabilitation programs can be evaluated as an important model for protecting psychological health and harmonious development of society. In the future, conducting comprehensive research in this area and widely applying international experience will further enhance the effectiveness of psychological rehabilitation.

**Keywords:** Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychological rehabilitation, socio-psychological support, psychotherapy, trauma therapy.

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## MOTIVES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS TO PARTICIPATE IN TRAINING PROGRAMMES

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Social workers specializing in the field of gerontology often turn to various formats of educational activities, including organizing classes, courses and programs in social service institutions and other venues (Zemaitaityte & Petrauskiene, 2018). Such programs become part of the long life learning system for all, while for many citizens of “silver age” they create the basis for social participation and individual well-being. In order to initiate the involvement and increase attendance of people in various forms of learning in old age, these programs should meet the expectations of participants. Hence, there is a need to understand the motives of the training programmes’ participants to enable such services that best meet the principles of participation and inclusion.

It was found out in the previous studies that cognitive interest was the strongest motivator, with social contacts in second place (Kim & Merriam, 2004). As shown in a German study, higher individual motivation in relation to various aspects of learning, as opposed to other life circumstances, affects the frequency of attendance (Ackermann & Seifert, 2021). However, among the various types of motives, instrumental ones predominate, which means that the students' desire for learning is primarily due to their intention to use the acquired knowledge now or in the future. For example, a survey conducted in the Czech Republic showed that the main motivation for older people to enroll in courses was the desire to further master new educational skills, followed by the need to actively spend leisure time (Nováková & Lorenzova, 2020). The motive for establishing new relationships with peers with similar interests was not significant.

The access of older people to socially significant resources and educational programs is heterogeneous. In this regard, the term “inclusive” or “integrative” heragogy arises, which is a close interaction with therapeutic education and social work (Maderer & Skiba, 2006). Based on the ideas of integrative and critical heragogics (Creech & Hallam, 2015), as well as with references to the ideas of the individual and social quality of life of older students (Geigl *et al.*, 2023) and the guidelines of the Madrid Plan (<https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/documents/mipaa-en.pdf>), we will consider the types of motives of older students: personal, group and instrumental. The reconstruction of a map of the motives of the seniors involved into the municipal active aging

programs was based on survey data conducted in the summer and autumn of 2024 in four Russian regions (N=819) and demonstrated the following. Affective and body-centered motives predominate in all three groups (more than 80%): enjoyment of activities and communication, movement. Other frequently mentioned motives include existential (to diversify life) and instrumental (to train memory and fill free time with interesting activities). These were followed by the motives for personal growth and mental well-being (to get away from routine and worries, increase self-confidence, better understand oneself), get recognition, learn more about nature, art and do handicrafts.

One in six of the respondents indicated pragmatic motives: getting skills that are useful in one's own family, including those for mutual understanding or solving any household tasks, as well as taking courses because they are free of charge. Less than half of the respondents (47.6%) decided to take courses in order to improve their qualifications for current work or employment. As for the elderly respondents with disabilities, the proportion of those who are motivated by purposeful reasons is 49%. We analyzed the senior citizens' responses depending on whether they attend educational courses online or offline. Despite the fact that 42.9% are already taking online courses and another part of the respondents would like to join this format (16.6%), not all seek to take courses in information technology that would be useful in order to effectively use "gadgets" and if completed, they rate the course quite low. The main difficulties in attending such courses are the lack of online skills (24.6%) and technical capabilities (17.9%). It is the face-to-face format that is chosen as a way to build social interaction (make new acquaintances, enjoy communication), as well as an opportunity to gain recognition and benefit. The online format is more likely to be used both for personal purposes, such as distraction from worries (69.1%), self-understanding (66.29%) and for subject-oriented tasks: participants are more likely to try to fill their free time (70%), than to acquire the necessary household skills (63.75%), improve skills and knowledge to help family members (65%). Interestingly, the most common motivation for visiting an online format is to do handicrafts and develop fine motor skills (72.5%). There are some differences in attendance depending on socio-demographic characteristics. A significant part of the surveyed seniors involved into all formats of courses belong to the category of those who have enough money for food and clothes, but not enough for large purchases (57.9%), which indicates the availability of such services among the less well-off, an important characteristic of social work with the elderly organized within the framework of municipal and regional active longevity programs. At the same time, there is some gender imbalance, which is reflected in the more frequent attendance of men in remote courses (55.1% of men and 41.1% of women who attended and attend online courses). Older people with disabilities and disabilities are not so actively involved in the digital format: more than 40% of them have never attended online courses.



To analyze educational programs in the conceptual framework of inequality, it is important to take into account the reasons for stopping attending educational programs. The main reason for the termination of participation in the courses is related to situational barriers (Cross, 1981; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982), namely, the state of health of the students (72.2%). Dispositional (lack of support from relatives and friends, 2%), feeling like an unwelcome guest, 1.6%) and institutional (lack of information about courses, 4.2%, long way to courses, 9.3%) barriers are much less common. It is important to note that an insufficient level of education is not a significant barrier, as is the lack of adaptation of the course content to the level of knowledge of the students - they were noted only by one in one hundredth of the respondents.

To develop social work with the elderly, it is important to take into account the comprehensive inclusive effect of educational programs for the older generation. This effect consists of increased participation, social recognition, leadership and social, including intergenerational integration of older people. The promotion of health and activity in old age is a cornerstone in this process, where the education system for the elderly becomes a social driver through the maintenance and formation of motives and acquiring competencies related to personal growth and well-being, the development of self-care skills and compliance with information security, social interactions, creative, reflective and professional tasks. Many elderly people are unable to attend courses full-time for health reasons, although they are not adapted to the online format either. In order to competently build educational programs for the “silver generation”, the gender, physical, age and motivational characteristics of the students must be taken into account. Despite the fact that our survey included the most resourceful elderly people who enjoyed their involvement in active longevity programs, in that number, training courses, the study showed that social inclusion through educational lifts is not available to everyone. In this regard, efforts are being made to increase the availability of such programs. Attention should also be paid to the fairly widespread prevalence of prosocial and labor motivation among the respondents. Research confirms the importance of developing intrinsic motivation and points to a link between satisfying needs and improving the quality of life of older people.

**Keywords:** Training programmes, motives of elderly.

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# COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THE REHABILITATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORK

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## Introduction

As a result of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, many citizens, adults and children received injuries and wounds that led to disability. Injured persons with acquired injuries must undergo a complex rehabilitation process in medical institutions. After that, they are expected to return home and adapt to life in the community. Nowadays, there are various forms of providing rehabilitation assistance to persons with disabilities. At the same time, special studies have shown that the absence or limitation of comprehensive rehabilitation assistance to persons with disabilities in the community leads to the emergence of complex life circumstances for them. These violations, in the absence of timely assistance to a person with a disability, lead to social maladaptation. The basis is not one, but many factors: psychological and pedagogical, socio-psychological, personal, socio-economic, etc. These factors act at the level of psychological prerequisites and complicate the social adaptation of the individual. While these are steps in the right direction, the fact remains that Ukraine still lacks a systematic approach to comprehensively assisting people with disabilities at the community level.

The purpose of the article is to investigate the effectiveness of comprehensive rehabilitation with people with disabilities and persons with acquired trauma during military operations in the context of social welfare and engagement in the community.

In world science, many scientific studies study acquired disability. For example, a study on Narrative Family Therapy and Group Work for Families Living with Acquired Brain Injury (Butera-Prinzi *et al.*, 2014). Acquired disability forces the environment to reconsider their lives and challenges children and their parents as they adapt to the new reality of life. The sooner the diagnosis is made, the easier it is for parents to adjust to the new realities of life (Palmer Haspel & Hamama, 2021). Psychological adaptation, social rehabilitation and integration into society after acquired injuries face many psychosocial issues and processes related to adaptation or adjustment to acquired disabilities and chronic diseases. Some theories and models help a person with a disability and the family control the adaptation process after a sudden change in health status

(Yates, 2003). According to Tagaki (2017), the scientific community has an evolutionary process from research on the recognition of acquired disability to the meaning of their condition for people with disabilities.

Thus, significant experience among Ukrainian scientists has been accumulated in researching problems of correctional work on psychophysical development (L. Barteneva, V. Bondar, L. Vavina, V. Masenko, A. Kolupaeva, S. Maksymenko, L. Fomichova).

### **Methodology**

Although our research continues, the main period this paper addresses runs through December 2024. In this part, we look back at the context of the recent social and economic situation, which has reawakened a number of problems surrounding the conditions of war in Ukraine and the process of reforming and developing the social welfare of persons with disabilities. It is based on different methodological approaches and strands of research, merging ethnographic fieldwork, case studies and interviews. We analyzed four real-life cases of people with acquired trauma, using veterans as examples - participants of reintegration programs of the Veteran Hub NGO and case practice activities of local organizations who are providing services. We combined observations in Ukraine with analyzing posts and threads taken from social media and official data.

### **Findings**

Among the problems and difficulties for people with acquired disabilities, the following can be distinguished: financial and economic, psychological, medical, underdevelopment and unavailability of early diagnosis technologies, the problem of information support, non-acceptance of people with disabilities in society, inaccessibility of particular objects and structures and imperfection of regulatory approval. One of the main problems is how to help people with acquired disabilities adapt to new realities and the need for comprehensive rehabilitation, including physical rehabilitation and reintegration into society or social rehabilitation, given the relevance of the problem of implementing innovative forms of comprehensive rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and the need to improve the quality of life of persons with various forms of disabilities.

Social rehabilitation is a type of social action aimed at implementing a system of organizational, economic, legal, cultural, educational, medical, health and other social measures to restore the physical condition, honor, dignity, rights and freedoms of children and youth who need them due to social vulnerability, illness or other social reasons.

The basis of the comprehensive rehabilitation model is a multidisciplinary approach involving psychologists, occupational therapists, social workers and other specialists. Veterans' communities play an essential role in facilitating socialization, emotional support, career

development and access to resources. Their activities are aimed at maximizing the integration of people with acquired trauma into society and ensuring their self-realization. One of the aspects of comprehensive rehabilitation is the activity of rehabilitation centers. A systematic review showed that the return of persons with severe disabilities to family life had a negative impact on the quality of life of their family members, leading to a loss of partnership, free time and social contacts.

## **Discussion**

Here are some practical examples of comprehensive rehabilitation programs for people with acquired trauma:

1. The UNBROKEN Rehabilitation Center. For example, communities that adopt UNBROKEN's experience are forming their rehabilitation units and adapting the best approaches to local conditions. There is an increasing emphasis on training specialists, including psychologists, to work with military families, who also have a significant demand for assistance.

2. The Halychyna Rehabilitation Center uses modern technologies to rehabilitate people with physical and psychological trauma. It implements community integration programs through art therapy, physiotherapy and psychological support.

3. The Lisova Polyana Center for Mental Health and Rehabilitation of Veterans is a state-owned institution run by the Ministry of Health, which is the first medical center in Ukraine to specialize in the treatment of psycho trauma, the effects of mild traumatic brain injury (post-communication syndrome), assistance to survivors of captivity and torture and other prolonged effects of severe traumatic factors on the psyche, their multimodality and the peculiarities of psychopathological impact during military operations. The Center focuses on the post-traumatic growth of patients, which is necessary for the survival of trauma.

## **Conclusion**

The study's findings clearly show a serious gap between the needs of people with disabilities, including those with acquired trauma and the capacities of service providers. It is precisely visible in the study that a significant achievement has been the identification and withdrawal of the comprehensive rehabilitation of acquired trauma in the community, which is to create an institutional mechanism for the implementation of legal provisions of mass-level awareness, but not on the ground level, specifically on communities.

An analysis of the results of implementing comprehensive rehabilitation for people with acquired trauma demonstrates the significant impact of an individualized approach. At the same time, a long period of adaptation indicates the need for sustained support from specialists, which helps reduce depression, increase independence and improve quality of life. However, challenges remain related to insufficient attention from members of the communities to the psychosocial

aspects of rehabilitation, including the need to increase access to specialized psychologists and support groups.

**Keywords:** Social rehabilitation, comprehensive rehabilitation, local community, person with a disability, person with an acquired disability, types of rehabilitation, multidisciplinary team, challenges in the work of a social worker in the community.

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## **SOCIAL SECURITY OF CHILDREN WHO ARE ORDERED AND DEPRIVED OF PARENTAL CARE**

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Children are the most vulnerable and neediest members of society. Ensuring their social security, protecting their rights and improving their well-being has been one of the main tasks of every society. Throughout history, attitudes towards children have taken different forms within the cultural, religious and legal systems of societies. Although written rules for the protection of children were limited in ancient times, there were values placed on them and protective mechanisms applied in various cultures. In modern times, ensuring the social security of children has become one of the priority issues of states and international organizations. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is one of the most important legal frameworks in this area at the global level. Despite this, children in many countries around the world still face poverty, violence, exploitation and other social risks. For this reason, it is important to implement not only legal measures, but also reforms related to social policies, educational programs and the institution of the family to ensure the social security of children. Exploring historical developments and contemporary approaches in the field of child protection allows for a deeper understanding of current problems and the suggestion of effective solutions.

As is known, information on ensuring the social security of children has existed in various cultures throughout history. The Sumerian and Chinese civilizations have set very valuable examples in this area. In Sumer, children were considered special and sacred and those who mistreated them were severely punished. In Chinese culture, the existence of written rules regarding the upbringing and protection of children shows the importance of organization in this area and the foundations of social security have been laid.

Among the ancient Turks, having children was considered extremely important in terms of preserving family values. Families without children were not welcome in society; these families could adopt orphans or other children with parental permission. Custody was mainly exercised by the father, but in the father's absence, the mother could also exercise this right. However, as in ancient Greek and Roman societies, there was no talk of a father having unlimited and absolute custody over his children. In ancient Turkic society, the words “ataç” (child showing maturity, son) were used to refer to boys and “anaç” (girl showing maturity, mother) were used to refer to girls. Boys and girls were considered to have the same value. Such support for children, protection



of their social rights and ensuring their safety, constituted one of the main principles of the traditions of that time.

Various steps have been taken by both the state and society to ensure the social security of children in Azerbaijan. Children's educational and social security needs were met through charitable organizations and foundations. During the reign of the Elkhaniid ruler, Qazan Khan, special training centers for children were established in Tabriz, where children were educated in both religious and social areas. These schools not only provided children with education, but also ensured their social well-being and they were also provided with festive clothing, clothing and other necessities every year.

In the modern world, ensuring the social security of children has not only been limited to historical approaches, but has become one of the main priorities in the legislative system of states. Social security includes not only the protection of children from violence, exploitation and neglect, but also the provision of social, educational and economic conditions necessary for their healthy development. The protection of children's rights and ensuring their social security are closely related to the social, cultural and economic development of society. Children, due to their physical and mental immaturity, need special care and protection. This is an important component of their legal status and is enshrined in the legislation of most countries. The issue of legal protection of children was first raised in the middle of the last century - in 1966, when the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was adopted. Article 24 of this Covenant was specifically intended for all children, who are minor members of society and ensured their right to appropriate protective measures. In addition, another covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was adopted, which examined in more detail the issue of "care and upbringing of children without independence". However, these documents considered children's rights only in individual aspects. Soon, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a number of international legal acts: the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, the Protocol on the Prohibition of the Participation of Children in Armed Conflict in 2000 and the Protocol on Strengthening the Fight against Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Children in 2002, thus beginning to protect children's rights in a more comprehensive and systematic manner. These international acts gave countries around the world specific obligations to protect children's rights and ensure their social security.

## **Conclusion**

Ensuring the social security of orphans and children deprived of parental care remains an important socio-political issue at the global level. Although different approaches are applied in this area in different countries, the main goal is to protect the rights of children, ensure their healthy development and successful integration into society. The principles established within the

framework of international organizations, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international legal documents, play an important role for states.

**Keywords:** Unaccompanied children, social security, children's rights, public policy, child protection programs.

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## **THE PROBLEMS FACED BY ELDERLY PEOPLE WITH HEALTH DISABILITIES IN THEIR INTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY**

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The rapid increase in the aging population worldwide has resulted in a growing number of elderly individuals experiencing health-related disabilities, which hinder their ability to fully integrate into society. This paper examines the various challenges faced by elderly people with health disabilities in their integration into society, focusing on physical, health, social, economic and legal barriers. Physical barriers such as inaccessible infrastructure and transportation challenges limit mobility and independence. Health and healthcare barriers, including limited access to services and lack of rehabilitation, hinder their physical and mental well-being. Social isolation, stigma and discrimination further exacerbate their difficulties in participating in community life. Economic challenges, including financial instability and limited employment opportunities, prevent elderly individuals from accessing necessary resources. Legal and policy barriers, such as insufficient protections and inadequate social welfare programs, leave them vulnerable to exploitation. The paper also proposes potential solutions to address these challenges, including improving accessibility, expanding healthcare services, promoting social inclusion, strengthening legal protections and enhancing financial support programs. By addressing these barriers, societies can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for elderly individuals with health disabilities, enabling them to lead fulfilling lives and participate fully in society.

### **Challenges in the Integration of Elderly People with Disabilities into Society**

The aging population around the world is increasing rapidly and with it, the number of elderly people experiencing health-related disabilities. As individuals age, they often face multiple health challenges that not only affect their physical well-being but also hinder their ability to integrate fully into society. The integration of elderly people with health disabilities into society is a complex issue, influenced by various barriers ranging from physical limitations to social stigma and limited access to healthcare. Addressing these challenges is essential for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment that enables elderly individuals with health disabilities to lead fulfilling lives.

### **Physical Barriers to Integration**

1. **Inaccessible Infrastructure** Many urban and rural areas lack the necessary infrastructure to accommodate elderly people with health disabilities. The absence of ramps, elevators, wider doorways and appropriate bathroom facilities makes it difficult for elderly individuals to move freely in public spaces, limiting their mobility and independence.

2. **Transportation Challenges** Access to public transportation is a significant problem for elderly individuals with disabilities. Many public transport systems are not designed to meet the needs of people with mobility impairments, making it difficult for them to travel independently. This lack of accessibility leads to social isolation as elderly people become increasingly dependent on caregivers or family members for transportation.

### **Health and Healthcare Barriers**

1. **Limited Access to Healthcare Services** Elderly people with health disabilities often require specialized medical care and ongoing treatment. However, healthcare services may be limited or difficult to access, particularly in rural or underserved areas. Long wait times, lack of transportation to medical facilities and financial constraints are common issues that prevent elderly individuals from receiving adequate care.

2. **Lack of Rehabilitation Services** Many elderly individuals with health disabilities require rehabilitation services to regain or maintain their independence. Unfortunately, rehabilitation services are often scarce and the cost may be prohibitive for many elderly individuals. As a result, elderly people may experience a decline in their physical and mental well-being, further hindering their integration into society.

### **Social Barriers to Integration**

1. **Social Isolation** Elderly individuals with health disabilities are at a high risk of social isolation. Their physical limitations, combined with a lack of accessible community spaces and social activities, can lead to a reduction in social interactions. This isolation can result in mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which further complicates their integration into society.

2. **Stigma and Discrimination** Elderly people with health disabilities often face stigma and discrimination. Society may perceive them as less capable or less valuable, leading to marginalization. The perception that elderly individuals are dependent or “useless” can reduce their opportunities for social participation and employment, making it harder for them to engage in community life.

### **Economic Barriers**

1. **Financial Challenges** The financial challenges and limited employment opportunities faced by elderly individuals with health disabilities can be observed in both developed and developing countries. In developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and many European Union nations, while social security and pension systems exist, they may not be sufficient to fully cover the needs of elderly individuals with disabilities, particularly in terms of healthcare, rehabilitation and social participation. In developing countries like India, Brazil and many African nations, social welfare programs tend to be less comprehensive and elderly individuals with disabilities often lack access to the financial support and healthcare they require. The absence of strong social safety nets, coupled with limited employment opportunities, exacerbates the financial difficulties of elderly people with health disabilities in these countries. Due to their limited mobility or health issues, they may not be able to work or earn an income. This lack of financial stability can further hinder their ability to access necessary services, including healthcare, rehabilitation and social activities. Additionally, they may rely heavily on pensions or social security, which may not be sufficient to cover all their needs.

2. **Limited Employment Opportunities** For elderly individuals with health disabilities, employment opportunities are often scarce. Many workplaces are not equipped to accommodate the needs of disabled employees and there may be a lack of opportunities for part-time or flexible work. This lack of employment not only impacts their financial well-being but also their sense of purpose and social inclusion.

### **Legal and Policy Barriers**

1. **Insufficient Legal Protections** In many countries, laws and policies protecting the rights of elderly people with disabilities are either inadequate or not enforced. This lack of legal protection can lead to elder abuse, discrimination and the denial of essential services. Without proper legal safeguards, elderly individuals with health disabilities may find themselves vulnerable to exploitation or neglect.

2. **Inadequate Social Welfare Programs** Social welfare programs designed to assist elderly people with disabilities may not be comprehensive enough to meet their needs. Limited access to affordable housing, transportation and personal assistance services often leaves elderly individuals with disabilities struggling to maintain a decent quality of life.

### **Addressing the Problems: Solutions and Recommendations**

1. **Improving Accessibility** According to the **Law on Medical Insurance of the Republic of Azerbaijan**, access to healthcare services for elderly individuals with disabilities must be ensured. This law organizes the provision of medical services and treatment for insured

individuals, including elderly individuals with disabilities. Within the framework of medical insurance, elderly individuals and people with disabilities can benefit from necessary medical services at both public and private healthcare institutions. Access to healthcare services for individuals with disabilities is provided based on their health conditions and is supported by medical assistance suited to their health status.

**Sweden:** Sweden has strong legislation on social inclusion and equality. The government and municipalities in Sweden provide accessible infrastructure for people with disabilities. This includes the construction of special transportation facilities, ramps, elevators, wider doorways and other infrastructure changes. Swedish legislation, particularly the “Handikapombud” (Disability Ombudsman) and “Lagen om stöd och service till vissa funktionshindrade” (Act on Support and Service for Certain Disabled Persons), encourages progress in this direction (<https://www.regeringen.se>).

**Canada:** In Canada, there are several laws and initiatives aimed at protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion in all aspects of public life. The Canadian government's “Accessible Canada Act” (2019) mandates that all public spaces be accessible for people with disabilities. This law includes measures to increase accessibility in parks, libraries and other public infrastructure (<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/accessibility.html>).

**United Kingdom:** In the United Kingdom, the “Equality Act 2010” ensures that accessible infrastructure for people with disabilities is provided in both the public and private sectors. The law also promotes physical changes and sensitivity measures to ensure the accessibility of public services and transportation for elderly people with disabilities (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents/enacted>).

**Germany:** Germany has laws that protect the equality rights of people with disabilities. The “Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons Act” (2002) offers a broad range of infrastructure changes and ensures improved accessibility to transportation, parks and public spaces for people with disabilities (<https://www.bmas.de/EN/Topics/Participation-and-Equal-Opportunities/disabled-persons.html>).

**2. Expanding Healthcare Services** Expanding access to healthcare services, particularly in underserved areas, is crucial. This includes providing home healthcare services, mobile clinics and ensuring that elderly individuals can access the healthcare they need without facing long wait times or financial barriers.

**3. Promoting Social Inclusion** Community-based programs should be developed to combat social isolation among elderly people with health disabilities. Social activities, support groups and recreational programs tailored to their needs can help them remain engaged and connected with others.

4. **Strengthening Legal Protections** overnments should strengthen legal protections for elderly people with disabilities, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect. For example, Scandinavian countries, particularly Sweden, strictly enforce anti-discrimination laws and provide legal support to elderly individuals facing exploitation or abuse. This approach ensures better legal protection for the elderly and allows them to live with dignity.

5. **Improving Financial Support** Financial support programs should be expanded to provide elderly people with health disabilities with sufficient resources to meet their basic needs. This includes increasing pension benefits, providing subsidized housing and offering financial assistance for healthcare and rehabilitation services.

### **Conclusion**

The integration of elderly people with health disabilities into society is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. By addressing the physical, social, economic and legal barriers they face, societies can create a more inclusive environment where elderly individuals with health disabilities can thrive. Ensuring that elderly people with health disabilities have access to the healthcare, support and opportunities they need is essential for improving their quality of life and fostering a more inclusive society for all.

**Keywords:** Social integration, physical barriers, psychological difficulties, elderly and disability, economic difficulties, social inclusion.

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## RURAL ELDERLY PEOPLE AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN ALBANIA

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Recent worldwide population statistics document an emerging demographic challenge of population aging. In 2024, elderly people (citizens aged 65+) represented 10 percent of the total world population (United Nations, 2024). This universal trend varies across regions and countries. Albania's population is also affected by the demographic transition and the 2023 population census data show an 'old' demographic structure where elderly people represent 19.7 percent of the total population compared to 11.3 percent represented in 2011 census data (INSTAT, 2024). Especially in rural areas, this phenomenon has affected not only the farmers but also the rural population in general. Aging of the rural population in Albania is a complex phenomenon triggered by several factors including the mass exodus of young rural population, low birth rate and increased life expectancy.

Literature has been concerned about the consequences of the population aging at the macro level highlighting the serious workforce shortage, low economic growth rate, aging of the labour force, low consumption, increased public spending on the health care system and pension scheme (Darvas *et al.*, 2024; Pinkus & Ruer, 2025). However the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda seeks to recognize elderly people as active agents of development to achieve sustainable outcomes leaving no one behind.

Social sustainability is one of the pillars of sustainability which is discussed in the literature at the macro-, meso- and micro/individual- levels. At the *macro level*, the concept of social sustainability is understood as a desirable society where policies intend to create prosperous places, promote the long-term maintenance of social structures and enhance the betterment of the society (Abramsson & Hagberg, 2018; Kumar & Sharma, 2022; Vuckovic & Skuflic, 2021). At the *meso level*, social sustainability is discussed in the context of intergenerational solidarity to ensure a good quality of life for current and future generations (Zaidi, 2012). At the *micro level*, social sustainability is focused at individual's quality of life and wellbeing (Chong *et al.*, 2017; Liu *et al.*, 2017; Walker, 2021).

Rural elderly people in Albania are exposed to several regional disparities and challenges that hinder them from enjoying a healthy and prosperous life. However, limited attention is paid in the literature about them while their relationship with social sustainability is understudied.



Therefore, the main purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between rural old population and social sustainability at both, macro- and micro-level. It will use primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected through face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 elderly people (17 women and 13 men) from 3 different villages located in three different communities respectively, in the North, East and South of the country which are taken as case studies. They served to explore participants' perceptions, feelings and social challenges to enjoy a good life in rural areas. Participants were randomly selected with the support of the key informants who were mainly the representatives of the local civil society organizations and the local government units. Secondary data were taken from national statistics, reports and policy papers to explain social sustainability in rural areas and its connection with rural elderly people.

Findings of this study show that underdeveloped and depopulated rural areas with underinvested infrastructure, limited social health care and social services do not provide a sustainable desirable place for rural elderly people who have limited access to them. Being socially challenged, they had developed coping mechanisms to overcome distress, loneliness and detachment, but they were skeptic about the quality of their life. Findings of this study have some implications for policy-makers and practitioners to design and implement successful aging strategies targeting rural areas.

**Keywords:** Rural elderly people, social sustainability, population aging, coping mechanisms, social challenges.

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## **COMPETENCIES OF TEACHERS OF ACTIVE LONGEVITY PROGRAMMES: BETWEEN THE MADRID PLAN REQUIREMENTS AND THE DEMANDS OF THE ELDERLY IN RUSSIA**

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The ageing population is becoming both a challenge for social policy and social work and a resource for the development of Russian society. One of the ways to respond to the challenges of longevity is educational programmes for older people that promote inclusion and increased their agency. For people in the 'silver' age, continuing education is not only a source of new knowledge and skills, but also contributes to improving their physical and psychological health and gaining autonomy from family and the state (Merriam & Kee, 2014; Schoultz *et al.*, 2020). Engaging and educating more seniors today requires special teachers (i.e. geragogues) with specific skills in order to maximise the potential and abilities of trainees, who need to be taught to enhance their human potential and quality of life (Wilson-Menzfeld *et al.*, 2023). In order to achieve these objectives, the teacher of educational programmes for the elderly must possess four types of competences (Balogová & Gazdová, 2019; Killian, 2016; Baschiera, 2017; Wilson-Menzfeld, *et al.*, 2023). Firstly, these are subject-specific expertise. Secondly, methodological competencies, that is, the ability of the trainer to assume the role of a counsellor, facilitator of a near-experiential discussion, creator of an appropriate learning climate for the needs of seniors and motivator of elderly to participate in the learning process. Thirdly, geragogues must embody social competences, which are defined as attitudes of teachers in consonance with the values of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, the growth of their autonomy, the non-acceptance of ageism, stereotypes and myths about the elderly. Fourthly, the personal competences of geragogues, including empathy and reflexivity.

The open-expertise approach, as outlined by Holavins (2020), stipulates that social work initiatives must align with the requirements of care recipients, thereby enhancing their sense of agency. Utilising a comprehensive online survey of active longevity programme trainees (N=819) across four Russian regions (Krasnodar Krai, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Saratov and Samara Oblasts), this study aims to ascertain the extent to which these competencies, cultivated within the framework of critical geragogy, align with the expressed needs of the elderly population by the instructors of educational programmes.

The heterogeneity of requests made by 'silver' students of educational programmes underscores the imperative to comprehend the elderly as a highly heterogeneous group, with divergent needs, opportunities and lifestyles. It is imperative to emphasise this concept, as the prevailing discourse, both at the level of state programmes public stereotypes and mass media, portrays the elderly as a homogeneous entity.

The study demonstrates that social competences in general are perceived by elderly in our sample as the least important among others. The least requested competencies are the ability to invest in intergenerational networking, to take into account and emphasise the life experience of the elderly and to promote their autonomy.

**Table 1.** Distribution of course participants' requests by competence requests to geragogues

	Expert competencies	Methodological competencies	Social competencies	Personal competencies
Requests from the elderly	69,4%	70,1%	62%	70,4%

The explanation for this is that the values of empowerment, which are discursively embedded in the logic of the critical geragogical approach and the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, are not so close to older people in Russia. The data demonstrate that such requests are predominantly expressed by the most wealthy and resourceful group of the elderly: the youngest, most educated cohort and the group with the highest income. These observations suggest the presence of a paradox concerning empowerment (Prisiazhniuk & Holavins, 2022), wherein requests for agency originate from the most resourceful group.

**Table 2.** Distribution of course participants' requests for competences to geragogues among age groups

	Expert competencies	Methodological competencies	Social competencies	Personal competencies
<60	3,40	3,29	3,25	3,32
60-75	3,40	3,35	3,28	3,45
76+	3,32	3,28	3,16	3,35

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF ICT SKILLS AND MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACHES IN THE SOCIAL WORK PROCESS WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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Persons with disabilities are one of the main groups that social workers focus on. The primary goal of social work is to support the most vulnerable and needy segments of society. This support is not limited to social services and professional psychological assistance; with the advancement of technology, it is also possible to make the lives of persons with disabilities easier. Information and communication technologies (ICT) play a significant role in this field, as technology helps both social workers and persons with disabilities solve various issues (Kennedy, 2018). The implementation of technological innovations aims to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities and strengthen their integration into society.

## **The Impact of ICT and Technological Developments on Persons with Disabilities**

ICT has two key aspects for persons with disabilities: it helps to ease their daily lives and also supports social workers in working effectively with these individuals (Abel & Elliott, 2019). Modern technologies enable persons with disabilities to live independently, participate in work life and establish connections with society.

- **Mobile Applications for Persons with Disabilities:** For example, the “Be My Eyes” app is used to assist visually impaired individuals in the environment. The app provides real-time assistance through other users' phones to those with visual impairments.

- **Dexteria** is a program designed to improve children's fine motor skills and recover movement functions after a stroke. It helps users enhance hand and finger movements and presents exercises in a game format to improve motor skills. Dexteria also offers personalized approaches according to various age groups and developmental stages.

- **Google Gesture Recognition** is a technology developed by Google based on recognizing hand and body movements. This system allows users to perform various commands using their hands.

- **Assistive Equipment:** For example, Ford Italy has introduced an innovative smart window called “Feel the View” for people with visual impairments. This device captures images of the

external view and converts them into 225 different depth and high-contrast images, allowing the user to feel the surroundings by touching the images. This technology enables persons with limited vision to interact with their environment and experience the world in a broader way (<https://ict.az/az/news/5139/>).

- **Liftware** manufactures specialized eating utensils for persons with disabilities. One of the key products is the “Liftware Stabilizer”, an automatic spoon and fork designed for individuals with Parkinson's disease and other hand movement difficulties. The device reduces hand tremors and facilitates eating.

- **Dotwatch** is a smart watch equipped with Braille text, specifically designed for people with visual impairments. This device provides all essential information on time and phone notifications in Braille, offering technological comfort and independence to users.

- **WeWALK** is a smart walking cane developed for people with visual impairments. The device uses sensors to notify the user of obstacles (such as walls, stairs or other physical barriers) ahead. These notifications are delivered through vibrations or sound signals, enhancing safety.

- **Exoskeletons** provide technological support to individuals with physical impairments, enabling them to stand, walk or perform certain movements. These devices act as an external “skeleton”, offering assistance to the user. Technologies like ReWalk and Ekso Bionics, produced by companies in this field, enable people with spinal injuries to stand and walk.

- **Websites and Platforms:** Platforms like “Google Accessibility” are designed to help individuals with visual and hearing impairments access information more easily, allowing persons with disabilities to navigate the internet comfortably.



ReWalk Personal 6.0



WeWALK Smart Cane (129 cm)



### **International Experience and the Application of Technological Innovations**

Many countries globally support the development of technological applications for persons with disabilities (WHO, 2011). In the United States, the “Assistive Technology Act” has strengthened the implementation of devices and applications for persons with disabilities. Technologies used in the U.S. ensure that persons with disabilities can lead independent lives and enhance their employment opportunities. In Europe, especially in Scandinavian countries, technological innovations related to the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are more widely applied.

For instance, Sweden’s “Disability Services” application provides various applications and resources to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities. These applications enable both social workers and persons with disabilities to address challenges they face.

In Azerbaijan, several technological applications and platforms for persons with disabilities are available. Some of them include:

- **Nar Mobile’s Sign Language Project:** This initiative supports inclusivity by helping individuals with hearing and speech impairments communicate more easily with others. The project also offers the opportunity to learn sign language for free without the need for a teacher. The content of the mobile application and the methodology applied are prepared by the “Karlara Dəstək” Public Union. The “Nar” company created the website [jestdili.az](http://jestdili.az) for this purpose and has also implemented ongoing “Training School” projects in the capital and regions. Additionally, the “Silent Bridge to the World” book and the “Live Book” initiative have been published (<https://www.nar.az/news/jest-dili-lugeti/>).

- **[www.surdotv.az](http://www.surdotv.az) Video Portal:** This portal was created as part of a social order from the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population to ensure the rights of persons under 18 with disabilities to access information. The platform offers a variety of programs, films and informative content with sign language interpretation, allowing these individuals to access video content and support their social integration.

- **ÖvladınıTanı (Know Your Child):** This website and mobile app were developed under the “Innovative Initiatives for the Development and Monitoring of Children with Disabilities” Project. The app helps parents assess the development of their children with disabilities and plan their care and support.

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder Initiatives:** As part of a project to enhance parental skills for children with autism spectrum disorders, a special mobile app and website called [www.autizmders.az](http://www.autizmders.az) were created. These tools provide video lessons for parents, enabling them to offer rehabilitation support for their children in a home setting.

Given the increasing number of internet users and the growing popularity of online education, video lessons are now being made available to parents through websites and mobile



apps. This project represents an innovative step in supporting parents of children with disabilities and will likely encourage the future implementation of more technological innovations in this area.

Furthermore, the use of technological tools by social workers when working with persons with disabilities increases their effectiveness in supporting these individuals. Based on international experience, social workers use technological tools to facilitate the daily lives and social integration of persons with disabilities. In Azerbaijan, however, technological innovations are still in the developmental phase. Despite this, existing projects and applications assist persons with disabilities and enable social workers to provide better support. Integrating foreign programs into Azerbaijan may present challenges, as these programs are typically not adapted to the local culture, language and environment. Therefore, for the accessibility of applications and platforms, it is essential to support the Azerbaijani language and adapt them to local laws and the specific needs of persons with disabilities. This integration can be achieved through collaboration between social workers and IT specialists, for example, by translating foreign programs into Azerbaijani, making necessary adjustments and adding innovations that meet the local needs of persons with disabilities.

**Keywords:** Social inclusion, integrative approach, social work, people with disabilities, technology.

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## **DISABILITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE STRUGGLE FOR INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE**

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### **Contextual Background**

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) emphasises the importance of inclusive workplaces and equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities. However, despite Southern African countries ratifying the CRPD, persons with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to employment and workplace inclusion.

### **Methodology**

This qualitative desktop and discourse analysis study examines the intersection of disability, human rights and governance in Southern Africa, with a specific focus on the struggle for inclusive workplaces. This study employed a qualitative desktop research approach, combining critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis to examine the policy and legislative frameworks and social and cultural norms that shape the experiences of persons with disabilities in Southern African workplaces. The study drew on a range of sources, including policy documents, legislation, academic literature and media reports.

### **Scope**

The study focused on five Southern African countries: South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It examined the policy and legislative frameworks governing disability employment and workplace inclusion in these countries and the social and cultural norms that shape the experiences of people with disabilities.

### **Findings**

The study found that despite the existence of policies and legislation aimed at promoting disability employment and workplace inclusion, persons with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to employment and workplace inclusion in Southern Africa. The study identified several factors that contribute to these barriers, including inadequate policy implementation, lack of accessibility and discriminatory social and cultural norms.

### **Contributions**

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on disability, human rights and governance in Southern Africa by providing a nuanced understanding of the policy and legislative frameworks, as well as the social and cultural norms, that shape the experiences of persons with disabilities in Southern African workplaces. The study highlights the need for a more inclusive and rights-based approach to disability employment and workplace inclusion in Southern Africa.

### **Recommendations**

Based on this study's findings, the following recommendations are made. Firstly, Southern African governments should strengthen the implementation of policies and legislation aimed at promoting disability employment and workplace inclusion. Secondly, Southern African governments should improve the accessibility of workplaces and public spaces to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to employment and economic opportunities. Thirdly, Southern African governments should challenge discriminatory social and cultural norms that perpetuate the exclusion of persons with disabilities from employment and workplace inclusion.

**Keywords:** Disability, human rights, governance, inclusive workplaces, Southern Africa, employment, accessibility.

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## CREATING AN INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT: ATTITUDES TOWARD DISABILITY AMONG UNIVERSITY STAFF IN GEORGIA

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### Background

Promoting inclusivity within higher education institutions has become an essential goal for universities worldwide, particularly as they seek to foster environments where students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds feel valued and supported. A core aspect of this inclusivity involves the full participation of people with disabilities (PwDs), who often face systemic barriers, whether related to accessibility, discrimination or attitudinal biases (Sharma *et al.*, 2023). By creating inclusive environments, universities contribute to both the social and professional advancement of PwDs, enhancing equity and ensuring that they have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the academic community (Iglic, 2017).

The role of university administrative staff in fostering inclusive environments is critical, yet little attention has been paid to understanding how staff attitudes toward disability influence these efforts. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the attitudes of university administrative staff in Georgia toward PwDs and their perceptions of inclusive employment practices. In particular, this research explores the willingness of staff to employ PwDs and assesses their perceptions of workplace acceptance for PwDs.

### Methodology

This cross-sectional study was conducted among 63 university administrative staff members from two universities in Georgia: 44 participants from a central university in Tbilisi and 19 from a regional university. The survey aimed to assess the attitudes of these staff members toward PwDs, using the Georgian-adapted version of the Attitude to Disability Scale (ADS). The scale consists of 16 items across four domains: Inclusion, Discrimination, Gains and Prospects. These items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

In addition to the ADS, the survey included questions about socio-demographic variables such as age, gender and years of employment. It also explored the types of jobs staff believed could be offered to PwDs in a university setting and assessed both the perceived acceptance of PwDs in the workplace and the willingness of staff to employ them.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations and inferential statistics, including ANOVA and Spearman's rho, to identify significant differences based on age, gender, employment duration and university location.

## Results

The factor analysis confirmed the adequacy of the Georgian version of the ADS, with the four-factor structure (Inclusion, Discrimination, Gains and Prospects) intact with acceptable fit indices (CFI = 0.914, RMSEA = 0.060). Cronbach's alpha values indicated good internal consistency across the domains, ranging from 0.6 to 0.8.

**Acceptance and Willingness to Employ PwDs:** The study found significant differences in both the perceived acceptance of PwDs and the willingness to employ them based on several demographic factors. Staff at central universities were more likely to accept PwDs in the workplace and were more willing to employ them compared to their counterparts at regional universities ( $M = 17.61$  vs.  $M = 16.31$ ,  $t(61) = 2.52$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). Younger staff (18-34 years) demonstrated higher levels of acceptance ( $M = 29.43$ ,  $SD = 8.9$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ) and greater willingness to employ PwDs ( $M = 12.22$ ,  $SD = 2.32$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ) than older staff members (35-49 years and 50+ years), confirming the positive relationship between youth and inclusive attitudes.

**Gender Differences:** Female staff exhibited more positive attitudes toward inclusion, particularly regarding the burden of disability on society (Inclusion domain). Female participants scored higher ( $M = 14.17$ ,  $SD = 2.2$ ) compared to male participants ( $M = 12.67$ ,  $SD = 1.6$ ), with statistically significant differences ( $t(61) = 1.95$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ).

**Duration of Employment:** A negative correlation was found between years of employment and positive attitudes toward PwDs. Staff with longer tenures tended to have less favorable attitudes, particularly in the Prospects domain (Spearman's rho = -0.363,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that longer exposure to the university's institutional culture may contribute to the entrenchment of less inclusive views.

**Job Opportunities for PwDs:** Staff were asked to suggest types of jobs that could be offered to PwDs in university environments. The most common positions identified were administrative assistant (73%), copy machine specialist (65.1%), IT specialist (57.1%), consultant (50.8%) and librarian (50.8%). Other roles suggested included assistant teacher (47.6%), operator's assistant (46%), administrator (44.4%) and cleaning person (42.9%). Less commonly suggested positions included technician (38.1%), café worker (34.9%) and animal care (23.8%). These results highlight

that staff were generally willing to consider PwDs for less physically demanding, more supportive roles but were less inclined to view them for more dynamic or leadership positions.

### **Conclusions**

This study offers valuable insights into the current state of inclusivity in Georgian universities and highlights the need for continued efforts to foster more inclusive attitudes toward disability. Younger staff members and those working in central universities were more likely to have positive attitudes, while staff with longer tenures exhibited more entrenched biases. Additionally, while there is a clear willingness to employ PwDs in certain roles, the diversity of roles offered remains limited. To fully integrate PwDs into university settings, institutions must continue to challenge negative stereotypes, provide training to address attitudinal biases and ensure that PwDs have access to a broader range of employment opportunities.

By addressing these issues, Georgian universities can take significant steps toward becoming truly inclusive institutions, benefiting not only PwDs but the broader academic community.

**Keywords:** inclusive environment, disability, university staff, attitudes, Georgia, higher education, diversity.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## **FORCED MIGRATION OF RUSSIANS TO AZERBAIJAN: ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATIONS AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES**

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Forced migration is a complex socio-economic and psychological issue that requires in-depth analysis. This study examines the motives behind the relocation of Russian citizens to Azerbaijan after the 2022 partial mobilization and analyzes their adaptation strategies in a new socio-economic environment.

The findings reveal that migration was primarily driven by mobilization avoidance, political dissent and personal safety concerns. Employment plays a crucial role in adaptation, significantly reducing anxiety levels, while social networks facilitate integration.

The study highlights the broader impact of Russian migration on host economies and the socio-political challenges of integration. Based on the findings, recommendations are proposed to improve migrant adaptation policies, including employment support, psychological assistance and social integration programs. These insights contribute to the development of effective strategies for managing forced migration in conditions of social instability.

Russia's war against Ukraine has displaced millions of people, both within Ukraine and Russia. While exact figures are difficult to determine, estimates suggest that by July 2023, over 800,000 Russians had left their country since February 2022. The number of those still residing abroad is likely lower now, with estimates placing it at around 650,000. This population remains fluid-some have relocated beyond their initial host country, while others remain uncertain about the duration of their stay in new environments, where conditions can be challenging.

According to OutRush's data from the summer of 2024, roughly 45% of those who fled Russia after February 2022 had already returned by the time the partial mobilization was announced in September of that year.

Even for a country as large as Russia, with a workforce of approximately 73 million, the departure of these individuals has had a noticeable impact on the labor market. This is particularly significant given that a disproportionately high number of those leaving were young, educated, urban professionals. Their absence further reduces the active labor force, which was already shrinking due to wartime mobilization.



Russia's unemployment rate has dropped to record lows, falling below 3% in early 2024. The absence of men in particular has reshaped the professional landscape, significantly altering the roles and career trajectories of both men and women over the past two years.

In the months following the invasion, a large share of those who left were young, educated, urban and politically opposition-minded individuals, including journalists, academics and activists.

This group is often perceived as a potential “opposition in exile”. However, there is also evidence that some Russian migrants, including those in Western countries, maintain strong ties to their homeland, with some even expressing pro-Kremlin views despite living abroad.

The new wave of Russian migrants finds itself in a highly politicized environment. Some actively participate in anti-Russian or anti-war activism, others openly support the Kremlin, while many choose to remain silent. The Russian state perceives them through the lens of the “*Russkii mir*” ideology-viewing them simultaneously as potential allies for propaganda and disinformation campaigns, as well as a source of brain drain or even outright traitors. The departure of political opposition figures is, to some extent, a strategically beneficial outcome.

Western governments see these migrants as valuable sources of insight into Russia’s increasingly isolated state and society, yet they also recognize the potential risks of Russian disinformation, making these migrants a matter of domestic security concern. Meanwhile, host countries in Central Asia and the Baltic states often regard Russian migrants with suspicion, particularly in relation to their existing Russian-speaking communities.

In the host societies examined in this study, the sudden influx of financially stable newcomers has had a profound impact on local economies, driving inflation, especially in the housing sector and the cost of essential goods.

Amid these broader migration trends, different host countries have experienced varying degrees of socio-economic impact. In this context, Azerbaijan has become a destination for many Russian migrants, presenting unique challenges and opportunities for integration. Our research, focused on Russian migrants who arrived in Azerbaijan after 2022, confirms these broader trends. While Azerbaijan has offered opportunities for employment and settlement, adaptation challenges persist, shaped by socio-political dynamics, economic conditions and local perceptions of migration.

The research is based on a mixed-method approach, incorporating qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews and quantitative statistical analysis of key variables. Data processing methods included thematic analysis, the chi-square test to assess the relationship between age and relocation motives and Spearman’s correlation analysis to identify the link between employment and anxiety levels. The sample consisted of 100 respondents who participated in both in-person and online interviews.



The findings indicate that the primary reasons for migration were the avoidance of mobilization (85%), political dissent (60%) and the pursuit of personal safety (45%). In the first six months following relocation, 70% of respondents reported high levels of anxiety, which decreased to 40% as they adapted. Employment emerged as the most significant factor in integration, showing a strong positive correlation with anxiety levels ( $\rho = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Additionally, social networks and participation in Russian-speaking communities served as key adaptation mechanisms for 65% of respondents.

This study is grounded in Berry's acculturation theory, Schwartz's migration stress model and Lazarus and Folkman's coping strategies framework. An extended theoretical analysis also considers contemporary research on forced migration and refugee adaptation, particularly the work of Ager and Strang (2008), which examines integration through the lens of economic stability, social connections and psychological well-being.

Particular attention is given not only to the psychological but also to the socio-economic adaptation of migrants, including the impact of income levels, education and family presence on successful integration. A comparative analysis of the adaptation experiences of Russian migrants in Azerbaijan and other post-Soviet countries, such as Kazakhstan and Georgia, provides insights into the national characteristics of integration processes.

The study employs a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Semi-structured interviews provided insight into the subjective experiences and adaptation strategies of migrants, while statistical data processing allowed for the identification of significant relationships between various adaptation factors. The quantitative analysis included the chi-square test to assess the relationship between age and relocation motives, as well as Spearman's correlation analysis to examine the link between anxiety levels and employment.

The findings confirm that the key factors for successful adaptation include:

- **Employment:** Having a job significantly reduces anxiety levels ( $\rho = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), providing financial stability and facilitating professional integration.
- **Social connections:** Participation in Russian-speaking communities and social networks greatly eases the adaptation process by offering emotional support.
- **Economic factors:** Income level and educational background play a crucial role in adaptation, increasing the likelihood of successful integration into the new society.

Based on the findings, the study proposes recommendations for improving adaptation programs for forced migrants:

1. Development of professional integration programs, including language training and employment support.
2. Implementation of psychological initiatives aimed at reducing stress and facilitating migrant adaptation.

3. Establishment of social mechanisms that promote interaction between migrants and the host society.

4. Conducting cross-country comparative studies to identify the most effective models of migrant integration.

The study highlights the importance of a multifactorial approach to analyzing the adaptation of forced migrants, considering not only psychological but also socio-economic aspects. Future research should focus on expanding the sample, conducting longitudinal analyses of adaptation strategies and examining the gender aspects of migrant adaptation.

Thus, the study's findings can contribute to the improvement of migrant integration policies and the development of effective adaptation strategies in conditions of social instability.

**Keywords:** Relocation, migration, adaptation, mobilization, Azerbaijan, migrant psychology.

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## **EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR PRESERVING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF MIGRANTS: RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT**

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### **Introduction**

The relevance of the topic is determined by the complex of socio-demographic, cultural and political challenges associated with the intensification of migration processes in the Russian Federation.

In the context of globalisation and regional socio-economic imbalances, Russia is facing a steady increase in migration, mainly from Central Asia and Ukraine. According to Rosstat (<https://rosstat.gov.ru>), the share of labour migrants in the population structure of the Russian Federation exceeds 7%, which actualizes the problem of their socio-cultural adaptation. The lack of effective integration mechanisms leads to the risks of social exclusion, interethnic tension and marginalisation of migrant communities, which contradicts the goals of sustainable development (United Nations, 2015).

Modern research (Berry, 2017; Banks, 2008) emphasises that the preservation of migrants' cultural identity does not contradict their integration, but, on the contrary, is a key condition for its success. Educational programmes focused on multicultural dialogue help to reduce xenophobic attitudes, form an inclusive identity and prevent anomie. In the Russian context, ignoring the cultural component in the education of migrants leads to the reproduction of 'parallel communities', which threatens social stability.

World experience (Germany, Canada) demonstrates the effectiveness of a systematic approach to multicultural education, including bilingual programmes, intercultural communication courses and adaptation centres (Kymlicka, 1995). However, in Russia such initiatives are local and non-systemic, which is confirmed by the lack of federal standards in this area (Mukomel, 2018). This creates the need to develop scientifically sound models that take into account the specifics of multi-ethnic Russian society.

Thus, the study of the integration potential of multicultural education in the Russian Federation is not only theoretical, but also of practical significance in the context of reducing social risks and strengthening civil unity.

Purpose of the study: To analyse how educational programmes in Russia contribute to the preservation of migrants' cultural identity and compare them with international experience.

Hypothesis: Educational programmes that combine the study of the Russian language with elements of migrants' native culture increase their integration potential and preserve their cultural heritage.

Scientific novelty: System analysis of Russian practices in the context of global trends, emphasis on regional specifics (Tatarstan, Moscow) and the role of NGOs.

## **Methods**

The object of the study is educational programmes aimed at socio-cultural adaptation and language integration of migrants in the Russian Federation in comparison with international practices (Germany, Canada, Turkey). The focus of the study is on the analysis of institutional mechanisms, pedagogical strategies and legal framework regulating migrants' access to educational resources. Special attention is paid to the role of the multicultural component in the formation of an inclusive educational environment and prevention of cultural marginalisation.

### **Research methods**

#### *Analysis of legislation*

A systematic analysis of regulatory and legal acts of federal and regional levels was carried out, including:

- Federal Law No.273-FZ “On Education in the Russian Federation” (emphasis on Art.14, 78 - language policy and migrants' rights) (<https://rg.ru/2012/12/30/obrazovanie-dok.html>);
- Regional initiatives (e.g., Law of the Republic of Tatarstan No.68 “On State Languages of the Republic of Tatarstan and Other Languages”, providing for bilingual educational programmes) (Ministry of Education of Tatarstan, 2022).

#### *Comparative Analysis*

Cross-cultural methodology was used to compare Russian practice with foreign cases:

- Germany: Integration courses (BAMF) (Kymlicka, 1995) with compulsory study of the German language and electives on native culture;
- Canada: Federal programmes “LINC” (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) (Kymlicka, 1995), combining language training and intercultural communication;
- Turkey: Digitalisation of education for refugees (PICTES platform for Syrian children) (UNHCR, 2023).

#### *Case studies*

Localised practices were studied:

- Republic of Tatarstan: A model of bilingual education (Russian/Tatar) in 30% of schools aimed at reducing the cultural barrier for migrant children (HSE, 2023);
- Moscow: NGO projects “Such Children” (cultural festivals) (Ark NGO, 2023) and “Kovcheg” (free language courses), covering 15% of migrant families.

*Analysis of secondary data*

Statistical and analytical materials were processed:

- Official statistics (Rosstat, 2024; Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation);
- Reports of international organisations (UNHCR, 2023; UNESCO, 2021) on migration and education;
- Publications of NGOs (“Migration and Law”, “Children as Children”).

## **Results**

### **1. Language Competence and Cultural Identity**

- 68% of migrant children in the Russian Federation demonstrate a level of Russian language proficiency below the age norm (Higher School of Economics, 2023), which correlates with low academic performance.
- The introduction of bilingual programmes (e.g., in Tatarstan) (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2022) increases academic performance by 22% (according to the PISA scale) and contributes to the formation of positive self-identification through the inclusion of elements of native culture in the educational process.

### **2. Institutional Role of NPOs**

- Non-profit organisations provide 15% of educational services for migrants, focusing on niche aspects (Ark NGO, 2023):
- Mother tongue courses (the project “Equal-Different” in St. Petersburg);
- Intercultural trainings for teachers (Moscow School No.1650);

### **3. Regional Models of Integration.**

- In Tatarstan, bilingual programmes reduce the level of social isolation of migrants by 40% (Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, 2022; Mukomel, 2018).
- In Moscow, theatre projects and ethno-cultural lessons (e.g., school No.654) reduce xenophobic incidents among teenagers by 35%.

### **4. International Context**

- Germany: BAMF integration courses increase the employment rate of migrants by 50% through a combination of language training and cultural adaptation (Kymlicka, 1995).
- Turkey: Digital platforms (EdTech) reach 60% of Syrian refugees, providing flexible Turkish and Arabic language training (UNHCR, 2023).

## Discussion

Interpretation of results (based on scientific theories and data)

### 1. Local Effectiveness of Russian Programmes

Regional initiatives (e.g., bilingual education in Tatarstan, NGO projects in Moscow) demonstrate positive dynamics in the adaptation of migrants, which is consistent with the theory of 'acculturation through education' (Berry, 2017). However, their limited scale is explained by the lack of systemic coordination between the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, which corresponds to the conclusions of studies on the fragmentation of migration policy (Cummins, 2000).

Example: The reduction of migrants' isolation in Tatarstan by 40% confirms the thesis that bilingual models mitigate culture shock (Cummins, 2000).

At the federal level, the lack of unified standards of multicultural education can create difficulties in the implementation of the principles of 'inclusive society' (Banks, 2008), according to which education is a key instrument of social cohesion. At the same time, regional initiatives (for example, bilingual programmes in Tatarstan) demonstrate the potential for the development of inclusive approaches, but their local nature requires more systemic integration at the national level.

- International Experience as a Reference Point
- Germany's systemic approach: BAMF integration courses combining language and culture are based on the concept of 'soft power' (Nye, 2004), where education shapes migrants' loyalty. Their effectiveness (50% increase in employment) supports the hypothesis of the relationship between language competence and economic integration (Chiswick, 2008).
- Digitalisation in Turkey: The use of EdTech for refugees is in line with the trend of 'hybrid learning' (Means *et al.*, 2013), which increases the accessibility of education in times of crisis. However, unlike Turkey, digital solutions for migrants in the Russian Federation are episodic.

## Recommendations (With Scientific Substantiation)

### 1. Federal Programme of Multicultural Education

- Rationale: The model of multicultural federalism (Kymlicka, 1995) assumes harmonization of regional practices through common standards. Example: Canada, where federal LINC programmes provide equal access to language courses.
- Implementation: Introduction of a framework law similar to the “National Integration Plan” (Germany) with mandatory modules on intercultural communication.

### 2. Facilitating the Recognition of Foreign Documents

- Theoretical basis: The theory of 'human capital' (Becker, 1964) emphasizes that non-recognition of qualifications leads to under-utilization of migrants' potential.

- Practice: Creation of an inter-ministerial commission for validation of documents, as in the EU (Directive 2005/36/EC).

### 3. Online Platforms for Language Adaptation

- Rationale: Research on the 'digital divide' (van Dijk, 2006) shows that EdTech reduces barriers for vulnerable groups.

- Example: The Turkish EBA platform has proven effective in educating 18 million users, including refugees.

- Structure: Development of a platform with AI tutors for Russian language and ethno-cultural content (analogue to Duolingo + national modules).

### 4. Support for NPOs

- Theory: The concept of the third sector (Salamon, 1999) states that NGOs compensate for the shortcomings of state systems.

- Mechanisms:

- Grants under the EU Erasmus+ model;

- Methodological hubs for the exchange of best practices (analogue of Migration Policy Institute).

## Conclusion

Education in the Russian Federation can preserve the cultural identity of migrants through bilingual programmes (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2022), NPO projects (NPO “Kovcheg”, 2023) and digital solutions.

For systemic changes, a federal law on multicultural education and interagency co-operation are needed (Kymlicka, 1995).

Practical significance: the results can be used by the Ministry of Education and Science to develop a strategy for migrant integration.

Prospects: research of long-term effects of programmes, analysis of the role of social media in preserving identity.

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## **SOCIAL WORK AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: BEST PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH AND INCLUSION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

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Digital technology offers numerous opportunities for individuals with physical disabilities to improve their quality of life and well-being, thereby positively impacting their mental health. Digital technology and assistive devices enable people with disabilities to access vital health information, social networks, education and employment opportunities (Cheatham, 2012). Therefore, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) holds tremendous potential to increase the inclusion and accessibility of individuals with disabilities in numerous critical aspects of health, education, employment and social activity. AI-enabled tools and applications such as way-finding and communication aids, adaptive learning systems and robot assistance with daily living activities provide personalized solutions that address the different needs of individuals with disabilities so that they are empowered to overcome barriers and participate more actively with society (Shuford, 2023). The appropriate use of digital technology can mitigate the severe psychological effects of social isolation, lack of psychological support and economic vulnerability resulting from physical disability. This is an important starting point for this paper, which examines perceptions related to the use of digital technology to promote the psychological well-being of people with physical disabilities, with a particular focus on social work interventions, assistive technologies, artificial intelligence tools, virtual reality and teletherapy and how these can be used to benefit this vulnerable group.

Emerging smart environments represent significant opportunities to positively impact the lives of people with physical disabilities by providing useful tools to support their daily activities, thereby improving their well-being (Burzagli *et al.*, 2022). Social work can therefore actively collaborate with technology designers to make technological tools more adaptable to the individual needs of people with physical disabilities at the everyday level.

Employment is central to the psychological well-being of individuals with physical disabilities. Traditional work environments, however, present formidable barriers to inclusion, creating increased economic insecurity and psychological distress. Remote work and micro-task crowdsourcing platforms have created new employment channels, enabling people with

disabilities to work with increased autonomy (Grabl *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, adaptive workspaces driven by AI and policies for digital accessibility have increased inclusion in the workplace, resulting in economic empowerment and psychological resilience (Burzagli *et al.*, 2022).

Despite such advancements, there are several impediments to the uptake of online mental care. Among the most imperative is the digital divide, with the poor level of digital ability among physically disabled people rendering them unable to use online services and telehealth services. Secondly, the extremely high cost of assistive technologies is another impediment, particularly in the context of the poor finances for disability support programs in low- and middle-income nations (Ibarra-Rodríguez, 2024; Kuo *et al.*, 2021).

As a response to such demand, this paper presents the Digital Mental Health Inclusion Framework with three core components: (1) the establishment of digital literacy programs for physically disabled individuals to improve their ability to utilize digital mental health tools, (2) policy actions to make assistive technologies accessible and affordable and (3) cross-sectoral partnerships among social workers, mental health professionals and technology designers to co-create inclusive digital interventions.

The incorporation of digital technology into mental health interventions has the potential to transform service delivery by making psychological support more accessible and reducing social isolation. Social work can be at the forefront in bridging the divide between technological innovation and real-world implementation so that digital inclusion strategies effectively achieve mental health equity. With concerted policy efforts, increased funding for assistive technologies and greater stakeholder awareness, digital technology can be harnessed as an effective vehicle for improving the mental well-being of people with physical disabilities.

**Keywords:** Social work, digital technology, physical disabilities, mental health, assistive technology, virtual reality therapy, AI-based mental health interventions, teletherapy.

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## MIGRANTS AND FOOD BUSINESSES BETWEEN MARKET AND POLITICS

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Migrants play a vital role across various sectors of the economy, especially in the food industry. The food sector, which includes agriculture and hospitality, frequently relies on migrant labor for its workforce (Baker, 2016; Boucher & Taran, 2017). However, migrants' involvement in this area comes with its own set of challenges. Politics and bureaucracy affect how migrants engage in the food industry, shaping their opportunities, working conditions and rights (Castles & Miller, 2020). Although migrants contribute essential skills and labor to the food sector, political choices and bureaucratic obstacles can either support or impede their participation and well-being in this crucial industry (Cholewinski, 2017).

The food industry, particularly in countries with a high demand for low-cost labor such as agriculture, food processing and restaurant services, relies heavily on migrant workers (Cox, 2018). These workers typically come from nations with fewer economic opportunities and seek jobs in regions where they can send remittances back home or secure better prospects (Talib & Abdullah, 2023). Migrants enhance the economy by performing labor-intensive tasks that are less appealing to the native population (Cox, 2018). However, the host country's political environment significantly affects their ability to work legally, as fluctuating policies regarding work permits, visas and labor rights often limit their mobility and security (O'Neil & Sachs, 2014).

Political decisions, such as immigration laws and policies, are central to the challenges migrants face in the food business. Governments may implement policies that encourage or restrict migration based on their economic and political interests (ILO, 2019). For instance, some countries might adopt policies that allow an influx of migrant workers during labor shortages in the food sector, while others may impose stricter regulations to limit immigration for political or social reasons. These decisions can significantly influence the availability of migrant labor, impacting the efficiency and sustainability of the food business. Furthermore, political discourse on migration can often be polarizing, featuring rhetoric that either supports or stigmatizes migrant workers, thereby affecting their treatment and rights within the food industry (Cholewinski, 2015).

Bureaucracy is crucial in determining how migrants can enter the food business. In many countries, migrants must navigate a complex system of paperwork, permits and regulations to obtain the right to work (Nazri *et al.*, 2022). Bureaucratic red tape often delays or hinders migrants

from joining the workforce, forcing them to rely on informal labor markets where working conditions may be poor and protections are limited. Additionally, labor exploitation in the food industry can arise when migrants are compelled to work without proper documentation, making them vulnerable to mistreatment (Cholewinski, 2015; Zhu, 2017). Inefficiencies in bureaucratic systems can exacerbate these issues, as migrants often endure long wait times for permits and have limited access to legal assistance (O'Neil & Sachs, 2014; ILO, 2019)

The range of narratives, from struggles to successes, forms the Malaysian framework for examining migrants and the food business. For example, locals must compete with elite migrant restaurants with substantial capital to promote their national cuisine within Malaysia, a country noted for its significant Muslim population (and as a popular tourist destination in Southeast Asia). Restaurants serving Middle Eastern, Italian, Punjabi, Hyderabad, French, Latin American and various other Asian cuisines are predominantly found in Malaysia. This diversity has placed Malaysia 25<sup>th</sup> on the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2023; <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/reports/>) and Malaysia ranked among the top ten retirement destinations (<https://internationalliving.com/>). Acknowledging the market demands and revenues that food businesses contribute to communities and the nation, a more agile approach and systematic regulations could help Malaysia enhance the roles of migrants and food businesses, balancing market dynamics with fundamental rights to liberty and property.

The interplay among migrants, the food industry, governmental policies and bureaucratic structures is intricate. Migrants play a crucial role in the food sector; however, political directives and bureaucratic systems substantially impact their rights, working conditions and opportunities. Governments possess the authority to formulate policies that may either safeguard or exploit migrant laborers and their capacity to maneuver through bureaucratic hurdles frequently dictates their prosperity within the food industry. To facilitate the success of migrants in the food sector, policymakers must adeptly balance immigration regulation with the provision of equitable, efficient and accessible pathways for these individuals to both contribute to and benefit from the economy.

**Keywords:** Migrants, market, foods, bureaucracy, politics.

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## FOSTERING RESILIENCE AND CAREER ASPIRATION AMONG ORPHANS THROUGH PAKISTAN SWEET HOME

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Over 4.6 million orphans in Pakistan (Mahmood *et al.*, 2020) grapple with everyday challenges and struggle for survival. Pakistan Sweet Home, a foundation dedicated to the care and wellbeing of orphans, has been providing shelter, food, healthcare, quality education, life skills, emotional support and recreation to thousands of orphans in a family like setting. As matter of fact, orphans have been historically neglected by scholars (Chattha, 2022). This study, thus, examines the role of Pakistan Sweet Home (PSH) in fostering resilience and career aspirations among its residents (orphaned children). I also attempt to study how PSH emerged out of a host of needs, expectations, resources and opportunities for orphans in Pakistan. The data for the paper comes from management team and teachers of PSH. I have chosen qualitative approach and convenient sampling technique to draw a sample of 16 staff members working at PSH (equal proportion of management staff and teachers). The reason of qualitative approach is to have a deeper insight and understanding of the national level orphanage (PSH) and its contribution to the wellbeing of the disadvantaged group. Drawing on the qualitative approach, the study uses probing open-ended questions, which will give participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses (Flick, 2009). The data comes from in-depth qualitative interviews, using interview guide. The collected data was processed inline thematic analysis. We have attempted to explore how PSH's holistic approach, providing education, mentorship, emotional support and life skills, helps shape the emotional and professional growth of its residents. By focusing on the development of life skills, career guidance and resilience-building activities, Pakistan Sweet Home plays a pivotal role in empowering orphans to overcome their circumstances and aspire to brighter futures. This paper highlights the effectiveness of these programmes in transforming the lives of orphaned children, enabling them to develop self-confidence, pursue meaningful careers and become contributing members of society. The findings underscore the importance of integrated support systems in nurturing the potential of orphaned children and promoting their long-term well-being.

**Keywords:** Career, future aspirations, resilience, orphans, sweet homes.

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# **THE APPLICATION OF DEFECTOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

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The application of defectology in social work practice plays a crucial role in supporting individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) by addressing their unique developmental and social needs. Social workers are key professionals in facilitating the educational, social and emotional adaptation of individuals with ASD, ensuring their successful integration into society. This research aims to highlight the essential role of social workers in applying defectological principles within the context of inclusive education, rehabilitation and psychosocial support.

Defectology, as a specialized discipline, provides a scientific framework for understanding and addressing developmental disabilities. However, its effective application requires a multidisciplinary approach, where social workers serve as a bridge between individuals with ASD, their families, educators and healthcare professionals. By integrating defectological methodologies into social work practice, professionals can enhance early intervention strategies, improve adaptive behaviors and promote the overall well-being of individuals with ASD.

Social workers play a pivotal role in designing individualized support plans, facilitating communication and advocating for inclusive policies that enable individuals with ASD to access education, employment and community participation. Their contributions extend beyond educational settings to include family counseling, social skills training and community awareness programs aimed at reducing stigma and fostering acceptance. The holistic approach adopted by social workers, in collaboration with defectologists, psychologists and educators, ensures that individuals with ASD receive comprehensive and sustainable support throughout their lives.

This research underscores the increasing importance of social work in the field of special education and highlights the need for continuous professional development to enhance the effectiveness of interventions. By strengthening the integration of defectology within social work practice, professionals can contribute to a more inclusive society where individuals with ASD can thrive and reach their full potential.

### **The Historical Development and Scientific Foundations of Defectology**

The field of defectology was established, developed and introduced as a distinct scientific discipline between 1926 and 1934. As a result, generations of scientists and practitioners in the late 19th and early 20th centuries gained access to invaluable data that facilitated effective corrective interventions and the compensatory restructuring of preserved cognitive and sensory functions in children with diverse developmental needs. The fundamental principles formulated by scholars of that era played a pivotal role in advancing special pedagogy and psychology, significantly shaping their respective domains.

The early 20th century witnessed the emergence of ground-breaking scientific contributions from Vygotsky (1929) and his students, which greatly influenced the development of defectological science. During the Soviet period, up until 1992, the discipline flourished under the guidance of distinguished scholars at the world's only Institute of Defectology, further strengthening its theoretical and practical foundations (Vygotsky, 1929).

### **Modern Defectology: Challenges and Development Perspectives**

However, over time, defectology began to be integrated into general pedagogy, leading to a dilution of its distinct characteristics. Efforts were made to align the professional standards of defectologists with those of general educators and social workers. Nevertheless, defectology and its subfields have unique research subjects, content, principles, methodologies, techniques and technologies specifically designed for working with individuals with developmental differences. Recognizing these specialized aspects is essential for maintaining the scientific integrity of defectology (Amirova, 2020; Bazhukova, 2016).

Modern society necessitates the further development of defectology as a foundational discipline for special, integrated, combined and inclusive education. The field must address contemporary challenges by expanding its theoretical and methodological framework to enhance early diagnosis, intervention and support for individuals with diverse developmental profiles. Integration problems of psychological and pedagogical support of children with visual impairment (Amirova, 2020).

It is crucial to reaffirm defectology as an independent and specialized scientific discipline that addresses the unique theoretical and practical challenges of special education and the empowerment of individuals with disabilities.

A renewed perspective on defectology underscores the importance of reinforcing the solid foundation laid by national scholars and practitioners. To address modern challenges in special education and social inclusion, the field must incorporate philosophical, sociological, natural-scientific, medical-biological and psychological-pedagogical foundations while integrating

information and digital technologies for both traditional and distance education (Mallaev *et al.*, 2019).

The ability to use psychological tools plays a crucial role in shaping the social and cultural participation of individuals with disabilities. Among them, those with intellectual disabilities face the most significant challenges in this regard.

This particular group requires a systematic approach to differentiating the spectrum of intellectual disabilities, particularly in distinguishing between borderline intellectual functioning and mild to moderate intellectual disability. Addressing these complexities remains a critical issue in contemporary defectological research and practice (Amirova, 2020).

Defectology and social work intersect in their shared goal of fostering the well-being and integration of individuals with developmental differences. Social workers play a crucial role in supporting individuals with disabilities by facilitating access to educational, psychological and rehabilitative services. They act as mediators between families, educators and healthcare professionals to ensure that defectological principles are effectively implemented in inclusive educational and social environments. By advocating for policy reforms, promoting social inclusion programs and providing direct interventions, social workers contribute significantly to improving the quality of life and independence of individuals with disabilities. The collaboration between social work and defectology is essential for addressing contemporary challenges in special education, enhancing interdisciplinary approaches and fostering a more inclusive society.

### **The Role of Social Work and Defectology in Supporting Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

The application of defectology in social work practice with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is essential for promoting their development, social integration and overall well-being. Social workers play a critical role in assessing and creating individualized intervention plans, ensuring that defectological principles are effectively applied to meet the unique needs of each individual. They support early interventions, help families navigate daily challenges and advocate for inclusive practices in schools, workplaces and communities. Social workers also collaborate with defectologists, psychologists and other professionals to provide a holistic approach that fosters cognitive, social and emotional growth. By integrating defectology within social work, professionals can enhance the quality of life for individuals with ASD and contribute to a more inclusive society. Social workers can also promote community awareness, reduce stigma and encourage participation in recreational, educational and employment activities. Continuous training and collaboration with defectology specialists are key to improving social work practices and ensuring that individuals with ASD receive the best possible care and support.

**Keywords:** Defectology, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), social work, inclusive education, psychosocial support.

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## **SECTION II**

### **Social Policy in Health Care and Education**

#### **INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY IN AZERBAIJAN: GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN IN MODERN REALITIES OF FAMILY INSTITUTE**

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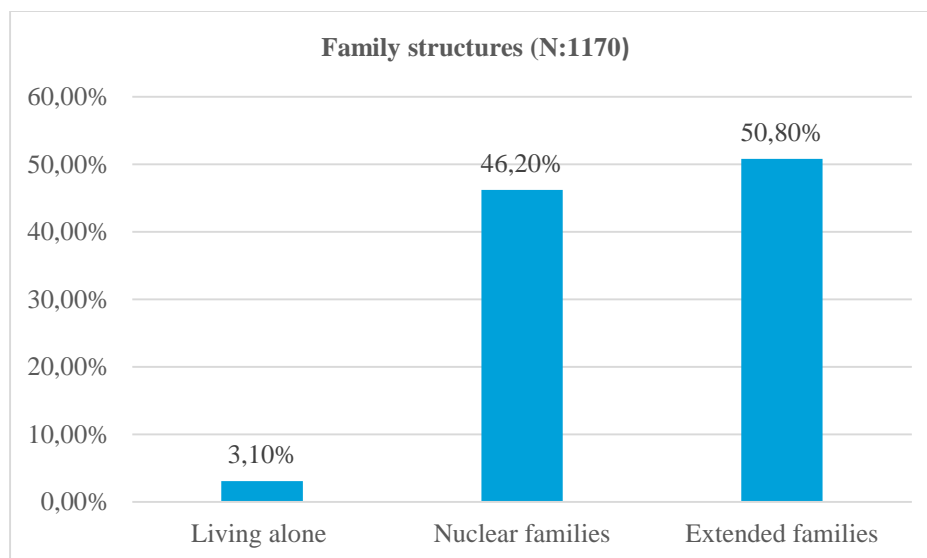
#### **Introduction**

In spite of being connected with family genealogy, representation of family relations in family and society, the theme of grandparents rarely becomes the focus of family studies (Maccarty & Edwards, 2018). The communication between grandparents and grandchildren as an aspect of intergenerational relations is being considered in this abstract. The analysed material is from the research of Social Research Center “Intergenerational relations in Azerbaijan: family solidarity and care” which held in 2024th year. 1170 respondents from 12 economic regions took part in survey. The sample of survey was formed as three groups (each of them 390 respondents) of generations with primary aim to compare their results. This research is the first attempt to apply the concept of “intergenerational solidarity” (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991) to Azerbaijani context.

#### **The context of intergenerational relationships**

Nowadays intergenerational relations in family are long-term as never before in history of mankind. The main reason of this change is increasing life expectancy. The researches of the last decades of 20th century show the lasting importance of intergenerational ties in spite of high social mobility, increasing of divorce rates, changes in family structure and its functions (Steinbach, (2008). Nevertheless, the influence of these issues is obvious. In the survey we refer 22% of respondents older than 18 years say that they live with their parents and 3,1% of them that they live with grandparents. The other finding of research is about family structures which are highly dynamic indicators and never have been measured in this country before. The results show that the

prevalence of nuclear families is more that it could be expected. If 50,8% of respondents live in extended families, 46,2% live in nuclear family structure and 3,1% of them live alone. Thus, in spite of popularity of discourses about extended families in public opinion, results of our research show that nuclear family structure is almost near to prevalence. We can assume that in this context the frequency of communication between grandparents and grandchildren is not high.



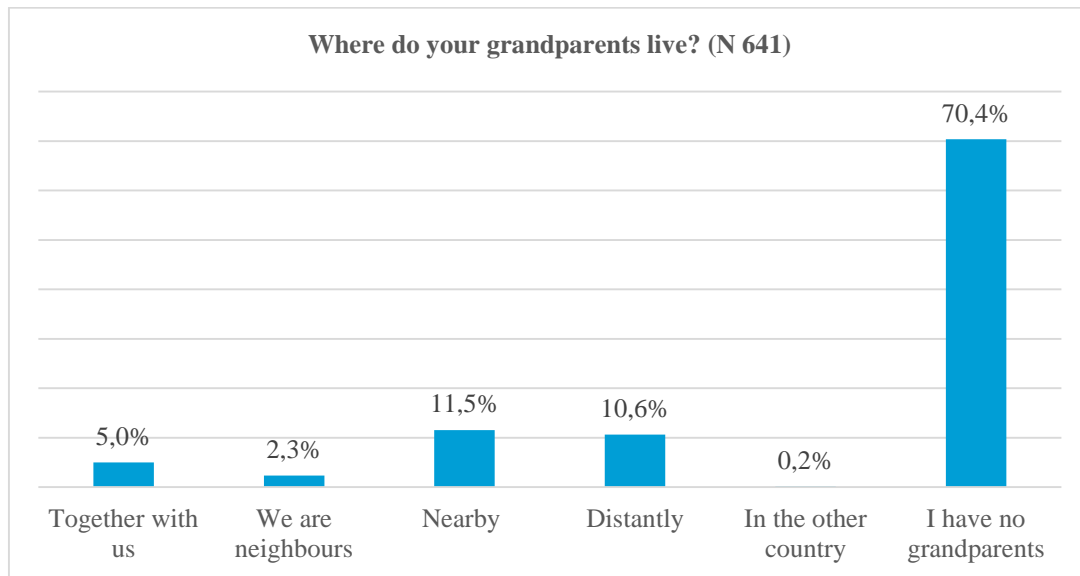
**Figure 1.**

**Grandparents: close or distant?** There is a question about place of living of **grandparents** in the research. Only 5,0% of respondents say that they live with their grandparents in the same household, 2,3% are neighbours with them, 11,5% live nearby, 10,6% live distant, 0,2% of grandparents live in the other country. 70,4% of respondents (which are older than 18 years) have no living grandparents. 56,4% of respondents of younger age (18-39 years old), 90,0% of those who is 40-59 years old and all of those who was older than 60 years have no living grandparents. In general, this question was addressed to participants who said that they had parents/grandparents to the filter question before and as we see most of them actually mean living parent (not both parents and grandparents).

We can conclude that living with grandparents is not a prevalent practice. Most of people older than 18 years has distant regime of contacts with their grandparents.

Gender, type of family structure, place of living (village, town or city) don't determine any remarkable difference in cohabitation with grandparents. The highest percentage of those who live in the same household with their grandparents are in Gazakh - Tovuz economic region (14,3%), most of those who live nearby are also there (23,1%), most of those who live distantly are in Central Aran region (16,1%).

Along with this the results of research reveal the high expectations towards the institution of grandparenting. To explore public opinion on this matter, respondents were asked to share their views on the statement: “**Grandparents have to take care of their grandchildren**”. 92,4% percent of them agreed, 6,8% disagreed with this statement. The analyses of three generations (18-39, 40-59 and 60+ years old) shows that the older participant are the more strict in their expectations towards grandparenting. But participants with higher education have milder expectations in this issue.



**Figure 2.**

## Conclusion

Results of some question of the research allow to conclude that in spite of steadiness of discourses about grandparenting, the realities of modern context of family institution increase distance between generations of grandchildren and grandparents and shape intergenerational solidarity. All participants of the research are older than 18 years. That means that childhood and adolescence may be the only period when intensive contact between two of these generations is possible. Of course, the type of cohabitation of different generations doesn't determine everything related communication between them. But it's impossible to underestimate correlations between these two aspects.

**Keywords:** Intergenerational solidarity, grandparenting, family structures, intergenerational relations.

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## SOVEREIGNTY IN GLOBAL PUBLIC OPINION: MODERN POLITICAL ETHICS AND THE AZERBAIJANI EXPERIENCE

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The thesis analyzes the impact of global public opinion on the concept of sovereignty, the role of modern political ethics in this process and Azerbaijan's unique experience. In the modern world, sovereignty is no longer limited to the territorial integrity and political independence of states; global information flows, the influence of international organizations and the formation of public opinion necessitate a reinterpretation of this concept. *The article emphasizes the ethical dimensions of sovereignty, particularly the reconciliation of national interests with international norms and values while protecting state sovereignty.* The Azerbaijani experience is examined in this context as a unique example: the country's achievements on the path to independence, its principled stance in resolving the Karabakh conflict and its ability to defend its sovereignty on global platforms are analyzed in detail. At the same time, Azerbaijan's multi-vector foreign policy and international law-based approach are evaluated as applications of modern political ethics. The thesis also examines the impact of global public opinion on Azerbaijan's sovereignty narrative, particularly in the era of social media and information wars. As a result, it concludes that Azerbaijan's experience provides a model from which other states can learn. The study covers the historical, theoretical and practical aspects of the topic, offering an in-depth analysis of how sovereignty is being reshaped in the modern world and Azerbaijan's role in this transformation.

### Introduction

Theoretical approaches to sovereignty in the world are still relevant and a subject of discussion today, because sovereignty is the basis of statehood and modern global dynamics require constant reinterpretation of this concept. Although traditional concepts such as classical sovereignty (Boden) and the Westphalian model emphasize the independence of states, globalization, the increasing role of international organizations and transnational problems (climate change, terrorism) weaken this concept of absolute power. For example, structures such as the European Union force member states to share sovereignty, which calls into question the classical theses on the indivisibility of sovereignty (Keohane & Hoffmann, 2018). At the same time, popular sovereignty (Rousseau) retains its importance as the basis of democratic governance, but how the “general will” is formed in the era of social media and information wars is

controversial. Legal sovereignty (Austin) clashes with international law in the modern era; although states apply their own laws, decisions of institutions such as the UN can limit this right. Postmodern approaches (Krasner) show that sovereignty is no longer a fixed concept, but rather changes flexibly in the face of global economic and political pressures (Krasner, 2001). Many countries and global centers are making considerable use of the process of studying public opinion on the approach to sovereignty in the modern era and the impact of its results on policy, attitudes, behavior or taking it into account in new trends and where possible, adapting public opinion to ready-made goals formed on an administrative basis. *For example*, Ipsos conducted a survey of 8,000 Europeans online from December 28, 2020 to January 8, 2021, including 8 EU countries: France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Sweden, Romania and Poland (<https://www.ipsos.com/en/perceptions-european-sovereignty-across-europe>). The questionnaire also examined attitudes toward fundamental questions relevant to the entire scientific sphere: Why is European sovereignty increasingly discussed at both the European and national levels? How is the concept of sovereignty understood and expressed across Europe? Do these meanings vary based on historical, political and geopolitical contexts?

How is the juxtaposition of “sovereignty” and “Europe” perceived? Is Europe truly sovereign today? While 51% of Europeans believe it is, evolving geopolitical dynamics challenge this notion. A comparative study of Russia's influence on Eastern Europe in 2018 versus today, amid war, COVID-19 and the U.S.-EU trade war, could offer valuable insights into shifting attitudes toward sovereignty.

Europeans prioritize several areas to strengthen sovereignty:

- Common security and defense policy (67%);
- Strategic production (food, health) (65%);
- Energy independence (60%);
- Upholding European values (democracy, rule of law) (61%);
- Border control (59%);
- Securing strategic and digital infrastructure (52%, 46%).



According to the table: **Cultural superiority**: the percentage of people in different countries who believe that their culture is superior to others, **Protection of life**: the percentage of people who believe that their way of life needs to be protected from external influences, **Territorial ambitions**: the percentage of people who believe that the territories of neighboring countries belong to their country. The section “Perspectives on Nationalism, Sovereignty and Global Institutions”, chapter 5 of the Pew Research Center's 2003 study “Views of a Changing World”, examines how the concepts of nationalism and sovereignty are perceived on a global scale and people's positions in global institutions (<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2003/06/03/chapter-5-nationalism-sovereignty-and-views-of-global-institutions/>). In many countries, people consider their culture superior to other cultures and think that it is important to protect it from external influences. In developing countries, such as Indonesia and South Korea, the majority of respondents value their culture highly. In many countries, people want to protect their way of life from external influences. This sentiment is especially strong in developing countries. For example, in Turkey, most respondents believe it is important to defend their way of life. In many countries, people also believe that certain territories of neighboring states rightfully belong to their own country. Such territorial claims are particularly common in India, Pakistan and several other nations. Additionally, many people hold mixed feelings about their country's position in global institutions; while they support global cooperation, they also seek to protect national sovereignty. Global sovereignty surveys indicate that modern political ethics are significantly challenged by three key issues: cultural superiority, the protection of national identity and territorial ambitions. These trends have become especially prominent during the ongoing reshaping of the world order. The growing belief in cultural superiority reflects rising national identity and self-affirmation. Likewise, concerns over safeguarding lifestyles signal resistance to globalization. Increasing territorial claims underscore resurging geopolitical tensions and historical disputes.

Ethnic, cultural and territorial factors shape the evolving world order, testing modern political ethics amid wars, internal instability, weakening institutions and rising use of force. In this context, Azerbaijan restored its sovereignty through anti-terror measures on September 20, 2023, continuing the Patriotic War. President Ilham Aliyev declared this date the **Day of State Sovereignty** on September 19, 2024 (<https://president.az/az/articles/view/66855>). In addition, the decree “On declaring 2025 the ‘Year of Constitution and Sovereignty’ in the Republic of Azerbaijan” was an important step in terms of strengthening and substantiating the connection of sovereignty with constitutional values. These successes of Ilham Aliyev, serving global political ethics and international law, established Azerbaijan’s experience as a precedent in the struggle for sovereignty. Azerbaijan, which liberated its lands in accordance with the UN Charter, set an example of a legitimate struggle against occupation. In other words, the State Sovereignty Day and the “Year of Constitution and Sovereignty” initiatives are the embodiment of the restoration of justice and the right to self-determination on a global scale. This should be evaluated as an ethical and legal experience for states in the modern world.

**Keywords:** Global public opinion, sovereignty, modern political ethics, Azerbaijani experience, national independence, international relations, statehood, constitution.

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# **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND THE INEQUALITY EFFECTIVENESS OF FISCAL POLICY IN ADDRESSING INCOME REDISTRIBUTION FOR DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS**

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Income inequality remains a critical challenge worldwide, affecting both developed and developing economies. This study evaluates the role of institutional capacity in enhancing the redistributive effectiveness of fiscal policy in reducing income disparities. Using panel data from 60 countries (30 developed, 30 developing) over 2002–2023, the analysis investigates the interaction between fiscal measures (e.g., progressive taxation, targeted spending) and institutional quality (e.g., administrative efficiency, governance integrity). Findings reveal that robust institutions amplify the impact of fiscal interventions, leading to more equitable outcomes, particularly in developed economies. Conversely, weaker institutions in developing countries limit redistributive efforts, often exacerbating inequality. The results underscore the necessity of integrating institutional reforms with fiscal policies to achieve sustainable equity. This research provides theoretical insights, empirical evidence and actionable recommendations for policymakers. Also, this study is one of the few that systematically compares the impact of institutional capacity on income inequality between developed and developing countries. While existing literature frequently examines the effects of fiscal policies on inequality, it lacks a comprehensive analysis detailing how these effects differ based on institutional capacity. This study fills this gap by providing new empirical findings.

## **Introduction**

Income inequality has become a critical global issue with significant socio-economic consequences, ranging from reduced social mobility to heightened political instability. Over the past few decades, it has increasingly influenced national policies and international economic dialogues. Fiscal policy-governments' use of taxation and public spending-is regarded as a primary instrument for achieving distributive justice. Through progressive tax structures and targeted social programs, fiscal measures aim to narrow the income gap between high- and low-income groups. However, the effectiveness of such policies varies considerably across countries and depends

heavily on institutional quality and administrative capacity (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Rodrik, 2007).

### **Policy Recommendations and Conclusion**

Overall, these policy recommendations underscore the necessity of integrating institutional reforms with fiscal policy measures to achieve sustainable and equitable economic outcomes. The success of redistributive policies depends not only on the design of taxation and public spending but also on the governance structures that oversee their implementation. Strengthening institutional capacity is, therefore, not merely a complementary strategy but a fundamental prerequisite for effective fiscal policy.

This study explores the intricate relationship between institutional capacity and the redistributive effectiveness of fiscal policy in addressing income inequality, using panel data from 60 countries (30 developed and 30 developing) over the period 2002-2023. The results demonstrate that institutional capacity - encompassing governance quality, administrative efficiency and transparency - plays a crucial role in determining the success of fiscal policy interventions. Countries with strong institutional frameworks achieve markedly better outcomes in reducing inequality through progressive taxation and well-targeted public expenditures, whereas weak institutions in developing nations hinder these efforts, leading to resource misallocations and inefficiencies.

Empirical findings highlight the differential impacts of fiscal policy instruments: while progressive taxes and public spending on education and healthcare significantly reduce income disparities, their effectiveness depends on the institutional integrity and administrative capacity of the implementing country. Developing countries face unique challenges, including corruption, poor targeting and limited institutional capacity, which reduce the impact of fiscal policies. In contrast, developed countries benefit from institutional strength, which allows for better policy alignment and enforcement, maximizing redistributive effects.

The key findings of the study are as follows:

- Strong institutional frameworks enhance the effectiveness of fiscal policies. In developed economies, better-targeted public spending and more efficient tax collection systems contribute to a reduction in inequality.
- Weak institutional capacity limits the impact of fiscal measures. In developing countries, corruption, inefficiencies in public administration and a large informal economy hinder the effectiveness of fiscal policies in addressing income disparities.
- Tax system structures significantly influence inequality. Direct taxes (e.g., income tax) have a greater redistributive effect, whereas developing countries rely more on indirect taxes (e.g., VAT), which tend to burden lower-income groups disproportionately.

- The effectiveness of public expenditures depends on institutional quality. Investments in education and healthcare yield better outcomes in developed countries, while institutional shortcomings in developing nations reduce the accessibility and impact of these social expenditures.

These results highlight the necessity of combining fiscal reforms with institutional improvements to reduce income inequality effectively. Policymakers should focus on enhancing governance integrity, improving tax compliance and investing in administrative efficiency to maximize the redistributive impact of fiscal policies.

This study contributes to the literature by offering new insights into the interaction between institutional capacity and income distribution. Future research should further examine how regional and country-specific factors modify this relationship, providing a more detailed understanding of institutional constraints in fiscal policy effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Income inequality, fiscal policy, institutional capacity, governance, redistributive effectiveness, developed countries, developing countries, taxation, public spending.

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## INTERDISCIPLINARY INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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This study addresses the importance of integrating social work into health, law and education within the framework of the Interprofessional Education (IPE) model. IPE aims to strengthen interprofessional collaboration by encouraging different professional groups to train together. However, the lack of recognition of the social work profession and its practices in the fields of health, law and education makes it difficult to provide services with a holistic approach. In this context, integrating the “Introduction to Social Work” course into the curricula of different disciplines will provide various contributions. Providing information such as social work practices, social work concepts, disadvantaged groups, social service institutions and organizations in general will develop a basic understanding of social work. Specifically, it will provide an insight into the medical social services of healthcare professionals in health group undergraduate departments (medicine, nursing, etc.) and the social service models applied to patients and their relatives. Including forensic social work perspective courses in the curricula of departments providing legal education and social services in the curricula of prospective judges, prosecutors and lawyers will contribute to meeting the social support needs of victims. Including an introductory “Introduction to Social Work” course in the undergraduate curricula of psychology, sociology and psychological counseling and guidance will raise students' awareness of child protection policies, micro-meso-macro working systematics and working with families. At this point, there are successful practices in the world and the implementation of similar policies in Turkey can improve social service provision by increasing interprofessional cooperation. In conclusion, the integration of social work into academic curricula will strengthen interprofessional cooperation and increase the level of knowledge of prospective social work professionals. In this way, it is expected to strengthen the impact of practices and policies aimed at improving social welfare.

**Keywords:** Introduction to social work, interprofessional education, medical social services, forensic social work.

## **THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL POLICY AND STATE GOVERNANCE: A THEORETICAL AND LEGAL PERSPECTIVE**

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Constitutionalism conditions or builds a constant impact (the influence of fundamental law) on state functions and governance, human rights and social policy, instituting a driving power in applying founding provisions for shaping the welfare system. The postulate may formalize a constitutional framework that designs a legal setup where certain principles are set to promote welfare policy in an arrangement authorizing the state to govern democratic values and the rule of law to realize legitimate duties in protecting fundamental social rights in line with social-oriented vision and norms of the constitution. The significance and implications of the constitutional framework interconnecting the equal development and implementation of social programs based on ultimate legal power, focus on the effects of primary jurisdiction promoting social equity. Emphasizing the constitutional imperatives may present insights into the social state policy, welfare rights and state obligations, providing aspects derived from constitutional theory.

According to constitutional theory, the conceptual and legal ground for government and societal structures can be found in constitutions. In this context, a constitution serves as the supreme legal authority, forming a political and civic arrangement of a nation and state, by presenting roots for national and governmental structure as well as social rights and sanctions.

As the primary legal act of a country, a constitution can be regarded as a vital source of fundamental notions that acknowledge the essentials for statehood, certifying human rights and obligations, state governance and duties before the major law, and general legislation for standing liable for national stability and societal prosperity. From this perspective, constitutional architecture boosts shaping the course of development governance guaranteeing the equilibrium of its prerogatives and duties of public parties and social stakeholders in society. The interaction between prospects, social rights and welfare objectives proposed under the founding law can be scrutinized in constitutional reviews in terms of the approach of the constitutional legislation that grants a consolidating outlook for state management and interlinked public domains. O'Connell (2012) reasons the constitutional role as the strategic premise for the establishment of social governance, rights protection and provision.

### **The Social State Doctrine: Welfare State in Constitutional Law**

The concept of the social state so-called welfare state represents a widespread viewpoint in contemporary constitutional theory. The core idea identifies the state's inevitable function in the reduction of social disparities while stimulating social development and welfare progress. Being the theoretical and constitutional principles, the social state doctrine requires government involvement in economic and social policies to ensure fundamental human rights. In a legal point, these principles are tied to the concepts of the rule of law and democracy. The rule of law warrants that the strategies governed by the state for supporting social policy operate within the established legal norms. In turn, the social state principles urge the adjustment of legal mechanisms that are well-founded to safeguard the welfare of citizens. Current democratic constitutional systems integrate the standards, specifying the state's responsibilities to afford social protection and welfare stability (Iida & Matsubayashi, 2010).

Habermas (1996) discusses the legal structuring feature of the constitution yet symbolizing shared values must be justified in a democratic discourse. According to the political sociologist, who has supported the European social model rather than the neoliberal claiming the latter's threat to social cohesion, the social state is essential for ensuring true democratic participation, where social policies provide not only redistribution, at the same time, it refers to enable democratic citizenship (all citizens to engage equally in public life). He views the social state (welfare state) as a decisive institutional framework that is of key importance for integrating society and balancing capitalism, promoting social integration and equal involvement in society, where the constitution exists as its foundation of democratic legitimacy through public acceptance based on rational, inclusive discourse (deliberative democracy). Upon this state, educational and other necessary resources or opportunities should be afforded to citizens to take part in public discourse and democratic processes. In such a system, defending rights and liberties allowing civil and political involvement of citizens, the rule of law guards and promotes democratic social participation of the social welfare public. The law is legitimate when being proposed democratically and protects the conditions for democratic engagements. Following Marshall, Professor Habermas also argues that citizens hold a need for social protection to truly practice civil and political rights (first generation of human rights). At the same time, it is suggested that in capitalist democracies, the social state structure boosts social unity and continuity. In the lack of material or socio-economic equality, legitimate democracy cannot be reached by intensive citizen engagement. Thus, the realization of individual rights is effectively provided in a welfare state.

The constitutional establishment forms the basis of social policy either putting the social state in motion or within accurate presentation of certain articles on social welfare protection. Herewith, the state organization performs as the protector of human rights related to social liberties. Besides, the government is assigned to crucial tasks in setting the welfare agenda and programs assuring

fundamental social rights and securities. Considering all, a state's founding normative (constitution) determines the rights to access the essential services spanning healthcare, education, housing, etc. provided in equal and inclusive conditions for individuals and the vulnerable demographic. Fostering a non-discriminative attitude in social welfare policy can be seen within the central line of this strategic approach. To reach the mentioned target, states develop relevant programs and measures, in sum, a regulatory landscape for the proper and just management of social policy issues. Practically, the constitution entitles the state organizations to apply the instrumental tools for safeguarding social welfare and security to ensure fundamental rights for all citizens impartially. Hence, the state defines the socioeconomic system's legislative regulations by employing its organizations to facilitate fairness of wealth distribution. Thus, enabling the state to actively function in promoting the welfare of citizens, the constitution serves as an empowering foundation for laws and socio-political order.

**Keywords:** Constitutional theory, social state doctrine, social policy, welfare state, state functions, social welfare, human rights, democratic social policy, rule of law, constitutional impact.

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## PUBLIC OPINION IN RUSSIA ON KEY ASPECTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Russians project the normative ideas that life in a justly organized society is a criterion for personal well-being onto the desired strategies for the country's development. In 2024, among the priority concepts of national development, the idea of social justice was the most popular, receiving the support of 50% of the population and ahead of the slogans of restoring Russia's status as a great power (39%) and reviving national traditions (36%)\*. Rimsky (2013) noted that the idea of justice has traditionally been one of the key components of the Russian socio-cultural model, but citizens assess the fairness of the structure of a particular society subjectively, through the prism of their own ideas and interests. Therefore, such an abstract philosophical category as “justice”, which generally prescribes the correspondence of the real to the due, gives rise to a variety of scenarios for the structure of a fair society. Indeed, today almost two-thirds of Russians (63%) find it difficult to accurately determine what is fair and what is not. The reason lies not in the loss of relevance of the concept of social justice in the modern world (only 8% believe that there has never been and will never be, social justice in society), but in the desire of Russians to offer the most suitable form of social organization in which the principles of justice will be fully realized.

The spectrum of ideas existing in Russian public opinion about what social justice consists of can be reduced to two alternative interpretations: equalizing, which assumes an equal distribution of resources between citizens and distributive, aimed at ensuring universal equality of opportunity. Today, among the signs of a fairly organized society, Russians most often name those that guarantee citizens equal opportunities for self-realization: equality before the law (61%), equal conditions for fair competition and achieving success (41%) and equality in social mobility (30%). The need for fair law enforcement is most often mentioned by wealthy Russians with an individual

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\*The empirical basis of the presented study is the data collected during the work on the project “Overcoming Excessive Inequalities as a Condition for Building a Fair Social State in Russia”, carried out at the expense of the Fund of the Expert Institute for Social Research (EISI) “FMUS-2024-0015” at the Federal Research Sociological Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The sociological survey within the framework of the project was conducted in October 2024 in 22 constituent entities of the Russian Federation using a representative all-Russian regional quota sample. The sample size is 2,000 respondents representing the adult (18 years and older) population of the country by parameters of gender, age, socio-professional status, level of education and type of settlement of residence.



income of 2.1 settlement medians (73%), while fair conditions for honest competition are mentioned by middle-aged (43% among 31-40 years old persons) and middle-income respondents (44% among those whose income is 1.26-2 settlement medians). The demand for open opportunities for vertical mobility is expressed by the youngest (38%).

But the idea of social justice as equal access of citizens to basic material resources is less popular. But here too, half of the respondents (51%) associate a fair social order with equal provision of citizens with necessary medical care and quality education, a third - with equality of the standard of living (32%), a fifth (21%) - with equal opportunities for citizens to get access to good jobs “without connections”. The oldest and least well-off citizens associate social justice with equal access of citizens to health care and education resources. The youngest - with unlimited access to good jobs.

Thus, Russians interpret social justice in the spirit of Rawls (2017), as a principle of social order based on “fair equality of opportunity” and proportional access of citizens to public resources, the size of which depends on their contribution to the common good. In such a society - in theory - mechanisms of social mobility function effectively, which give citizens the opportunity to realize their human capital (Mareeva & Slobodenyuk, 2022), not only allowing people to increase their individual well-being, but also ensuring sustainable development of the country at the macro level (Kuzminov & Frumin, 2018).

It is natural that, when answering the question about what kind of society they would like to live in, Russians choose a society of equal opportunities (59%), rather than equal incomes and living conditions (41%). Over the past 12 years, since 2012, this proportion has remained unchanged, but compared to 1995, when the public mood was dominated by the dream of building a society of fair self-realization, the popularity of the idea of equal incomes has almost doubled, from 25% to 41%. Some authors interpret the growing interest of citizens in income equality as a consequence of their disappointment in both the current “rules of the game” (Mareeva, 2018), which do not contribute to the creation of fair inequalities and in the feasibility of a national development strategy based on human capital.

Such statements may seem overly alarming, but they are not unfounded. Despite the stabilization in the early 2010s of the priority public demand for the creation of fair conditions for the equal realization of their opportunities by citizens, the continuing popularity of the ideas of equal living conditions indicates the continuing demand of society for the active participation of the state in ensuring the necessary living conditions for citizens. Today, in Russian society, social justice is perceived not only as a desired principle for organizing social relationships, but also as a basic public demand for the state. After the attempt in the 1990s to apply the market model to the fair distribution of goods and opportunities only exacerbated the existing forms of inequality, in the 2000s society partially returned to the Soviet paradigm of the state as a guarantor of compliance



with the principles of justice (Gorshkov *et al.*, 2021). This was not a return to the paternalistic model; rather, it was supposed to be a kind of social contract with the state, which would provide citizens with basic living conditions, leaving opportunities for personal initiative and responsibility. However, today, with the dominance in public opinion of the idea of minimal state participation in the social sphere, as a guarantor of providing citizens with a basic minimum of resources and rights (45%), more than a third of Russians (37%) support the idea of the state fully ensuring equality of all citizens (property, legal, political)<sup>†</sup>.

And in the current crisis period, when economic instability increases the risks of unemployment and deterioration of the quality of life for the population, the idea of active patronage by the state is becoming increasingly relevant. In particular, the issue of accessibility of medical care is especially acute, especially for residents of border regions, as well as for participants in a special military operation and their families.

In the current crisis situation, Russians' views on both a fair social order and the primary measures of fair assistance to citizens of their country in the current circumstances are changing. Today, Russians consider the most important principles of a fair social order to be equal opportunities for citizens to receive medical care (54%) and their equal access to good jobs (41%). The least important are the reduction of the gap between the standard of living in cities and villages (18%), as well as a decrease in the share of the rich in society (11%).

Among the barriers preventing the establishment of principles of justice in Russia, citizens most often name: excessive gaps in income (33%) and living standards (29%) of the population, as well as inequality of access to medical services (30%). Russians are least concerned about the failure to comply with the principle of equal pay (18%), as well as the significant number of rich and super-rich (15%).

By comparing Russians' answers to questions about what principles should be observed in a just society and which of these principles are least observed in Russia, we calculated an index of dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in various spheres of everyday life. The difference in assessments allowed us to identify areas of both obvious and hidden concern among citizens. The real opportunities for Russians to access health care (24%), education (19%), good work (15%) and fair law enforcement (14%) diverge most from their idealistic ideas about a just social order. In addition, serious dissatisfaction with territorial inequality and the difference in living conditions in the city and in the countryside has formed in public opinion (10%). In the current circumstances, citizens do not consider this problem to be acute, but dissatisfaction with the state of affairs is accumulating here.

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<sup>†</sup>Another 16% of respondents believe that state aid should only be provided to the weak and 3% are completely against state social support.

**Keywords:** Sociology, quality of life, well-being, public opinion, social justice, social inequalities, mass consciousness, social transformations.

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## **ECO-SOCIAL APPROACH: KEY ISSUES AND PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIAL WORK (The case of Russia)**

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In the face of growing environmental challenges and social inequalities, modern social policy is evolving to incorporate sustainable and holistic approaches (Esping-Andersen *et al.*, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 1998). The eco-social approach represents a key direction in this transformation, integrating environmental sustainability with social justice and economic development (Brands & Emmeline, 2016). This paper explores the key issues of the eco-social approach, its significance for contemporary social policy and the potential benefits and challenges of its implementation in Russian social work. The primary research methods included literature analysis on the eco-social approach, data from previous studies and expert interviews with managers and employees of social service organizations (N=15) in different Russian regions (St Petersburg, Leningrad Oblast, Yekaterinburg and Sverdlovsk Region).

The eco-social approach is based on the idea that environmental well-being and social justice are interconnected (Koch & Fritz, 2014). Traditional social policies primarily focus on economic stability and welfare support, often neglecting environmental sustainability. However, the eco-social model emphasizes sustainable resource use, social justice and equity, public participation and community engagement (Fairbrother, 2016). Modern governments and organizations increasingly recognize the need to integrate environmental and social concerns into policymaking. In other words, this approach is based not only on the understanding of society as a system but also on the interaction between society and the environment as a single, interconnected global system that requires sustainability to promote social well-being. Implementing the eco-social approach in social work involves considering the interactions between social, spatial, natural and digital environments. In practical terms, particular attention should be given to the interaction between the medical and social services spheres.

An analysis of expert interviews conducted in organizations in Russian regions (St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region) revealed that the social environment for organizations supporting people with disabilities is characterized by uneven intersectoral cooperation. While

interactions with government institutions and relevant committees are relatively effective, horizontal collaboration between non-profit organizations remains weak. An important trend is the increasing participation of people with disabilities in cultural, sports and social events, as well as the expansion of opportunities for professional training and employment. In St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region, the establishment of multifunctional medical-social centers is actively supported, integrating various services to provide users with a comprehensive and convenient support system. A comparative analysis across regions suggests that despite regional differences in the development of social service systems, common challenges persist. These include interagency cooperation, funding, accessibility of services and workforce training.

The analysis identified regional trends in the development of social, medical and medico-social services. In many Russian regions (e.g., Yekaterinburg and Sverdlovsk Region), key changes are associated with the expansion of rehabilitation services. The following significant trends were identified: separation of social services and social rehabilitation; development of comprehensive rehabilitation programs; increased role of interagency cooperation, including coordination between healthcare, social protection and education sectors to ensure comprehensive rehabilitation and prevent service gaps; expansion of the commercial sector, including private rehabilitation centers; persistent challenges in ensuring accessibility in social and rehabilitation environments; limitations in the use of digital technologies, partly due to cognitive and physical impairments among a significant portion of rehabilitation center clients; implementation of innovative technologies, contingent on careful evaluation of their effectiveness and applicability.

In conclusion, the eco-social approach represents a promising direction for modern social policy, aiming to balance economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability. By integrating ecological concerns into social policy frameworks, societies can develop long-term solutions that benefit both people and the planet. However, successful implementation requires political will, financial support and active public engagement. Moving forward, governments and international organizations must prioritize policies that foster a sustainable and socially just future. The traditional welfare state model, which primarily focuses on the social environment, does not fully align with Russian conditions, where spatial and environmental factors significantly influence social well-being. As for the digital environment, despite its importance, it remains underdeveloped in the social sector-partly due to limited digital infrastructure and partly due to the low digital literacy of a significant portion of social service users.

**Keywords:** Eco-social approach, sustainability, social work, medical and social interaction, welfare state, Russian regions.

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## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS AND THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPONENTS IN ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH: EVALUATING THE BASIC LIFE SKILLS (BLS) PROGRAM**

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The development of socio-emotional skills (SES) in children and adolescents is a crucial aspect of personal growth, shaping their ability for successful social adaptation and psychological well-being. Based on the CASEL (2003) model, SES includes five key competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, interpersonal skills and responsible decision-making. These skills contribute to emotional regulation, positive social relationships and conflict resolution. Scientific studies confirm that SES begins to form at an early age and develops intensively during adolescence. Children aged 10-12 acquire the ability to recognize and regulate emotions, which forms the basis for advanced social skills such as empathy and teamwork (Brackett *et al.*, 2012). The level of cognitive and emotional maturity significantly influences the pace and depth of SES acquisition.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of the Basic Life Skills (BLS) program, comparing it to international initiatives such as Second Step, SEL and Healthy Behaviors. Unlike traditional programs focused solely on cognitive and emotional aspects, BLS integrates cognitive training, emotional development and practical modules, ensuring a more sustainable SES formation.

### **Results**

This study demonstrated a significant increase in self-regulation ( $d=0.95$ ), empathy ( $d=0.88$ ) and self-esteem ( $d=1.02$ ) among participants. These findings highlight the program's effectiveness in enhancing SES and improving adolescent psychological well-being.

Socio-emotional skills (SES) encompass a broad set of competencies that facilitate interpersonal interactions, emotional regulation and adaptive behaviors. Although SES begins developing in early childhood, its refinement in adolescence is crucial due to increasing cognitive complexity and social expectations (Durlak *et al.*, 2011). Understanding SES development during adolescence allows for the effective implementation of targeted interventions.

Early SES development lays the foundation for later social and emotional competencies. Programs such as BLS aim to enhance these skills by providing structured, developmentally

appropriate activities. Specifically, SES interventions in early and late adolescence differ in their focus and effectiveness, with older adolescents benefiting more from self-regulation and metacognitive strategies.

The practical significance of SES is evident in its impact on mental health outcomes. Studies indicate a strong correlation between low SES levels and increased risks of anxiety disorders, depression and poor social adaptation (WHO, 2021). Effective interventions can mitigate these risks and foster resilience among adolescents.

The BLS program distinguishes itself from similar interventions by integrating cognitive, emotional and practical skill development. Unlike Second Step and SEL, which emphasize theoretical learning, BLS incorporates real-life application and parental involvement, ensuring higher engagement and long-term retention of SES competencies.

Existing research highlights gaps in understanding long-term SES intervention outcomes, particularly concerning gender and cultural differences. This study addresses these gaps by evaluating SES improvements over an extended period.

The study employed a quasi-experimental design with 200 participants aged 10-18, divided into experimental (n=100) and control (n=100) groups. The experimental group completed a 16-week BLS program.

#### Data Collection Methods:

- **Questionnaires:** SRQ (Brown *et al.*, 1999), IRI (Davis, 1983), RSES (Rosenberg, 1965).
- **Observations:** Behavioral changes recorded during training.
- **Statistical Analysis:** ANCOVA and regression models to control for individual differences and assess SES improvements.

Participants in the BLS program showed significant improvements across all SES indicators:

SES Indicator	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	<i>p</i> -Value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Self-regulation	3.45	4.12	<b>p&lt;0.001</b>	0.95
Empathy	3.28	4.05	<b>p&lt;0.001</b>	0.88
Self-esteem	3.62	4.25	<b>p&lt;0.001</b>	1.02

Comparison with other SES programs (e.g., Second Step, SEL) confirmed that BLS's holistic approach leads to more sustainable SES development. However, potential confounding factors, such as external social influences and prior individual motivation, require further exploration.

Future studies should implement longitudinal assessments to evaluate SES program effects beyond immediate outcomes, considering gender-specific and cultural variations.

The findings suggest that the **BLS program effectively enhances socio-emotional skills** by significantly improving self-regulation, empathy and self-esteem. The integration of SES

programs into educational systems could enhance adolescent psychological well-being and social adaptation. Future research should focus on long-term SES development and assess intervention adaptations across diverse educational environments.

Additionally, practical recommendations include:

- Implementing BLS modules into school curricula.
- Enhancing parental involvement to reinforce SES learning.
- Conducting follow-up assessments to measure long-term SES retention.

**Keywords:** Socio-emotional skills, self-regulation, empathy, adolescence, educational programs, psychological well-being, educational interventions, longitudinal effects.

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## **PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: AZERBAIJAN'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ACTIVITIES DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC**

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This thesis examines Azerbaijan's public diplomacy activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on its presidency of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (CCTS) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The aim is to explore the changes in public diplomacy activities during emergencies in the context of a public health crisis.

In December 2019, the coronavirus, which was first detected in China, rapidly spread to almost every country in the world, turning into a public health crisis that raised international concerns. The World Health Organization (WHO) named the disease caused by the virus COVID-19 in February 2020 and declared it a pandemic on March 11 of the same year. The pandemic lasted for nearly three years and in May 2023, WHO announced that the pandemic status of the disease had been lifted.

The pandemic, which became a global economic and social crisis, presented new challenges and created a different situation. Azerbaijan, which responded swiftly to the pandemic challenge, took active steps both domestically and internationally. From the early days of the pandemic, preventive measures were taken within the country to control the disease and restrictions such as quarantine regimes and border closures, which were implemented in most countries to manage the pandemic, were applied. Social support projects were also carried out (<https://president.az/en/articles/view/40297>). Azerbaijan joined the COVAX initiative (the mechanism for the production and centralized supply of COVID-19 vaccines) and started its vaccination process in January 2021, one month after Europe (<https://president.az/en/articles/view/50738>). During the peak of the pandemic, Azerbaijan presided over two international organizations: the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (2019-2021) and the Non-Aligned Movement (2019-2023). As the president of these organizations, Azerbaijan launched several initiatives in the global fight against the coronavirus. Special Summit meetings of both organizations were held in April and May 2020.

On April 10, 2020, the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (CCTS) held an emergency Summit via videoconference on the topic “Solidarity and Cooperation in the Fight

against the COVID-19 Pandemic,” during which the “Baku Declaration of the Emergency Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States” was adopted. This meeting became the first international event dedicated to the COVID-19 pandemic within the framework of international organizations and also marked the first Summit at the level of heads of state on the pandemic. During the Summit, the participants were instructed to fully mobilize scientific, innovative, technological and medical potentials in the fight against the pandemic. The principles of cooperation in economic, social and humanitarian sectors, the measures implemented, the protection of safety and health, as well as steps to be taken to recover from post-pandemic economic downturn were discussed. To ensure the implementation of the decisions taken by the country leaders and to consolidate efforts in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, meetings were held with the health ministers of the Turkish Council on April 28, the ministers responsible for transportation on April 30, the ministers of economy and heads of customs authorities on May 6 and the heads of migration-related government agencies via videoconference on May 7 ([https://azertag.az/en/news/strategic\\_cooperation\\_among\\_turkic\\_states\\_azerbaijans\\_special\\_role-1500519](https://azertag.az/en/news/strategic_cooperation_among_turkic_states_azerbaijans_special_role-1500519)).

During Azerbaijan’s presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), an online Summit meeting of NAM leaders was held in May 2020 and a special session of the UN General Assembly at the level of heads of state and government on the fight against COVID-19 took place in December 2020 (<https://president.az/en/articles/view/48495>). During this period, Azerbaijan's initiative to adopt UN resolutions ensuring fair and universal access to vaccines for all countries was notably highlighted.

Azerbaijan’s initiative led to the decision to create a working group within the Movement to develop a database related to the treatment of COVID-19 and this database was established. The World Health Organization (WHO) referred to this database to identify the needs of NAM member states in the fight against the pandemic, which in turn helped WHO plan and forecast its support more effectively (<https://president.az/en/articles/view/53946>).

On March 23, 2021, during the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council, a resolution titled “Ensuring Equal, Affordable, Timely and Universal Access to COVID-19 Vaccines” was supported by 133 countries. A subsequent resolution, which called for ensuring equal, reasonable, timely and universal access to COVID-19 vaccines for all countries, was adopted on December 16, 2021, at the UN General Assembly with the support of 179 countries. These resolutions were introduced by Azerbaijan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement to put an end to the “vaccine nationalism” policies of developed countries and to stop the unfair and indifferent treatment of developing countries. Furthermore, Azerbaijan provided financial and humanitarian assistance related to COVID-19 to over 80 countries, most of which are members of the Non-Aligned Movement, either bilaterally or through the WHO. Azerbaijan also provided several countries with

vaccine doses free of charge and voluntarily contributed \$10 million to the WHO to support impoverished countries (<https://president.az/en/articles/view/53946>).

One of the key events during Azerbaijan's presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was the next summit of the NAM held in Baku in March 2023, which focused on post-pandemic recovery. During this summit, President Ilham Aliyev announced two global initiatives to support recovery in Africa and Small Island developing states in the post-pandemic period and Azerbaijan, as the first donor, allocated one million US dollars for both initiatives (<https://nnk.gov.az/azerbaycan/qosulmama-herekatinda-azerbaycanin-sedrliyi>).

During its presidency, Azerbaijan also placed significant emphasis on the institutional development of the Non-Aligned Movement. At Azerbaijan's initiative, the NAM Parliamentary Network was established in 2021 and the NAM Youth Organization was created in 2022. The idea of creating the NAM Women's Platform was supported by member states in 2023. Azerbaijan's presidency contributed to sectoral cooperation within the Movement, with meetings held for ministers responsible for labor, health, education and information and communication sectors, as well as the first session of think tanks.

In foreign policy, public diplomacy activities, which serve as a supporting mechanism and require active engagement on the international stage, are of great importance in both traditional and exceptional circumstances. Azerbaijan's active involvement and initiatives during the most intense phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, which were supported by the international community, demonstrate that public diplomacy can effectively contribute to increasing a country's international influence, building positive image and establishing relationships that seek to connect with the international community. As the chair of two international organizations, the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (CCTS) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Azerbaijan has shown responsibility not only at the national level but also in mobilizing the international community in the fight against the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, COVID-19, public health crisis, public diplomacy.

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## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH ADHD IN VIETNAM

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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a common neurodevelopmental disorder in children. In Vietnam, inclusive education (IE) has gained increasing attention, but practical support for children with ADHD remains challenging. This report analyzes the multifaceted role of social work (SW) as a crucial link in supporting children, families and schools during the IE process through assessment, intervention, counseling, resource connection, policy advocacy and promoting inter-sectoral collaboration to create an optimal learning environment. The report also identifies challenges and suggests solutions to enhance the role and effectiveness of social work in this field in Vietnam.

### Introduction

ADHD is a common neurodevelopmental disorder in children (global prevalence 5-7%, Polanczyk *et al.*, 2015; Thomas *et al.*, 2015), which severely affects learning, social interaction and can persist into adulthood (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Barkley, 2015).

Inclusive education (IE) is a strategic orientation in Vietnam (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2019), ensuring every child receives education and necessary support. The need for support is vast (estimated 1.5-2 million children with disabilities, General Statistics Office & UNICEF, 2018). However, the implementation of IE faces challenges due to stigma, limited teacher capacity (large class sizes), lack of specialized services and weak coordination between families, schools and healthcare systems.

In this context, social work, with an ecological systems approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and social justice principles (IFSW, 2014), plays a crucial role in connecting systems, providing support and advocating for the rights of children with ADHD in IE. This article analyzes the role of social work, identifies challenges, opportunities and suggests solutions.

### Theoretical and practical

According to DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the core symptoms of ADHD such as difficulty maintaining attention, distractibility, poor organization, excessive

activity, difficulty waiting turns and frequent interruptions directly hinder children's ability to learn, complete tasks, follow classroom rules and build friendships (DuPaul & Stoner, 2014).

According to UNESCO (2009) and the Vietnamese Education Law (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2019), IE involves a comprehensive education system reform to meet diverse needs. This requires changes in policies, programs, methods, assessment and tight coordination, often through Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

Social work promotes the welfare of individuals and communities through social change, problem-solving and strengthening the capacity of individuals, families, groups and communities (IFSW, 2014). Based on theories of human behavior and social systems, especially the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), social workers intervene at the interaction points between individuals and their environments, adhering to core values such as service, social justice, human dignity and worth and professional competence (NASW, 2021).

### **Specific roles of social work in supporting IE for children with ADHD**

School social workers play a role in practice, connection and advocacy for children with ADHD (NASW, 2012):

**Early screening and identification** of ADHD are important for preventing long-term learning and psychological difficulties (Sayal *et al.*, 2018). Social workers collaborate closely with teachers and parents to collect initial information through behavioral checklists.

**Psychosocial assessment** is then conducted, which not only focuses on ADHD symptoms but also considers systemic factors such as family environment (stress, parenting methods), school environment (peer interactions, teacher-student relationships), co-occurring health issues and the strengths and resources of the child and family (Hepworth *et al.*, 2017). This approach forms the basis for developing personalized and effective intervention plans.

**Direct intervention** helps children with ADHD develop missing skills through individual counseling sessions, structured small groups, where children are guided to practice essential social skills such as listening, sharing, taking turns, conflict resolution through role-playing, social stories, emotional regulation skills: recognizing emotions, healthy coping strategies and especially executive skills necessary for learning such as planning, organizing materials, managing time and self-monitoring. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques are also applied.

**Family support** - The family environment significantly influences children's development, so social workers provide scientific information about ADHD and IE to help parents understand their child's condition, reduce guilt or confusion. Moreover, they implement **Parent Management Training (PMT)** programs to equip parents with positive behavior management strategies, establish consistent discipline in the family and improve effective communication with their child. Studies have shown that PMT improves children's behavior and significantly reduces parental

stress levels. Additionally, social workers provide psychological counseling, support families in crisis management and coordinate self-help parent groups to enhance learning and sharing.

**Effective communication bridge** - Social workers help families and schools understand each other's perspectives, expectations and difficulties. They actively build and monitor Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to ensure the plan reflects the child's diverse needs and suggests appropriate adjustments and support. Social workers also provide counseling and training for teachers on the characteristics of children with ADHD, offer strategies for effective inclusive classroom management and collaborate with teachers to solve emerging difficulties. This collaboration creates a consistent and cohesive support environment for the child at home and school.

**Connecting resources and coordinating services** - When children or families require services beyond what is available directly in schools, such as medical diagnosis, psychological therapy, speech intervention, legal support, etc., social workers guide families to access hospitals and special education centers. They may participate in case management to coordinate services for adequate support.

**Protecting educational rights** - Social workers advocate for children's educational rights and fight discrimination. They contribute to policy discussions related to IE, school mental health and the institutionalization of social work in schools. Social workers also communicate publicly to raise awareness of ADHD, eliminate misconceptions and promote a more inclusive society.

### **Challenges and opportunities**

Social work in supporting IE for children with ADHD in Vietnam faces many challenges: Severe shortage of social workers with a ratio of 1 social worker per 5,000-10,000 students, much lower than the recommended 1 per 250 by NASW (2020); Limited awareness in the education sector, causing social workers to be undervalued; Lack of clear legal frameworks regarding staffing, functions and compensation; Limited financial resources; Strong stigma surrounding ADHD (Vietnam Stigma Study, 2023), causing many families to hesitate in seeking support; Weak inter-sectoral coordination between education, health and social labor systems.

However, there are significant opportunities for development due to intense political commitment to IE, reflected in the Education Law of 2019 and related policies; increasing practical demand from families and schools; professionalization of the social work sector with an expanding training system and national development projects (Social Work Project Report, 2022) and the opportunity to learn from international school social work systems such as the MTSS model. These factors provide a strong foundation for enhancing the role of social work in supporting children with ADHD.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Social work plays an essential and irreplaceable role in supporting children with ADHD in Vietnam. It is a crucial link between children, families, schools and communities, providing specialized support, promoting cooperation and advocating for children's rights. Although facing many challenges, with appropriate investments in policy, human resources and coordination mechanisms, social work can become a strong pillar in the IE system, contributing to building a just society and creating equal development opportunities for all children, including those with ADHD.

To enhance this role, comprehensive solutions need to be implemented, such as developing human resources through systematic training and professional development; improving legal frameworks, clarifying the role, function and financial mechanisms for social workers in schools; piloting, evaluating and expanding effective school social work models; enhancing inter-sectoral coordination in supporting children with ADHD; securing and diversifying financial resources from both the government and privatization and promoting communication to raise awareness about ADHD, IE and the role of social work.

**Keywords:** Social work, inclusive education, ADHD children, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, support, Vietnam.

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## FEATURES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK IN UZBEKISTAN

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As part of the institutionalization of the Institute of Social Work in Uzbekistan, the search for and implementation of optimal models and effective methods of long-term and short-term types of assistance and support for families and children is carried out. Social work in general and the social services system for the population, in particular, are developing intensively using various innovative technologies.

### **Introduction**

The key vector of development of the social sphere, highlighted in the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan in 2022-2026, is the development of social policy. This involves, among other things, improving the system of social protection and health protection of citizens, increasing employment and implementing state youth policy.

The emergence of new social problems in society requires the development of new innovative technologies to solve them. With the help of social technologies, it is possible to relieve social tension in a timely manner, resolve individual and collective social conflicts and make and implement optimal management decisions (Latipova, 2021).

For more than ten years, in the context of close partnerships between state, non-governmental and international organizations, socially necessary professional activity - social work - has been intensively developing in Uzbekistan. This is a socially necessary professional field that has existed in many countries of the world for over 100 years, designed to strengthen the social stability of society, promote the implementation of modern state social policy and improve the quality and availability of social services to vulnerable groups of the population.

**In Uzbekistan, the objects of social work** are sometimes considered spheres of life, among which the most important are: the production sphere; the health sector; the education sector; the cultural sphere; the cultural and leisure sphere; law enforcement agencies; the penitentiary system; the socio-ethnic environment; the sphere of consumer services.

**Social work institutions** include the entire spectrum of social services and institutions that assist the population (official, unofficial, state, non-state, voluntary and public). Each social institution has its specific tasks (Ernazarov, 2020).

**Methods and forms of social work** in Uzbekistan with clients include methods aimed at creating conditions for solving the problems of social work. The solution of the main tasks of social work is directly related to the need to organize the interaction of a social worker with a client. The methods of interaction vary significantly depending on who the client is: an individual, a group or a community. Accordingly, methods of individual, group and community social work are distinguished. In the system of social work, it is customary to distinguish various levels on which its tasks, forms and methods of solving clients' problems depend. In Uzbekistan, the following levels of practical social work are distinguished: 1) macro-level - social and administrative; 2) meso level - group; 3) micro level - individual.

**At the micro level**, social work is based on client requests for a specific case (casework). Here, social work is viewed more as a practical psychosocial activity.

**At the meso level**, territorial (communal, community) social work is implemented jointly with local governments as the Mahalla institution. It is deployed based on specialized social services that provide social services to problem groups of the population. This level involves its combination with a territorial social policy aimed at implementing specific social programs at a local scale. Priorities for social support can be established by individual charitable organizations (Ernazarov, 2020).

**At the macro level**, social work acts as a social policy. Macro-level specialists are faced with the task of purposefully influencing the formation and implementation of social policy at all levels (from municipal to federal) to ensure a socially healthy living environment and life for the population. The effectiveness of the implementation of social programs is ensured by the interaction of state, public and charitable institutions in the field of social protection of citizens.

The process of teaching social work reflects the specifics of national education systems, which can differ greatly from one country to another. There is no single model for training social workers. However, there is an understanding that without special knowledge it is difficult to provide qualified assistance to a person who has found himself in a difficult life situation in a particular society. Teaching social work skills not only allows for equipping future specialists with the methodology of scientific analysis of social processes and analysis of the socio-political situation, but also makes it possible to isolate from it a group or an individual who finds himself outside the adequate state or behavior.

**Keywords.** Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan, social work, NGOs, Mahalla institution, quality and availability of social services, forms and methods of solving.

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## THE HISTORY OF FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN AZERBAIJAN

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The modern world is undergoing fundamental changes in its approach to education and more broadly, to socio-cultural policy. Undoubtedly, this is related to the society's renewed focus on the development and formation of personal qualities in individuals. The 21st century is characterized by the idea that the primary goal of every aspect of social development is an individual's self-awareness. These changes in public consciousness have led to the emergence of a new educational paradigm based on approaches and concepts developed through modern practice, in which the concept of "inclusive education" holds a particularly important place.

Inclusive education (from the French *inclusif* - inclusion and the Latin *include* - to include) is the process of developing general education in a way that ensures access to education for all by meeting the diverse needs of all children, particularly those with special needs. Inclusive education is an educational concept that develops a specific methodology based on the understanding that all children are individuals with different learning needs. This concept aims to promote a more flexible approach to teaching and learning in order to meet these diverse needs. If the changes implemented through inclusive education result in more effective teaching and learning, then all children - not only those requiring special care - will benefit from it.

In general, a number of relevant laws, declarations and programs containing various provisions regarding the development of inclusive education have been adopted at the international level to date.

For the first time in 1924, the provisions regarding the need for special protection of children with mental and physical disabilities were reflected in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child by the League of Nations (the Geneva Declaration). In 1947-1948, Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations, stated that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or other status (Khudaverdiyeva, 2021).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (also known as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child), adopted in 1989, is the first comprehensive human rights treaty that encompasses the

social, economic, cultural, civil, political and protective rights of children and emphasizes that children's views must be taken into account. The Convention reflects not only the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity but also the general aims of education in terms of supporting the child's fullest possible development. Article 2 of the Convention, for the first time, highlights the state's obligation to ensure that all rights are realized for every child without discrimination, including on the basis of disability. Article 23 addresses the right of children with disabilities to receive support in gaining access to education that promotes their social inclusion. Additionally, in General Comment No. 9 on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasized that inclusive education must be the goal in the education of children with disabilities (<https://www.ohchr.org/ru/treaty-bodies/crc>).

UNESCO, the specialized agency of the United Nations for education, science and culture, has also provided the most universal definition of inclusive education, describing it as a unified phenomenon that ensures equal access to quality education for all children without exception (Malofeev, 1997). It is primarily based on humanism, the development of intellectual and creative abilities and the balance of the intellectual, ethnic, emotional and physiological components of the individual.

At the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, held in Salamanca, Spain, from June 7 to 10, 1994, with the support of UNESCO, an innovative educational concept for the education of children with disabilities was introduced. The conceptual framework for the education of persons with disabilities was defined in the Salamanca Statement and the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. It was at this global conference on special needs education, held under the auspices of UNESCO, that the principle of inclusive education was proclaimed in an appeal to the governments of all countries.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006, is considered a unique international legal treaty, having been signed by 185 states and the European Union. Article 1 of the Convention emphasizes that children with disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others and highlights the importance of equal participation in public life. Additionally, the Convention underlines the significance of children with disabilities having the opportunity to participate alongside others in play, sports activities and cultural life.

In recent years, significant attention has been paid to the development of inclusive education in Azerbaijan. This is understandable, as in many parts of the world, including Azerbaijan, the number of children and young people in need of such education is rapidly increasing. While in the past this category of citizens primarily included individuals with physical disabilities, today the scope of the issue is much broader. There are several reasons for this. For instance, the rising number of children with various psychological disorders is not only linked to the growing

prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), but also to factors such as migration, adaptation to a new environment, family and household difficulties, worsening ecological conditions and more. In addition, even modern-day gifted children (prodigies) may be considered part of this special category. After all, their development does not align with commonly accepted norms and such children are often misunderstood and unaccepted not only by society but even by their own parents.

When we deeply analyze the topic, we see that today, inclusive education - more precisely, its development and the resolution of problems in this field - has become one of the most global challenges facing humanity. Since humans are social beings, their development outside of society is impossible. Naturally, inclusion is not just about physical barriers but also involves social and psychological aspects. It is a matter of whether society is ready for all children to learn together. In this regard, the concept of inclusive education should occupy a special place in the policies of every state.

In our country, between 2005 and 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science implemented the “Development Program for the Organization of Education of Children with Special Needs (Children with Disabilities)”. In this regard, significant efforts were made to ensure the right of children with special needs to receive education, as well as to transition to inclusive education and create equal opportunities for the education of all children in educational institutions. It should be noted that, within the framework of the relevant program, the Ministry and UNICEF began implementing joint inclusive education projects in Azerbaijan starting from 2005.

In addition, in 2008, the Republic of Azerbaijan ratified the “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” and the law came into force in 2009. The main objective of this convention is outlined in its Article 1, which states: “To promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to support respect for their dignity”. Currently, the legal status of persons with disabilities in Azerbaijan is defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on “Prevention of Disability and Health Limitations in Children and the Rehabilitation and Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities and Children with Disabilities”.

According to Article 5 of the “Education Law” of the Republic of Azerbaijan, adopted in 2009, “The state guarantees the creation of appropriate conditions for every citizen to receive education and ensures that no one is deprived of any level, stage or form of education, regardless of their gender, race, language, religion, political beliefs, nationality, economic and social status, origin or health capabilities and guarantees that no discrimination will occur in the organization of education in inclusive classrooms”.

Based on the order of the Minister of Science and Education dated March 18, 2015, No. 311, the project “Implementation of Inclusive Education at the Primary Education Level” was carried

out. The project included the updating of the procedures for involving children with disabilities in education, the application of new methodologies in special education and the creation of new services for children with disabilities in general education schools. To involve children with disabilities in general education schools, work began on developing an inclusive education model at the primary education level in Azerbaijan and a work plan and roadmap were created.

In 2017, the “State Program for the Development of Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2018-2024” was approved. The purpose of this program is to ensure the right to education for persons with disabilities at all levels of education on an equal basis with others and to create an accessible environment for their education.

In the overall historical development process, the education system for children with disabilities has progressed from segregation to inclusion. The history of the education of children involved in inclusive education can be divided into the following stages: From the early 1960s to the mid-1960s - the “**medical model**”, which caused the segregation of people with disabilities. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s - the “**normalization model**”, which integrated people with disabilities into public life. From the 1980s to the present day - the “**inclusion model**”, i.e., inclusion.

The “medical model” is the most widely accepted model in public consciousness. It views disability as an event caused by a person’s illness, injury or other effects on their health. This model emphasizes the need for medical intervention and treatment by specialists, while also placing the responsibility on society to assist people with disabilities by creating specialized institutions where they can read, work and communicate. However, the medical model generally advocates for the segregation of people with disabilities.

The fundamental core of the “Normalization” concept is that the upbringing of a child should be carried out in the spirit of the cultural norms accepted by the society in which the child lives. This concept was adopted and further developed in the United States, Canada and several other countries and it also defined the policies for children with disabilities for the subsequent years. The “Normalization” model generally refers to a child's readiness to be accepted by both the school and society (Nirje, 1994).

Inclusion or the “inclusion model” is a term that describes the education of children with special needs in general schools. At the same time, this education is different from regular, special and integration-based education. Inclusivity provides an opportunity to empower students with disabilities and encourage them to study at school together with other children - friends and neighbours. The main principle of an inclusive school is that children with special educational needs should acquire education that meets common interests alongside their healthy peers, regardless of the difficulties or differences between them. Analyzing the research on the issue of inclusive education allows for the identification of the following principles of inclusion:



- Recognition of the equal value of all students and teachers for society;
- Increasing students' participation in the cultural life of schools, while reducing the level of isolation of certain students from the general school life;
- Analyzing and studying efforts to remove barriers and improve accessibility of schools for individual students and implementing reforms and changes aimed at the overall benefit of all students in the school;
- Recognizing the role of schools not only in improving students' academic performance but also in developing social values;
- Acknowledging inclusion in education as one of the aspects of societal integration.

The rich practical experience of inclusive education in a number of European countries clearly demonstrates that, by achieving a certain level of legal, cultural and economic development in society and the state, the successful integration of children with disabilities and those falling under the inclusion category into regular educational institutions is not only possible but also highly necessary.

In this regard, the implementation of the following measures is of great importance for organizing inclusive education in general education institutions:

- ***Special training of personnel.*** Due to the lack of practical skills and knowledge, most teachers are simply not prepared to teach children with disabilities. Therefore, organizing special training for all teachers becomes a critical task. In addition, the successful establishment of inclusive education conditions is only possible by increasing the number of speech therapists, special education teachers, psychologists and medical staff in general education institutions.

- ***Ensuring effective interaction at all levels.*** The main goal here is to establish strong cooperation between the educational institution and psychological support centers, relevant departments and medical institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations operating in this field. Organizing high-quality two-way communication between the institution and the family raising a child with a disability is equally important.

- ***Material and technical support of institutions.*** Creating an accessible environment in educational institutions for children with disabilities requires the installation of ramps, handrails and fences, as well as the availability of special toilet cabins. Additionally, it is necessary to widen door entrances, allocate extra space in classrooms, install electroacoustic devices and signal lights, use large, high-contrast signs for classroom names and duplicate them in Braille. All other practical aspects that may cause discomfort for children with disabilities must also be taken into account.

Thus, inclusion is recognized not only as a more developed, humane and effective education system for children with special educational needs but also for typically developing children. Regardless of whether a school meets the criteria of the inclusive school system, it grants everyone the right to education. This is because a school does not merely fulfil educational functions - it is



also a fundamental aspect of a child's life. The school shapes individuals with educational trajectories who are taught to respect and accept each other's individuality. In this process, education and upbringing play a crucial role in the development and formation of personality.

At school, students learn to be part of a team, to communicate with one another, to build relationships and to creatively solve educational problems together with the teacher. It can be confidently stated that inclusive education expands the personal potential of all children and contributes to the development of such qualities as humanity, tolerance and readiness to help others. Inclusive education is, in principle, a new system in which students and teachers work together toward a common goal - ensuring accessible and high-quality education for all children without exception.

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## **EFFECT OF ETHNIC IDENTITY FACTOR ON COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF SOCIAL WORKERS**

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It is known that one of the most important duties facing social workers is related to establishing a correct and competent dialogue with the other party. So, only in this case, social workers will be able to successfully continue their activities in the areas needed for vulnerable groups (including refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as among migrants). The successful communication factor plays an important, even in many cases, decisive role in organizing the help of social workers to vulnerable groups, organizing the life and activities of vulnerable groups of society in accordance with dignified living standards. In this sense, it is not accidental that among the ethnic codes of social workers, one of the important requirements is to accept the idea of the existence of different cultures as an irrefutable reality and to show a tolerant and respectful attitude on that basis ([https://www.uaf.edu/socwork/student-information/checklist/\(D\)-NASW-Code-of-Ethics.pdf](https://www.uaf.edu/socwork/student-information/checklist/(D)-NASW-Code-of-Ethics.pdf)). In this sense, the obligations and duties imposed on social workers require them to have certain basic knowledge about different cultures (namely, about the cultural heritage of people who have found refuge in that country and have a different ethnic identity).

As emphasized in the research of Devkar and Waghmare targeting the nature of communication barriers (communication barriers) faced by social workers in communication, language and cultural barriers can significantly reduce the effectiveness and efficiency of communication. If this is the case, the researchers note that there is necessarily a lack of communication between social workers and members of the vulnerable group. Devkar and Waghmare (2024) rightly add that if the cultures to which migrants, refugees and IDPs belong, and those with different ethnic identities are not treated with the necessary level of appreciation, tolerance and respect, the work of social activities in general becomes impossible, as a result, those groups can become a source of concern (probably, prospectively) as a group that does not join society, out of social adaptation. As is known, the dichotomy of one's own culture and another's culture is universal.

At this time, the representatives of any community treat the bearers of different culture and ethnic identity with special caution, anticipation and mistrust. Krysova and Shalaev (2016), who

evaluated the most different aspects of the social work process with migrants, point out the factor of intercultural dialogue as one of the biggest difficulties in terms of social adaptation. The authors emphasize that migrants facing acculturative stress experience problems of understanding and understanding (both understanding the other side and self-understanding to the other side) in front of the cultural diversity of their new social circle while acutely feeling their ethnic identity difference (Krysova & Shalaev, 2016). I would like to remind you that acculturation stress manifests itself when a migrant or refugee, in a word, a representative of a sensitive group, encounters new things for themselves, for their mentality, life principles, completely new cultural beliefs, values and customs.

It should be recalled that acculturative stress is a situation of cultural contrast (contrast, contradiction) faced by any person with a different ethnic identity due to transition to a new environment (migration, forced displacement, refugee, etc.). At this time, it is undeniable that language competence, the level of familiarity with the language used by the new social circle plays an exceptional role.

At the same time, knowing the lacunae, which are considered to be one of the most important obstacles of multicultural dialogue, can significantly help smooth communication. It should be noted that by lacunae, we mean concepts that are impossible to translate for a carrier of a different culture and even in many cases difficult to describe lexically. For example, the impossibility of explaining the concept of “Namus” (honor) specific to the Azerbaijani mentality to the representatives of the French or English-speaking community is the most striking example of this. Returning directly to the point of analysis of communication problems of social workers, we would like to add that in a number of modern studies, the emphasis on the language factor, the communication factor, does not seem to be accidental.

Some studies even evaluate the psychological and psychopathological consequences of communication failures (Revollo *et al.*, 2011); they also investigate the reasons why ethnic identity differences are considered unacceptable by local community representatives (Madhavappallil & Jong Baek, 2006; Fedotova, 2022). At this time, the social worker's mission is to ensure the communication of different ethnic identity carriers and to help the success of migrants' and other sensitive group's self-expression and self-representation efforts. If we take into account that, as noted by Reamer (2015), among the main factors at the root of professional failures of social workers are communication difficulties and problems of understanding, then the demand for special preparation of the social worker will seem completely understandable.

Because a social worker who cannot decipher cultural codes cannot make any contribution to the understanding of those codes by representatives of other ethnic identities. In this sense, the scientific achievements revealed by linguistics, the research dedicated to deciphering the lacunae can play an important role in the successful organization of social work. In such a case, we think

that we would not be wrong if we say that social workers working with vulnerable groups such as migrants and refugees also become their advocates and spokespersons for social adaptation. Because in some cases, the social worker forms an intermediate link between the addressee and the addressee and performs the coordinating mission.

**Keywords:** Ethnic identity, social discourse, organization of social work, refugee, internally displaced persons and migrants, communication.

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## **THE HISTORICAL VICTORY OF AZERBAIJAN AND THE LEGAL BASIS FOR THE FULL RESTORATION OF SOVEREIGNTY**

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Thanks to his wise policy, unwavering convictions and historical foresight, national leader Heydar Aliyev achieved the creation of a modern state and the realization of his people's dream of independence. It was thanks to the tireless work of Heydar Aliyev that Azerbaijan became a strategic partner of the world's countries and entered the ranks of dynamically developing countries of the world. Today's realities once again prove that the achieved successes are the result of Heydar Aliyev's unprecedented merits on the path of comprehensive development and progress of Azerbaijan. The genius of Heydar Aliyev's life path has become a symbol of service to the Motherland for each of us.

Having eliminated all threats to our statehood and independence and having ensured political and social stability, Heydar Aliyev, who began building a legal state, took one of the first measures in this direction. The Constitution, as the fundamental law of every civilized country, has the highest legal force. This document, by establishing the principles of the structure and foundation of the state, the political, legal and economic foundations of society, also reflects the rights of citizens and determines the development priorities of the country. The Constitution, with its supreme legal characteristics, has a special role in the life of every nation and state (The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Fundamentals of Law, 2018).

The greatest desire of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev was the liberation of the occupied Azerbaijani lands. The Great Leader concluded his thoughts as follows during his address to the people on the eve of the Presidential elections on October 1, 2003: "I believe that with your help and support, Ilham Aliyev will be able to resolve the fateful issues, plans and affairs that I was unable to complete. I believe in him as much as I believe in myself and I have great hopes for his future" (Mirzabeyli, 2024).

The main fateful issue that the National Leader could not complete during his lifetime was the full restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Heydar Aliyev, with his deep understanding and confidence in the future, always believed that this issue would eventually be resolved, historical justice would be restored, our people would liberate our lands from occupation by any means, our internally displaced persons would return to their native lands and our compatriots would live forever in their ancestral homeland. Great Leader Heydar Aliyev

bequeathed the solution of this gravely responsible issue to his son, the esteemed President Ilham Aliyev, who would become the Leader of his people after him, a victorious commander and a worthy successor to his political course (Huseynova, 2021).

The main fateful issue that the National Leader could not complete during his lifetime was the full restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Heydar Aliyev, with his deep understanding and confidence in the future, always believed that this issue would eventually be resolved, historical justice would be restored, our people would liberate our lands from occupation by any means, our internally displaced persons would return to their native lands and our compatriots would live forever in their ancestral homeland. Great Leader Heydar Aliyev bequeathed the solution of this gravely responsible issue to his son, the esteemed President Ilham Aliyev, who would become the Leader of his people after him, a victorious commander and a worthy successor to his political course (Rzayev & Shafiyev, 2021).

The first stone of the sacred road that will lead to Shusha and Karabakh was laid by the Great Leader himself. He established a regular army, established the Higher Military School to train brave soldiers who were the basis of the army, whose hearts were filled with love for the Motherland, nation and flag and who met the requirements of the time and sent young people to study abroad. Those young people are today the conquerors of Karabakh, the heroic commanders of our Army that liberated our lands from occupation (Jafarov, 2021).

The rapid development policy achieved by Azerbaijan after 2003 also brought closer the date when our lands would be liberated and our national sovereignty over all our territories would be established. At the same time, the position of the political forces that came to power in Armenia in 2018 revealed the futility of peace negotiations. On September 27, 2020, the next military provocation committed by Armenia on the front line made war inevitable. The Azerbaijani Armed Forces, which began their historic mission that day, liberated our lands from occupation in just 44 days. The trilateral statement signed on November 10, 2020 became a political and legal confirmation of Armenia's defeat.

As a result of the local anti-terrorist measures carried out by Azerbaijan in Karabakh on September 19-20, 2023, which lasted 23 hours, Armenian separatism in our lands was once and for all put an end to. With this operation, which ended with the magnificent victory of our heroic army, the national sovereignty of our state over all our lands was ensured and the foolish idea of creating a second Armenian state on Azerbaijani lands was forever thrown into the dustbin of history. With this historical event, another glorious page was written in the annals of statehood and sovereignty of Azerbaijan under the leadership of our esteemed President, Victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev (Asgarov, 2019).

As a result, the Second Karabakh War was written in the history of Azerbaijan as a chronicle of honor and heroism in the last hundred years. Today, our tricolor sacred flag proudly flies in all

the liberated territories of Azerbaijan - in Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadli, Kalbajar, Lachin, Agdam, Shusha, Khojavend, Hadrut, Agdere, Khojaly and Khankendi.

Our people are proud of their army and the victory we won in the Patriotic War is an indicator of the unity of the people and the army. It is precisely as a result of this unity and trust that Azerbaijan was able to ensure its territorial integrity. The strengthening of the Armed Forces and the role they play in the life of society was accompanied by an increase in patriotism. Millions of our citizens, as well as our compatriots living abroad, made a great contribution to achieving victory by supporting their armies. In his speech, Head of State Ilham Aliyev also spoke about the necessity of conducting an anti-terrorist operation. Although Azerbaijan sought to resolve the conflict peacefully in order to ensure stability in the region, the provocations committed by the other side led to the disruption of peace and stability in the region. As a result, as a result of the anti-terrorist measures carried out by the Glorious Azerbaijani Army in Karabakh, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our state were fully restored and security was established in the region.

According to the decree of President Ilham Aliyev dated September 19, 2024 on the establishment of the Day of State Sovereignty in the Republic of Azerbaijan, September 20 is celebrated every year as the Day of State Sovereignty in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The establishment of this significant day is of exceptional importance in terms of conveying to the future and new generations the national struggle of our people for their territorial integrity, the heroic chronicle written by our army under the leadership of President, Victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev and instilling in them. The full provision of our territorial sovereignty also creates new national ideological principles that serve the interests of statehood and the solidarity of our people.

It should be noted that after the Second Karabakh War, the Azerbaijani state, in addition to liberating its ancestral lands from occupation, also restored the administrative-territorial division of Karabakh, which was purposefully violated 100 years ago - in 1923. According to the Decree signed by the President of Azerbaijan on July 7, 2021, historical justice was restored with the establishment of the Karabakh and East Zangezur economic regions (Mirzazade, 2022).

The real independence of Azerbaijan, the establishment of a legal state and the full establishment of national sovereignty were ensured by the political course initiated and implemented by the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev and resolutely continued by Mr. President Ilham Aliyev. Today, our glorious tricolor flag, waving majestically in all our territories, proudly declares the national sovereignty of Azerbaijan to the whole world. The independence of Azerbaijan is permanent and unshakable. No force can threaten the independence and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, which is experiencing the most powerful period in its history (Mammadov, 2023).



Undoubtedly, under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, the Republic of Azerbaijan will fulfill all the tasks set for it, protect its internal security at the highest level and become one of the strongest and most powerful states not only in the region, but also in the global arena.

The Azerbaijani people will forever remember this victory in history. The victory is not only today's success, but also an event that will be remembered with pride in the memory of future generations. The will and determination of Azerbaijan in this struggle will occupy an important place in the history books and future generations will remember this success with pride.

President Ilham Aliyev's declaration of 2025 as the “Year of Constitution and Sovereignty” aims to further strengthen Azerbaijan's statehood traditions and emphasize its commitment to ensuring the rights and freedoms of the people. This decision is also a historic step in terms of promoting our national sovereignty and legal values. As in the past, the large-scale reforms to be implemented during the year will pave the way for the Azerbaijani people to move forward on the path of building a legal state.

**Keywords:** Sovereignty, constitution, law, territorial integrity, Patriotic War, legal state building, historical victory.

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## THE ROLE OF GREEN MARKETING IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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This article examines the concept of “Green Marketing” in the tourism sector and its crucial role in promoting environmental sustainability. It highlights how green marketing strategies, adopted by tourism organizations in Uzbekistan, help attract eco-conscious travellers while contributing to the development of a green economy.

The tourism and hospitality industry occupies a pivotal role in addressing global environmental sustainability due to its excessive resource consumption and significant ecological impacts. According to Miralles et al. (2023) tourism industry contributes approximately 8% of global carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Overcapacity in hotels, inefficient water usage, food waste and widespread reliance on single-use plastics are among the key factors exacerbating environmental degradation. Research reveals that hotel guests generate an average of 1-2 kilograms of waste per night (<https://www.businesswaste.co.uk/sectors/hotel-waste-management>). The substantial environmental footprint of the tourism and hospitality sector has positioned green marketing as a critical instrument for advancing ecological protection initiatives.

Defined as efforts to inform individuals and consumers about environmentally friendly products or services, green marketing plays a vital role in fostering a culture of environmental stewardship. In the context of tourism, green marketing entails the promotion of tourism products and services that prioritize ecological sustainability, aiming to meet consumer demand while minimizing environmental harm. The concept of green marketing emerged in Western countries during the late 20th century amid growing environmental concerns. Initially focused on promoting eco-friendly products, it has since evolved into a broader strategy addressing global challenges such as climate change, resource depletion and biodiversity loss. Within tourism, green marketing targets the expanding segment of environmentally conscious travellers - often referred to as “eco-conscious tourists” - who prioritize sustainability in their travel choices. Tourism organizations can employ various green marketing strategies to attract this demographic, enhancing brand reputation while delivering long-term environmental benefits. Examples of green tourism products and services include eco-friendly accommodations, tours designed to minimize ecological impact and the adoption of green certifications.

**Table 1.**

	Traditional Marketing	Green Marketing
Goal	To generate profit and increase market share.	To protect the environment and ensure ecological sustainability.
Target Audience Focus	General consumers with broad needs.	Environmentally conscious consumers who are interested in reducing environmental impact.
Targeted Services	Production based on convenience, price and quality.	Eco-friendly, recyclable and energy-efficient products and services.
Main Marketing Approach	Meeting consumer needs and increasing demand.	Promoting reduced environmental impact, recycling and energy conservation.
Market Expansion	Frequently creating new products and services to expand the market.	Expanding the market through products and services that reduce environmental impact.
Main Marketing Strategies	Competitive pricing, extensive advertising, mass media.	Raising awareness of the ecological benefits of products, promoting green certifications and building an eco-friendly image.
Execution Methods	Traditional mass media channels (TV, newspaper, radio).	Social media, green certifications, ecological exhibitions and events.

**Source.** Author's work

With its rich cultural heritage and diverse natural landscapes, Uzbekistan has emerged as a significant tourism destination in Central Asia. As of 2023, the country boasts over 149 tourist routes, encompassing regions such as Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khorezm, which account for 93.29% of national tourism activity. In 2023, the number of tourism firms and organizations in Uzbekistan reached 288, collectively serving 577,677 tourists. Khorezm Province leads in inbound tourism services, hosting over 10% of total visitors, while outbound tourists constitute 6% (Uzbekistan Committee for Tourism Development, 2023). Despite this growth, the environmental impact of tourism in Uzbekistan - particularly in terms of resource consumption and waste management - raises concerns.

To address these challenges, Uzbekistan has begun integrating green marketing into its tourism strategy. The government's "Strategy for Transition to a Green Economy 2019-2030" outlines ambitious goals, including improving energy efficiency, promoting rational resource use and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 10% by 2030, in line with the Paris Agreement. Tourism organizations are aligning with these objectives by adopting sustainable practices and leveraging green marketing to attract eco-conscious travellers. For instance, collaborations with international organizations have facilitated initiatives such as solar-powered accommodations and waste reduction campaigns in tourist hubs.

Green marketing offers a promising pathway for advancing sustainability in the tourism sector while appealing to eco-conscious tourists. In Uzbekistan, where tourism is a key driver of

economic growth, embedding green marketing within national strategies can enhance the country's appeal to environmentally aware travellers and support its green economy objectives. By positioning itself as a leader in sustainable tourism, Uzbekistan can ensure ecological balance, preserve its natural and cultural heritage for future generations and contribute to global sustainability efforts.

**Keywords:** Green marketing, sustainable tourism, eco-conscious tourists, environmental sustainability, tourism industry, green tourism products.

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## **THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN THE REAL WORLD AS A FUNDAMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE NEED AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

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Social work, as a life-saving profession in the digital age, plays a crucial role in meeting basic human needs, reducing deprivation and promoting social welfare. Traditional welfare needs such as housing, healthcare, education, insurance, transportation and recreation have long been recognized as fundamental pillars of social well-being. However, in today's increasingly digitalized world, a new social welfare need is emerging: “the right to live in the real world”. This right arises from the emergence of new and disguised inequalities that stem from the dominance of advanced technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, over various aspects of social and cognitive life. One of the new dimensions of inequality in the digital age is the divide between AI producers and processors and those who are merely consumers of these technologies. This gap not only affects people's access to technology but also leads to deepening knowledge and cognitive disparities within societies. Unlike previous revolutions-agricultural, industrial and digital-where societal transformations were relatively transparent, the dominance of AI over thought processes, the power to analyze reality and the understanding of truth poses a significant challenge for social work. Under these circumstances, social work must go beyond its traditional service provision role and actively defend individuals' right to control reality, understand truth and enhance their critical thinking abilities. Achieving this goal requires a fundamental revision of social work curricula and the preparation of students with knowledge and skills tailored to the digital era. Specialized training in futures studies, AI fundamentals, data-driven decision-making, analysis of modern social policies and an understanding of the impact of technological advancements on social welfare systems and digital justice are essential areas that must be integrated into social work education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A review of social work curricula in Iranian universities reveals that both theoretical and practical training have largely overlooked the impact of technological advancements and the requirements of the digital era. In the field of technology, social work students primarily receive basic instruction, such as computer fundamentals and research software like SPSS. Additionally,

during internships, social workers rarely engage with online service centers. This indicates a significant misalignment between social work education and the rapidly evolving societal and technological landscape.

On the one hand, the rapid growth of technology and the widespread integration of tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) have significantly influenced all aspects of social welfare, including education, healthcare, housing, insurance and employment. On the other hand, social workers seem to struggle with analyzing these changes and understanding their broader implications. This delay in adaptation can pose a serious threat to the “right to live in the real world”, as societies that fail to keep pace with these transformations may become increasingly vulnerable to digital inequality and technological disparities.

Therefore, social workers must adopt a preventive approach to mitigate future crises stemming from technological disruptions. By formulating appropriate policies and educational programs, they can safeguard “the right to live in the real world” as a fundamental aspect of social welfare. Achieving this goal necessitates fundamental reforms in university curricula and the preparation of social work students to effectively navigate the challenges of the digital age. This study critically examines existing literature and documents to highlight the urgent need for such curricular revisions.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a documentary review approach combined with critical content analysis to examine social work curricula. In this regard, the syllabi and educational programs of social work in various Iranian universities-including Allameh Tabataba'i University, Kharazmi University, University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Shahed University, Yazd University and other academic institutions-have been systematically reviewed and analyzed.

Using qualitative content analysis with a critical perspective, this research evaluates the extent to which social work curricula align with technological advancements and the needs of the digital society. Critical content analysis enables the identification of existing gaps in social work education while also examining structural, ideological and institutional factors that may hinder the adaptation of the field to social and technological changes.

### **Discussion**

The primary objective of this study is to identify deficiencies in social work education and propose recommendations for curricular reforms and updates to address emerging technological challenges. These challenges include the rise of artificial intelligence, online social services and the digitalization of social welfare systems.

### Critical Content Analysis of Social Work Curriculum in Relation to the Digital Age

The critical content analysis approach examines how concepts, ideologies and power dynamics are represented in texts. In this study, the social work curriculum in Iran has been analyzed using this method to assess its alignment with the transformations of the digital age.

- Overall Assessment of the Curriculum

A review of undergraduate social work syllabi in Iranian universities indicates that the curriculum primarily focuses on classical concepts of social work, such as social work principles, social work law, social pathology and welfare policies. While digital technologies are increasingly shaping social, economic and service structures, the curriculum remains highly limited in addressing technological advancements.

- Lack of Digital Technology Coverage in Course Content

An analysis of the course subjects reveals that technology-related courses are mostly limited to “computer basics” and data analysis software such as SPSS. However, major developments such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data analysis, online social work services and digital welfare platforms are significantly transforming the social work field. Moreover, social work students do not engage with critical topics such as digital justice, technological discrimination, the role of algorithms in social services or the ethical challenges of technology.

- Field Training and Online Social Work Services

Regarding internships and practical training, the curriculum remains centered on traditional in-person social work practices, with placements in rehabilitation centers, hospitals and welfare institutions. Online and digital social work experiences are almost absent, highlighting a significant gap between academic training and the realities of digital social services.

- Consequences of Overlooking Digital Transformations

Failing to integrate digital advancements into social work education can lead to several critical consequences, including:

- ❖ Reduced ability of social workers to analyze social changes driven by technology.
- ❖ Growing disconnect between welfare systems and technological transformations.
- ❖ Lack of essential skills for delivering digital and online social services.
- ❖ Inability to address digital inequalities and social justice challenges in virtual spaces.

This analysis highlights the urgent need to revise and modernize the social work curriculum to equip future professionals with the necessary digital competencies for an evolving world.

1. Suggested Revisions for Social Work Education in the Digital Age.

2. Enhancing Knowledge Competencies Required for Social Workers in the Second Quarter of the 21st Century.

- Understanding Social Work Theories and Their Application in the Context of Technology

Social workers must develop a deep understanding of new social policies and the impact of

technological advancements on vulnerable populations. The emergence of digital technologies, big data, artificial intelligence (AI) and online platforms has fundamentally redefined social welfare and supportive services. Social workers should be able to comprehend how these changes are reshaping basic welfare needs and assess their implications on social policymaking, digital justice and support for vulnerable groups. Technologies such as AI and big data have transformed key areas like employment, healthcare, housing and security, challenging traditional social protection models. Moreover, the use of algorithms in welfare decisions increases efficiency, but also raises issues of algorithmic bias and privacy violations.

### 3. Required Skill Competencies for Social Work in the Second Quarter of the 21st Century

- Specialized Training in Futures Studies a key skill for social workers is the ability to engage in futures studies. Social workers must be able to anticipate the impacts of emerging technologies, such as AI and the metaverse, on different social groups, cultures and communities. These changes may not affect all communities uniformly and could lead to new social divisions. For instance, AI may lead to the formation of new minority groups or exacerbate existing social inequalities. Social workers need to be well-versed in these developments to design appropriate intervention strategies. In this regard, social work curricula must be significantly updated to include methods of futures studies. It is recommended that at the undergraduate level, at least one course be dedicated to the foundations of futures studies in social work. In the master's program, the topic should be explored more extensively, with six units covering the subject. Furthermore, doctoral programs should approach futures studies in a specialized and research-focused manner, allowing students to integrate advanced future studies methodologies, such as:

- Scenario writing and trend analysis
- Analysis of macro trends
- Utilization of big data and AI
- Participatory futures studies
- Social modeling and simulation Developing analytical and predictive skills will better equip social workers to face social, economic, technological and cultural changes, enhancing their professional capabilities and decision-making.

- Familiarity with Artificial Intelligence and Data-Driven Decision Making In the digital era, social work based on data and AI has become an essential skill. Social workers must be familiar with the fundamentals of AI, machine learning and data analysis methods to better understand the impact of these technologies on their clients' lives. This requires interdisciplinary studies in social work, data science and information technology. Master's and doctoral programs should guide students toward these areas, creating opportunities for cutting-edge research in these fields.



Overall, social work in the age of the metaverse and AI needs to redefine skills and educational standards so that social workers can play a more active and effective role in supporting individuals and communities in the digital world. A key prerequisite for this process is an understanding of the historical genealogy of these technologies. According to Mitchell (2019), AI was officially founded at the Dartmouth Conference in 1956, marking a significant turning point in the emergence of impactful technological waves across various disciplines, including social work.

- Technology-Based Skill Development in Social Work Internships with a Focus on Online Services In the digital age, social workers need to develop skills in providing online services, analyzing social data and employing new technologies in social work processes. This shift requires the updating and modification of social work education programs so that students can acquire the necessary skills in real-world settings, under the supervision of experienced mentors. These courses should not only teach how to use technology in delivering social work services but also emphasize critical thinking and rethinking traditional and digital social work methods.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to assess the alignment of social work curricula with digital transformations and contemporary societal needs and it revealed that current educational programs in Iranian universities face several limitations in this regard. While technological transformations, particularly advancements in artificial intelligence, have had a profound impact on all aspects of social welfare, social work programs remain largely focused on traditional and classical concepts, neglecting crucial topics such as digital justice, technological discrimination, the role of algorithms in social services and online services.

This misalignment can lead to several negative consequences, including reduced capacity of social workers to analyze technology-driven social changes, growing disconnect between welfare systems and technological advancements and lack of essential skills in delivering online and digital services. Moreover, overlooking digital transformations can result in inability to address digital inequalities and social justice challenges in virtual spaces, posing a significant threat to the right to live in the real world.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to revise social work curricula and prepare students to effectively navigate the challenges of the digital age. Proposed changes include integrating futures studies, introducing artificial intelligence foundations, data-driven decision-making, developing online services and deepening understanding of contemporary social policies. Only with these approaches can social workers effectively engage in today's digital world and defend the right to live in the real world as a fundamental aspect of social welfare.



This research underscores the necessity of fundamentally revising university curricula, especially in the field of social work, to equip students with digital competencies and technological skills. This will help improve social services quality and reduce social harm in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Social work education, digital transformation, digital justice, artificial intelligence.

## **LANDMINES - LEGACY OF KARABAKH WAR IN THE CONTEXT OF ARMENIA'S WAR CRIMES AND THE CHALLENGE FOR GREAT RETURN**

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In the post-Soviet space Azerbaijan became the first and only country that cut the roots of territorial conflict, separatism and started clearing the landmines, buried by Armenia. At the same time, the complete elimination of such a bitter legacy as the landmine problem left over from the First and Second Karabakh wars, erasing the traces of mine terrorism carried out by Armenia against our country requires a long time, material and financial resources, hard work and strong will. The landmine problem is also one of the main challenges facing the “Great Return” State Program referring to resettling of Azerbaijani internally displaced people (IDP`s) back to the territories liberated from Armenia. In this context, the restoration and reconstruction work is also accompanied by certain difficulties due to the threat of landmines in Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur. Gaining global support for overcoming these difficulties, as well as condemning and punishing Armenia internationally for mining territories and carrying out other war crimes, is very important.

Mines, a harsh legacy of the history of conflict, continue to be a serious problem in about 60 countries today and a permanent solution to this problem does not seem possible in the near future. According to official data 4-5 thousands of mine incidents occur annually while  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the victims are civilians. Today, the most heavily mined areas in the world are Ukraine, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Turkey and Yemen, which are parties to the Mine Ban Treaty.

Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines (in short, the Mine Ban Treaty) (Ottawa Convention) was opened for signature in 1997. In general 165 states have ratified this Convention, while Armenia and Azerbaijan are among non-signatories. Up to 30 countries that are not parties to the Mine Ban Treaty have land contaminated with mines, among which Azerbaijan (Karabakh), Georgia (Abkhazia), etc. are in the forefront in terms of the size of land with mine contamination.

Clearing land from mines has been a difficult and costly process. Since the Mine Ban Treaty came into force in 1999, 30 States Parties to the Treaty have declared their territories completely

mine-free by 2021. For example, Mozambique took 22 years to clear its territory from mines and was completed in 2015 and the country was declared completely mine-free. Chile took 22 years to clear its territory from mines and in 2020, the country was declared completely mine-free. The Falkland Islands, which belong to the United Kingdom, were completely cleared of mines in 2020 after 40 years of work.

Azerbaijan's landmine problem began to emerge due to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and the Karabakh wars. The "Landmine Monitor 2022" report notes that before 27 September 2020, when the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, namely the Second Karabakh war broke out, 6,75 km<sup>2</sup> of land in the territory of Karabakh (the so-called ex-"republic") was contaminated with mines. Until 2020, the only mine clearance facility in Karabakh was the international company Halo Trust, which claims to have cleared 60% of the mine-contaminated areas there as a result of its services to the so-called regime between 1994 and 2020. Considering the presence of previous and newly planted mines by Armenia, in the following time period since the Second Karabakh War until 19-20 September 2023, when the separatist regime in Karabakh was fully destroyed, the area of mined lands in Azerbaijan is massive. At the June, 2021 meeting of the UN Mine Ban Treaty, Armenia denied that it had mined the land during the 2020 war. However, in May 2021, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan publicly stated at a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers that Armenian soldiers had mined the territory to increase security on the border.

According to Azerbaijani MFA Jeyhun Bayramov 960 km<sup>2</sup> of land has been mined and hundreds of thousands of mines buried there by Armenia. After 2020, the mine clearance task is being carried out by ANAMA and other state institutions of Azerbaijan. ANAMA Chairman Vugar Suleymanov notes that totally 10 285 km<sup>2</sup> of our liberated territories are contaminated with mines and other unexploded ordnance to varying degrees. In the speech addressed to the participants of this Conference by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, it is noted that approximately 12% of the territory of Azerbaijan is contaminated. According to preliminary estimates, 1,5 million mines and an unknown number of unexploded ordnance are buried in our lands. As a result of demining operations carried out in Karabakh and East Zangezur from November 2020 to April 2, 2025, a total of 190 thousand hectares (1,9 km<sup>2</sup>) of land were cleared of mines and explosive remnants of war. This also means that it will take many years to fully clear the mined land in liberated territories of Azerbaijan. As a result of mine explosions, the number of deaths and injuries since 2020 is 392 of whom 70 have died. In total, since the beginning of Armenia's military aggression against Azerbaijan in 1990's, more than 3 400 Azerbaijani citizens have been affected by landmines, 358 of whom were children and 38 were women.

After the liberation of Azerbaijani lands from occupation in the Second Karabakh War, large-scale work began on the restoration of settlements on the basis of the "I State Program on the Great Return" adopted on November 16, 2022. Under this Program, a total of about 140 000 IDP's will

be resettled in Karabakh and East Zangezur by the end of 2026. As of April 2025, there are 40 000 people in Karabakh and East Zangezur. As the large-scale “Great Return” State Program to the liberated territories is being implemented, the mine problem stays as a serious threat and the number of deaths and injuries is increasing. Continuing work on the restoration and development of the liberated territories, creation of modern infrastructure there and eliminating the problems, including the mine problem, are of strategic importance and therefore are among the national priorities of Azerbaijan. In addition, the mine problem also threatens economic activities. Azerbaijan carries out its mine clearance activities almost entirely at the expense of its own domestic resources. Gaining the support of the international community in this area, including international condemnation of Armenia for committing mine terrorism, is of great importance. Neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan are parties to the Mine Ban Convention. It is also desirable to launch a relevant discussion panel on this issue, especially within the framework of the Azerbaijan-Armenia normalization and peace process. An important step in this direction is the declaration of the participants of the 3rd International Mine Action Conference, which took place in the Zangilan region of Azerbaijan and the city of Baku on May 30-31, 2024. Although Azerbaijan is not a party to the Mine Ban Treaty (Ottawa Convention) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (Oslo Convention), the declaration accepted at the Zangilan conference states that adherence to the principles and values of the relevant conventions and steps will be encouraged to comply with these documents.

However, since Azerbaijan is seriously suffering from war crimes by Armenia, including mine terrorism, it is trying to raise the mine problem in almost all possible international legal instances. For example, at the 15th meeting of the States Parties to the Hague Convention in 2023, a resolution on the “Impact of Mines on Cultural Heritage” was adopted at the initiative of Azerbaijan. It can also be noted that Azerbaijan initiated the establishment of a special contact group on humanitarian demining within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement. Currently, Azerbaijan, together with the UN, is working towards the establishment of an “International Center of Excellence on Mine Action Training”. Azerbaijan has also proposed including humanitarian demining as Goal 18 in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

One of the most important indicators of the political normalization process between Armenia and Azerbaijan after the Second Karabakh War is the transfer of mine maps. In exchange for the map showing the location of 97 000 mines buried in Agdam, which was presented to Azerbaijan by Armenia on June 12, 2021, Azerbaijan returned 15 Armenian saboteurs as a gesture of goodwill. After that, a similar “exchange” took place on December 4, 2021. Azerbaijan handed over 10 military personnel in exchange for the mine maps. However, these mine maps are not accurate and Armenia deceived the world community by providing false maps.

The mine issue is one of the most important humanitarian and security problems facing our country today. Despite the fact that 4,5 years have passed since the end of the 44-day Patriotic War and the liberation of Karabakh and East Zangezur from occupation, it has not yet been possible to free these territories from mines. Since the mine clearance process generally requires a very long time and serious resources, it is still ongoing. There is a need to condemn Armenia, which has committed mine terrorism against our country, for war crimes and to increase international support for Azerbaijan in mine clearance. Just as HALO Trust has declared that it has cleared more than 60% of the mines in Karabakh (for the so-called regime) during the years of occupation, an official appeal can be made for the clearance of Azerbaijani territories from mines with international support. The European Union's "Emergency Fund for Africa" is engaged in humanitarian mine clearance activities and is an example of how international cooperation can be established in this area.

## **DETERMINING VIEWS ON FAMILY EDUCATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF PROTECTIVE AND PREVENTIVE SOCIAL SERVICES THROUGH THE FOCUS GROUP METHOD**

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### **Introduction**

The family is the primary institution directly influencing an individual's psychosocial development (Darling *et al.*, 2022). Today, rapid social change, economic hardship, digitalization and intergenerational value conflicts threaten the structure and functionality of families (Morris, 2013). Communication problems, weakened parental roles, domestic violence, addiction and mental health issues present multifaceted challenges that negatively impact family well-being (Cuartas, 2022). These issues highlight the need for protective and preventive social service interventions and structured family education programs (Greenstein, 2006; Matos & Sousa, 2004). The content and implementation methods of these programs directly affect accessibility and participation. Therefore, it is crucial that such programs are developed based on the knowledge and experience of field professionals who work directly with families.

This study aims to structure psychoeducational and group-based interventions to strengthen family functionality based on the perspectives of professionals who directly work with families. It seeks to benefit from their field experience to develop sustainable, effective and contextually relevant education programs. The research addresses the following questions:

1. What are the main social, psychological and structural problems faced by families today?
2. What should be the content, methods and modules of psychoeducational and group programs designed for families?
3. What are the conditions that enhance the applicability, sustainability and participation in these programs?
4. What are the essential qualifications required for professionals who will implement these programs?
5. How should the organization, institutional cooperation and physical infrastructure be structured for an effective family education process?

## **Method**

The study adopted a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design (Patton, 2002). Data were collected through focus group interviews using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher (Greenbaum, 1998). The participant group consisted of 22 professionals from public institutions who work directly with families, including social workers, psychologists, psychological counselors, sociologists, teachers, academics and religious officials. The interviews were conducted over three sessions at the Rize Governorship Meeting Hall with official approval. Audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis. Open coding was used to derive themes, which were then categorized under five main thematic areas.

## **Findings**

The data were organized under five main themes and their corresponding sub-themes:

### ***1. Current Practices and Problem Areas:***

Participants reported that existing family education programs are limited in scope and access to services is problematic. Low participation rates, challenges in reaching disadvantaged groups and a lack of inter-institutional coordination were frequently emphasized.

### ***2. Fundamental Issues Faced by Families:***

Key issues included poor communication, weak parent-child relationships, unclear role distribution within marriage, domestic violence, substance addiction, economic hardship, mental health problems, generational conflicts and challenges faced by single-parent families.

### ***3. Expectations Regarding Psychoeducational and Group Programs:***

Participants highlighted the need for content covering communication skills, conflict resolution, parenting roles, domestic violence awareness, marriage preparation, family planning, addiction prevention and self-awareness. The importance of tailoring content to disadvantaged groups was also emphasized.

### ***4. Format and Organization of the Training Program:***

Short, targeted, group-based and interactive modules were suggested. Creative methods such as art and play were seen as increasing engagement. Practical factors such as scheduling, space and childcare support were underlined. Strategies to include fathers through workplace collaborations were proposed.

### ***5. Qualifications of Educators and Implementation Capacity:***

Participants emphasized the necessity for practitioners to possess both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Interactive delivery methods, supervision support and the development of shared intervention frameworks were seen as essential for program effectiveness.

## Conclusion

The findings indicate that psychoeducational and group-based family interventions should be structured around the field experiences of professionals. A comprehensive, modular and participatory educational framework is needed to address the complex issues families face. Flexible and creative implementation methods, inclusion of men and disadvantaged groups, support for educators and strengthened institutional coordination are among the key recommendations. The study provides evidence-based contributions to the development of family-focused social service interventions and offers guidance for practitioners and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Family education programs, preventive social work, psychoeducation, focus group, family functioning.

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## CONSTITUTION AND SOVEREIGNTY YEAR IN THE CONTEXT OF STRENGTHENING AZERBAIJAN'S POSITIONS

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President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has signed a Decree on declaring 2025 as the “Constitution and Sovereignty Year” in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The decree was signed on December 28, 2024<sup>‡</sup>.

The insights present an overview of the “Constitution and Sovereignty Year” in the context of the strengthening geopolitical influence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The document outlines suggestions on how Azerbaijan can take proactive steps to inform and engage the public regarding the significance of the “Constitution and Sovereignty Year”, both from an analytical and promotional perspective.

The insights address Azerbaijan’s efforts to consolidate its position within the evolving geopolitical landscape, particularly focusing on issues related to peace negotiations with Armenia.

The proposed initiatives include the organization of educational programs on the constitution, exhibitions, discussions with legal experts. These efforts are intended to raise awareness of Azerbaijan’s independence and constitution, reaching a broader audience and strengthening national identity.

### **Introduction**

The relationship between constitution and sovereignty varies across countries, shaped by their legal, political and historical contexts. However, generally speaking, both constitution and sovereignty are regarded as fundamental principles essential for safeguarding a state's legal foundation and independence.

The United Nations Charter outlines the principles of international law concerning state sovereignty and provides an analysis of sovereignty within the UN system ([https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4096514](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4096514)). Additionally, discussions often center on how the concept of sovereignty has evolved in international relations and how it influences the power dynamics between states.

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<sup>‡</sup> [https://azertag.az/en/xeber/2025\\_declared\\_the\\_year\\_of\\_constitution\\_and\\_sovereignty\\_in\\_azerbaijan-3354235](https://azertag.az/en/xeber/2025_declared_the_year_of_constitution_and_sovereignty_in_azerbaijan-3354235)

The U.S. Constitution is a key legal document that governs principles of law and sovereignty and it has been extensively analyzed by numerous legal scholars in this regard.

The “Constitution and Sovereignty Year” is crucial in terms of reducing the influence of powers in the South Caucasus that have interests and seek to build dangerous ambitions. Through this, the Azerbaijani state:

- Demonstrates its commitment to security issues arising from its Constitution and sovereignty principles,
- Declares that all necessary legal and military measures will be taken to ensure the absolute protection of its national security and territorial integrity,
- Highlights its significant role in the security of the Middle East and Europe during a turbulent period, emphasizing its high-profile position for the entire region,
- Takes steps to strengthen the central lines of its defense and security doctrines in 2025,
- Demonstrates practical manifestations of the deterrence concept to neutralize the ambitions of forces opposed to Azerbaijan. In the framework of the “Constitution and Sovereignty Year”, Azerbaijan will intensify efforts to return the remaining three villages of Kazakhstan and the village of Karki in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. It can be predicted that:
  - If Armenia does not learn from the ongoing events and engages with external influences on the peace agenda, Azerbaijan may implement “long-range actions”,
  - The resolution of issues related to the Zangezur Corridor will be among the priorities of Azerbaijan in this context.

Azerbaijan has created an opportunity to end the more than 40-year-long conflict with Armenia with a peace agreement project. However, tensions on the border remain high and trust in peace remains disputed. It is unclear whether the proposed peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia will ensure lasting peace or if the remaining gaps will disrupt the delicate balance. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, presents the “Constitution and Sovereignty” tandem to Armenia. The conditions set forth by President Ilham Aliyev regarding the peace program are also essential for Armenia’s sovereignty and security. Therefore, it is understandable that demands are made for Armenia to amend its Constitution. In this context, it can be promoted that:

- President Ilham Aliyev is preparing a new Constitution for Armenia, based on the principle that Armenia will never again create a legal basis threatening Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity and sovereignty,
- President Ilham Aliyev is the author of a process that fundamentally changes Armenia’s public and political life and political system,
- The “Constitution and Sovereignty Year” is a regional peace and security act organized under Ilham Aliyev’s leadership.

The “Constitution and Sovereignty Year” can be assessed in the context of ensuring the rights and freedoms of Azerbaijanis worldwide, including those living in Iran. In this regard:

- While Azerbaijan is interested in improving relations with Iran, it should develop its capacity to influence Azerbaijanis in Iran in a cautious manner. One suggestion could be organizing “Azerbaijani Cultural Days” in Iran. In return, allowing Iran to hold its cultural days in Azerbaijan could serve as a gesture,

- Azerbaijanis living in various countries, together with Turkish diaspora organizations, can organize a series of events regarding the rights and freedoms of Azerbaijanis in Iran. This could lead to Azerbaijan gaining moral-psychological sovereignty over Iranian Azerbaijanis.

### **Recommendations**

In connection with the “Constitution and Sovereignty Year” to be celebrated in Azerbaijan, it would be advisable to consider the following proposals aimed at informing the public about strengthening the country’s independence and legal foundations, as well as emphasizing the importance of education, culture and statehood:

1. **Constitutional Education Programs:** Constitution and sovereignty-related educational programs could be organized for every age group in Azerbaijan. Lessons and seminars on this topic should be held in schools, universities and vocational education institutions to better inform students and youth about the country’s legal foundations, state structure and the importance of independence.

2. **Meetings with Legal Experts:** Various forums, discussions and seminars could be organized with lawyers, state officials and international experts to discuss Azerbaijan’s legal development, the application of the Constitution and sovereignty issues.

3. **Constitution-Themed Exhibitions:** An exhibition of paintings, sculptures, photographs and art works related to Azerbaijan’s independence and constitution could be organized. These exhibitions would offer a visual representation of Azerbaijan’s history in terms of its independence and Constitution.

4. **Constitutional Awards and Exhibitions:** Distinguished individuals in the field of constitutional law and legal development could be awarded. Their activities could be presented to a wider audience.

5. **Events at Historical Sites:** Events related to Azerbaijan’s independence and the adoption of its Constitution could be held in liberated territories and historical marches could be organized.

**Keywords:** Constitution, sovereignty, Azerbaijan.

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF GREEN MARKETING IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES

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This article examines the theoretical foundations of using green marketing strategies in the sustainable development of industrial enterprises in Uzbekistan. It also reveals the importance of industrial enterprises in the country's economy, the state of their development and the possibilities of using green marketing strategies.

The pace of economic reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan is stimulating efforts to rapidly enter not only local but also global markets. Such changes require significant changes in the activities of industrial sectors, their adaptation to marketing requirements. In the context of market relations, marketing strategy is an advanced form of entrepreneurship, which is an activity aimed at creating real opportunities for the development of scientific and technological progress in a market economy. Goals 48-51 of the Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy focus on the development of the industrial sector and the transition to a green economy, which set out priority tasks such as the development of “driver” industries and the full use of the industrial potential of the regions, as well as the transition to a “Green Economy”, sharply increasing the use of renewable energy as its basis. At the republican level, industrial enterprises produced industrial products worth 885,8 trillion soums at the end of 2024 and the physical volume index of industrial production compared to 2023 was 106.8%<sup>§</sup>.

Although the industrial sector in Uzbekistan is developing at a significant pace, the need for sustainable development and environmental responsibility is growing. In this process, green marketing strategies are showing their importance. Green marketing is the process of producing environmentally friendly products, creating a market for them and presenting an environmentally responsible company image to consumers. In Uzbekistan, the assumption of environmental responsibility by industry and the introduction of green marketing not only solve environmental problems, but also serve to ensure economic and social stability.

In the late 1980s, the term “green marketing” officially emerged and soon became popular as a marketing tactic. A number of researchers are conducting scientific research in this area. In particular, Patwary et al. (2022) Green marketing in its early stages was mainly associated with

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<sup>§</sup>Bulletin of the socio-economic situation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, industrial statistics 2024.

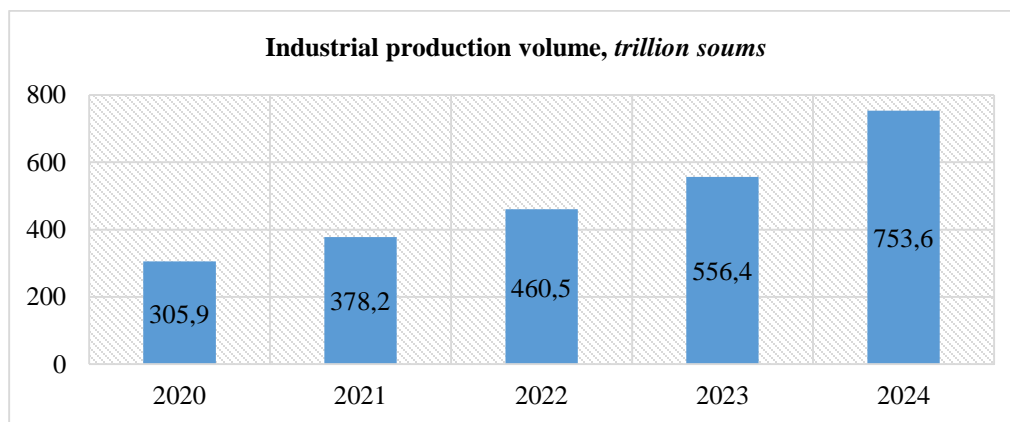
eco-labeling and highlighting the environmental benefits of products. They argue that green marketing (green brand awareness, environmental awareness, environmental awareness) has a positive impact on purchase intention. According to Tzanidis et al. (2024), green marketing is a marketing strategy aimed at promoting and selling environmentally friendly products, practices and policies.

In an era of increasing concern for the environment and sustainable living, the relationship between green marketing strategies and consumer behavior towards green or sustainable products has received considerable attention from the academic community, industry experts and policymakers (Pacevičiūtė & Razbadauskaitė-Venskė, 2023). Green marketing is a marketing strategy in which a company actively adopts environmentally friendly measures in the production, promotion and distribution of its products or services in order to meet consumers' environmental demands (Luo *et al.*, 2025).

In our opinion, the main goal of green marketing is to satisfy the environmental consciousness of the consumers by offering products and services that meet environmental criteria. At the same time, it seeks to mitigate any harmful effects on the natural world and increase the competitive advantage of the enterprise. In addition, green marketing is a strategic communication method that effectively integrates sustainability into all aspects of brand marketing. Businesses that implement green marketing strategies integrate sustainability into their operations by sustainably sourcing raw materials and using energy-efficient production processes.

Today, the manufacturing industry has the largest share in the industrial sector in Uzbekistan, with the volume of products produced by them amounting to 753.6 trillion soums or 85.1 percent of the total volume of industrial products.

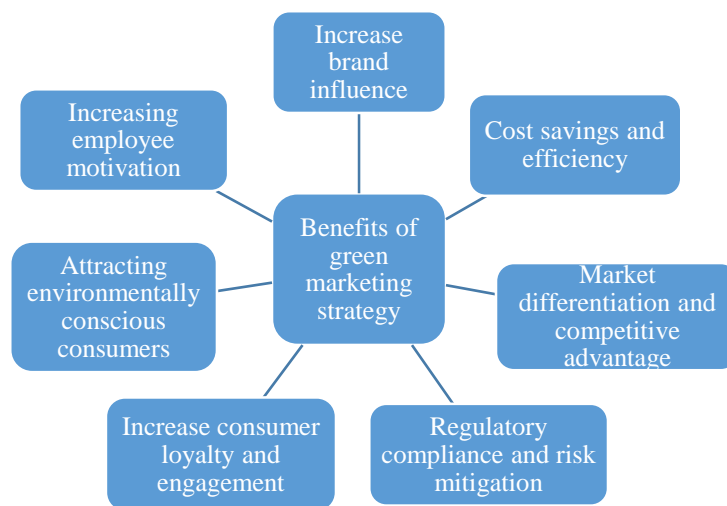
**Table 1.** Industrial production volume, *trillion soums*



**Source:** Author's work based on data from the Statistical Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Based on the above data, it can be said that in the structure of the manufacturing industry in 2024, the share of the production, repair and installation of machinery and equipment, the production of motor vehicles, trailers, semi-trailers and other finished goods was 20.8%, the share of the metallurgical industry was 22.7% and the share of the production of textiles, clothing and leather products was 16.9%.

In order to further increase the volume of industrial production in our country and ensure its competitiveness in the domestic and global markets, it is recommended to include green marketing in the long-term strategic planning activities of enterprises and increase investments in green product development, market promotion and brand creation initiatives. However, the development of green marketing in our country is still at an early stage. There are shortcomings in the widespread use of green technologies, their introduction in production and marketing. There are problems in this area such as a shortage of qualified specialists, low demand for ecological products and consumers' lack of awareness of environmental responsibility. In our opinion, the use of green marketing strategies in the sustainable development of industrial enterprises presents a number of opportunities (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Benefits of using a green marketing strategy

Based on the results of these studies, we believe that the importance of using a green marketing strategy in the sustainable development of industrial enterprises in Uzbekistan is as follows:

- Economic development and sustainable growth. Ecologically clean products produced through green marketing not only increase demand in the international market, but also create new economic opportunities in the domestic market. At the same time, industrial enterprises of

Uzbekistan will have the opportunity to increase their income through the production and sale of new ecological products.

- Increasing social responsibility. Existing industrial enterprises, by assuming social responsibility, produce environmentally friendly products and contribute to the sustainable development of society.
- Resource conservation and environmental impact reduction. One of the main directions of development of Uzbekistan's industrial sector is efficient use of resources and reduction of environmental impact. Green marketing strategies will further accelerate this process. For example, enterprises can reduce environmental risks by using recyclable materials, reducing waste and introducing energy-saving technologies.

**Keywords:** Industrial enterprises, green marketing, marketing strategy, manufacturing industry, green economy.

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## **THE PROCESS OF DEMOGRAPHIC AGING OF RUSSIA AND CHINA IN THE MODERN CONDITIONS OF DIGITALIZATION OF THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM**

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Russia and China are united not only by a common state border that stretches for more than 4 thousand kilometres, but they are also linked by strong economic ties and international trade. In these two dissimilar neighbouring countries, despite the huge difference in population, similar demographic processes are developing that have long-term trends. In the humanities, this phenomenon is described as the “demographic transition”. The number of elderly people in Russia and China is large and growing rapidly every year, which is a marker of the complex process of demographic aging of the population. In the second quarter of the 21st century, these countries will inevitably be forced to solve complex demographic problems, which in turn will affect all areas of social and economic life.

The modern world and economy are rapidly changing under the influence of digital transformation. Scientists, studying this process, use the term “digital transition”, which will change all spheres of human life and society. Thus, digital technologies are drivers of social change and the formation of new industries. By relying on this approach to studying the digitalization process, economists tend to lose sight of the human personality with its unique set of values and needs. Russia and China are showing successful first steps of the state towards the development of the digital economy. But further successful digitalization is impossible without considering and coordinating the interests of social groups and institutions that are its beneficiaries, as well as those social groups and institutions that will suffer clearly predictable losses. Nowadays, experts and scientists have increasingly begun to note signs of the formation of a new type of social inequality - digital. It can be concluded that in Russia and China two global processes have coincided and are taking place in parallel: the demographic transition and the digital transition.

According to Russian Federal State Statistics Service data for July 2024, the population of Russia is 146.1 million people. In 2024, the share of Russian citizens over 55 years old reached the maximum mark in modern history - 30%. In 1990, this figure was 21.1%, in 2015 - 27.3%, in 2020 - 29.4% (<https://mintrud.gov.ru/ministry/programms/12>). It is important to note that the rate of aging is ahead of previous forecasts by demographers, who expected that only by 2045 the

number of citizens over working age in Russia would reach 27% of the population. The population continues to age primarily due to a decline in the birth rate.

In 2024 China's population stood at about 1.408 billion, down from the 1.412 billion recorded in the 2020 census. The elderly population is huge and growing rapidly. According to the seventh population census data of the National Bureau of Statistics of China, by the end of 2023, China's elderly population aged 60 years and above reached 296.97 million, accounting for 21.1% of the total population, of which the population aged 65 years and above was 216.76 million, accounting for 15.4% of the total population (Ning, 2021). According to a prediction by the Department of Aging of the National Health Commission, it is expected that around 2035, the elderly population aged 60 and above will exceed 400 million, accounting for more than 30% of the total population (<https://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/s3574/202209/ee4dc20368b440a49d270a228f5b0ac1.shtml>). These two figures indicate that China's elderly population is huge and has entered a deeply aging society four years ahead of schedule, with a trend of continuous growth.

Population aging in Russia and China differs greatly in absolute data but is comparable in relative data. Another common feature is that population aging in these countries is taking place in the context of rapid digitalization. Digitalization of the healthcare system is the most important area of change in all countries of the world, including Russia and China. The level of development and availability of new digital and medical technologies directly depends on the level of economic well-being of the country. Moreover, in Russia and China, the process of concentration, accumulation and investment of capital affects mainly large cities and agglomerations, while in rural areas there is a depletion and outflow of human and economic capital. At the same time, scientists and experts in the field of economics note that digital technologies have an enabling effect on high-quality rural development and are instrumental to implementing the digital countryside and rural revitalization strategies (Cheng & Xiyan, 2024). Economic inequality between urban agglomerations and rural settlements significantly affects demographic indicators and especially the fact that the rural population is aging much faster than the urban population. China's rural areas have a high proportion of elderly people, and according to the National Health and Health Commission, the elderly are the main users of healthcare resources and chronic and multiple diseases are more prevalent in the elderly population, placing higher demands on the healthcare system. China's rural areas have a higher proportion of older persons and the per capita amount of basic old-age insurance received by urban workers is much higher than that in rural areas, which leads to greater economic pressures on older persons in rural areas, who have relatively fewer resources at their disposal in terms of medical care and social security. A similar situation can be observed in Russia. Rural populations are often not only deprived of access to new medical technologies, but also, due to the “digital divide”, are poorly informed about the possibilities of solving health problems using government support funds.

In China with the development of big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and other cross-industry information technologies, the digital or “Internet+” healthcare model is rapidly emerging (<http://www.sbm.shisu.edu.cn/4a/b7/c12125a150199/page.htm>). Thanks to the development and refinement of telemedicine, populations in rural and remote areas have greater access to high-quality counselling and guidance and online pharmacy platforms allow customers to purchase most of the common medicines they need without leaving their homes. The digitalization of healthcare has eased and met the healthcare needs of the elderly, especially in remote rural areas. In addition to well-studied risk factors for health loss, external factors generated by the digital transformation of the healthcare system are beginning to influence life expectancy.

Even though digital medical care services currently do not work with the elderly, soon they will be forced to adapt their services specifically to this category of the population. Time flies inexorably, transferring adult users of digital services to the socio-demographic group of elderly people, for whom digital technologies in various areas of life will be part of their everyday life. As experts note, in the 21st century, the elderly or as they have been called in recent years, “seniors”, are no longer perceived unambiguously as objects of care and attention (Lomonosova & Burdun, 2022). Measures aimed at developing the infrastructure of digital technologies in the healthcare sector have so far yielded results only in megacities and large cities. Today, a negative trend has emerged of unequal access not only to digital resources, but also to medical care for representatives of different socio-demographic groups, with the elderly being among the most vulnerable.

In 2006, Russia adopted important regulatory documents aimed at stimulating the digitalization of the healthcare system: from the development and regulation of digital health insurance services to telemedicine and the development of personalized applications and devices. Today in Russia, models and necessary legal mechanisms for the development of digital medical care services for the elderly have been developed and tested. In addition, over the past decades, results of fundamental research in the field of gerontology have been obtained.

Russia and China have great potential in solving the problems of population aging in the context of digitalization of medicine, since by developing different aspects of this complex phenomenon they have come closer to a holistic understanding and solution.

**Keywords:** Demographic transition, digital transition, population aging, digital divide, digitalization of healthcare.

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## THE IMPACT OF GREEN ECONOMIC POLICIES ON THE SOCIAL WELFARE OF YOUTH IN AZERBAIJAN

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The aim of this research is to investigate the role of green economy policies in influencing the social welfare of youth in Azerbaijan. In the context of global environmental challenges and climate change, the implementation of green economy models has become increasingly significant. This approach seeks to balance economic development with ecological sustainability, emphasizing the efficient use of natural resources, the adoption of renewable energy sources and the management of waste. The Azerbaijani government has made significant strides in this direction, aiming to reduce carbon emissions by 35% from 1990 levels by 2030, thus promoting the transition to a green economy.

This study assesses the impact of Azerbaijan's green economy policies on the social welfare of its youth, examining how green job creation, sustainable education opportunities and participation in environmentally sustainable economic activities can benefit young people. The findings suggest that green economy policies can contribute to long-term social welfare by providing youth with new job opportunities in the environmental sector, as well as enhancing education and social stability.

Additionally, the research highlights the challenges Azerbaijan faces in fully implementing green economy practices, particularly the underdeveloped green job market and the limited opportunities for youth in ecological sectors. Consequently, maximizing the potential of green economy policies requires strong collaboration and strategic actions among the government, the business sector and society. The study concludes that while Azerbaijan's green economy policies can positively impact the social welfare of youth, their successful implementation hinges on inclusive and sustainable approaches.

### **Strategies for Implementing a Green Economy**

The green economy seeks to balance economic growth with ecological sustainability by focusing on the efficient use of natural resources, renewable energy, waste management and the development of eco-friendly technologies. It promotes social justice and equality, aiming to

improve the welfare of individuals and society while ensuring sustainable development for future generations.

The significance of the green economy lies in its alignment with sustainable development principles and its capacity to enhance environmental management. This approach not only tackles ecological challenges but also strives for a green economic transformation, supporting both social progress and equality. Crucial to its success is the sustainable management of natural resources, resilient energy supplies and the application of recycling technologies (Baghirov, 2023).

Key strategies that support the green economy include renewable energy adoption, energy efficiency improvements, enhanced waste management and sustainable agricultural practices. Furthermore, government regulations and incentives, as well as technological innovation, play essential roles in overcoming the challenges of green economy implementation. Despite challenges such as high initial costs and resistance from some stakeholders, the long-term benefits-such as job creation, improved quality of life and climate change mitigation-are substantial. Achieving comprehensive sustainability requires collaboration among government, private sectors and communities. Research shows that with an integrated and participatory approach, a successful transition to a green economy can be realized, laying the foundation for sustainable economic growth (<https://www.undp.org/>).

The green economy seeks to integrate economic growth with environmental sustainability through the adoption of eco-friendly and sustainable practices. Research has identified several key strategies that underpin a green economy, including the adoption of renewable energy sources, enhanced energy efficiency, effective waste management and sustainable agricultural practices. Furthermore, the successful implementation of a green economy relies on governmental regulatory support, incentives and the role of technological innovation in overcoming implementation challenges. Despite facing obstacles such as substantial initial costs and resistance from certain stakeholders, the long-term advantages of a green economy are substantially more significant. These advantages encompass job creation, improved living standards and the mitigation of climate change impacts. Consequently, achieving sustainable development requires robust collaboration among the government, private sector and civil society. The study concludes that, through an integrated and participatory approach, the transition to a green economy can be successfully accomplished, establishing sustainable development as the cornerstone of future economic growth (United Nations in Azerbaijan, 2023).

### **Azerbaijan's Path to Green Economy: Achievements and Future Directions**

Azerbaijan has made notable progress in its transition to a green economy, guided by indicators established by the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Green Growth, formed by the Ministry of Economy in 2016. These indicators focus on socio-economic factors, environmental

efficiency, natural resources, quality of life and economic opportunities, offering a comprehensive framework to assess the nation's green growth.

The government's commitment to this transformation aligns with international climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement. By setting targets like reducing carbon emissions by 35% by 2030, Azerbaijan is implementing policies to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable resource management. These initiatives aim to foster social welfare, particularly among youth, by creating green jobs and enabling access to a sustainable economy.

Socio-economic indicators have shown that Azerbaijan's green policies are benefiting youth welfare, evidenced by improved living standards, education and employment opportunities. While the country has experienced economic growth, challenges remain, particularly in areas such as employment, social services and education related to sustainability.

Azerbaijan's green transformation is also tied to new economic opportunities, with investments in sectors like renewable energy and agriculture. However, further investment is needed in areas like water management and environmental protection to ensure long-term sustainability. Despite positive trends, the country's low ranking in the Global Sustainable Competitiveness Index (GSCI) highlights the need for more ambitious green policies, especially in resource efficiency.

To fully realize a green economy, Azerbaijan must prioritize technological innovation and green finance. Investments in research, development and green sectors will be crucial for creating green jobs and supporting youth engagement in sustainability efforts, ultimately contributing to the country's sustainable development goals (United Nations in Azerbaijan, 2023).

### **Challenges and Policy Recommendations for Enhancing Youth Welfare in Azerbaijan's Green Economy**

To enhance youth welfare within Azerbaijan's green economy transition, a multifaceted strategy is required. Expanding green job opportunities across sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture and waste management is crucial to ensuring that young people can access stable employment in these emerging fields. This can be achieved by offering incentives to businesses that invest in green technologies and promoting green entrepreneurship, especially through targeted programs and grants for youth-led startups. Furthermore, there is a need for substantial investments in education and training programs that equip young people with the skills necessary for a sustainable future. Developing specialized curricula in sustainability, renewable energy and environmental management at both secondary and higher education levels will align academic programs with the needs of the green economy. Collaboration between universities, technical colleges and industries can also create a more seamless transition for young individuals into green sectors. In addition to these efforts, fostering youth involvement in decision-

making processes related to green economic policies will help ensure that the voices of young people are heard and their concerns addressed. Platforms or advisory councils could be established to allow youth to actively contribute to discussions on sustainability. Furthermore, facilitating access to green finance, such as offering green micro-loans or grants, will support young entrepreneurs looking to innovate in sustainable industries. These financial mechanisms, combined with mentorship and business development services, can help youth-led businesses thrive in the green economy. Public awareness campaigns focusing on sustainability are also essential to educate young people about the importance of environmental responsibility and the role they can play in the green transition. Lastly, continued investment in green sectors, including renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure, will create long-term employment opportunities while contributing to the country's environmental goals. Introducing social protection schemes, such as unemployment benefits for youth displaced by the green transition or retraining programs for young workers, will help ensure that no young person is left behind. By taking these comprehensive steps, Azerbaijan can ensure that its youth actively participate in and benefit from the country's green transformation, contributing to both their personal well-being and the nation's sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Green economy, sustainable development, youth policy, youth welfare, youth empowerment.

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF GREEN BANKING IN PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

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This article explores the concept of the “Green Banking” system and its significant role in environmental protection. It highlights the importance of “Green Banking” services offered by commercial banks in promoting the development of a green economy in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Today, accelerated industrialization and a sharp increase in population are negatively impacting the environment due to the rising demand for resources. This expansion of production is also contributing to air pollution from harmful gases. To address these environmental issues, the concept of a green economy - which seeks to create a balance between nature and the economy - is increasingly being adopted.

The term “green bank” refers to a modern initiative aimed at enhancing the sustainability of financial institutions and increasing their social responsibility. This can involve measures such as reducing the excessive use of economic resources and lowering energy consumption. Developing a green economy is a critical objective for countries worldwide and it is actively progressing in Uzbekistan as well. In this context, financial sectors, especially banks, play a vital role in promoting environmental sustainability. Green banks are significant because they operate in an environmentally friendly manner and finance projects that do not harm the environment.

Unlike the financial services provided by traditional commercial banks, “Green banking” offers a balanced approach that considers three essential elements: People, Planet and Profit. This framework reflects the modern principles of social responsibility in banking.

The concept of “Green banking” was first introduced in Western countries in 2003 and primarily focused on environmental protection principles. However, in today's world, numerous global issues such as climate change, industrial expansion and the depletion of green spaces due to agro-industrial development are disrupting the ecological balance. These challenges have rendered many areas of our planet unsuitable for human habitation. As a result, the “Green banking” system has emerged not only as a movement for ecological security but also as a platform for financing promising environmental protection projects.

Following the Global Financial Crisis of 2008-2012, there has been an increased interest in researching the social responsibility of financial institutions. Advocates of sustainable banking,

such as Biswas (2011), Corne and Szafarz (2014) have defined socially responsible banking as financial intermediation based not only on economic criteria but also on non-economic factors, including social, ethical and environmental considerations. Research on sustainable and socially responsible banking has primarily focused on three main areas (Shershneva *et al.*, 2018):

- Green banking;
- Ethical banking;
- Alternative banking.

Various definitions have been proposed for the concept of green banking. Indian researcher Bahl (2012) describes “green” banking as a new strategic imperative focused on developing environmentally friendly banking operations. According to the Indian Banks' Association, “green banking” is a type of banking that considers social and ecological factors to protect the environment and conserve natural resources. It is also referred to as an ethical bank or a sustainable bank. These banks primarily provide services for projects aimed at preserving the earth’s ecology, environment and natural resources, including biodiversity (Kesavan, 2018).

Green banking services differ from traditional banking services in that they provide loans for renewable energy-related and environmentally friendly projects to combat climate change. The main goal of green banks is not to make a profit, but rather to promote the use of renewable energy and benefit the environment. For example, green banks may offer long-term financing at reduced interest rates to encourage the use of solar panels to avoid the use of fossil fuels, which are considered non-renewable energy sources.

Banks can encourage their customers to make green choices by offering green banking products to their customers. Examples of green retail banking products include the following as shown by Alicja (2024):

- Green mortgages - loans at relatively low interest rates for consumers who purchase homes that meet certain environmental requirements.
- Green car loans - loans at reduced interest rates to customers to purchase electric or low-emission vehicles.
- Green funds - this allows bank customers to invest in projects related to environmental and social issues.

The main tasks of “Green banking” services in commercial banks in ensuring environmental safety are as follows (Figure 1):



**Figure 1.** Main functions of “green banking” services

Several measures are being implemented in the Republic of Uzbekistan to prevent environmental damage, effectively utilize resources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. According to the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan titled “On Approval of the Strategy for Transitioning the Republic of Uzbekistan to a ‘Green’ Economy for 2019-2030”, there are several key tasks. These include increasing the energy efficiency of the economy, promoting the rational use of natural resources through the development of financial mechanisms and reducing the share of greenhouse gases in the gross domestic product by 10 percent by 2030 in accordance with the Paris Agreement signed in 2017 (<https://lex.uz/docs/-4539502>).

The banking system plays a significant role in achieving these goals, as commercial banks in Uzbekistan are implementing green banking services. They draw on foreign experience and collaborate with international corporations. For example, an agreement with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in the realm of “green banking” enables funding for green projects in small and medium-sized businesses, specifically targeting environmentally responsible initiatives. Additionally, in partnership with the International Finance Corporation, a policy for “environmental and social risk management” has been adopted, leading to modifications in the banks' credit policies. Consequently, banks are now able to provide loans with consideration for environmental and social risks. Moreover, commercial banks in Uzbekistan are not limiting their green banking efforts to financing environmentally-friendly business projects; they also offer preferential loans for solar panels, which are a form of renewable energy.

To summarize, it is essential to further develop and support the activities of green banks, as their operations are crucial for maintaining ecological balance and ensuring livable conditions for future generations. As a relatively new trend in Uzbekistan, green banks need increased attention from the state. Specifically, Central Banks should bolster the activities of green banks and support more green businesses to prevent environmental damage, conserve natural resources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Keywords:** Green economy, social responsibility of banks, Green Banking system, Green Banking products, green mortgage.

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## HEALTHCARE ETHICS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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The digital transformation of healthcare has significantly impacted patient care, offering advancements in diagnosis, personalized treatment and predictive analytics. Technologies such as electronic medical records, artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning have improved decision-making and efficiency, enhancing patient-centered care. However, these developments raise critical ethical concerns. This presentation explores key ethical challenges, including privacy and data security, biases in AI-driven decision-making, transparency and explainability of algorithms. It addresses the role of trust and confidence in AI-based healthcare and the importance of maintaining human agency in medical decision-making. The evolving doctor-patient relationship is also examined, questioning whether AI fosters paternalism or enhances patient autonomy. Ultimately, AI should serve as a tool to augment physicians' cognitive capacities rather than replace them. Ethical concerns must be addressed through interdisciplinary collaboration among healthcare professionals, policymakers, AI developers and ethicists, ensuring responsible AI implementation. Professional regulations and guidelines are essential to uphold ethical integrity in digital healthcare.

**Keywords:** Education, artificial intelligence, decision-making, interdisciplinary collaboration.

## **CLIMATE CRISIS, ITS IMPACT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Climate change has already resulted in climate-related extreme events of greater frequency and/or intensity. This, along with long-term changes in average conditions (whether in temperature or rainfall), is likely to continue to have a major impact on livelihoods. Developing countries will be especially affected by such events - and more specifically, the poor people in developing countries - because of their geographical exposure and their greater reliance on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture. Social protection offers a wide range of instruments (cash transfers, insurance products, pension schemes and employment guarantee schemes) that can be used to support households that are particularly vulnerable to both the ongoing and acute impacts of climate changes. Although the evidence base showing how these measures can help those affected prevent and cope with climate challenges is still limited, this paper aims to provide a condensed review of the current knowledge and evidence about the role of social protection in reducing the impact of climate change on the poorest populations and provides a series of recommendations for both social protection and climate change practitioners and for strengthening the evidence base.

As said Gilbert F. Hounbo, International Labour Organisation (ILO) Director-General, climate change does not recognize borders and we cannot build a wall to keep the crisis out. The climate crisis affects us all and represents the single, gravest, threat to social justice today. Universal social protection is top of the list of tools that we have at our disposal to help us ensure that the climate crisis does not deepen existing inequalities and exclusion in affected communities.

“The potential role of social protection as a response to these multiple risks is gaining increasing recognition. Social protection offers a wide range of instruments (e.g. cash transfers, insurance products, pension schemes and employment guarantee schemes) that can be used to support households that are exposed to climate changes. But the evidence base showing how these measures can help those affected prevent and cope with climate challenges is still limited. Little attention has been paid to designing such instruments to enable “graduation” out of poverty, ultimately removing the need for support and it is not yet clear whether they can be transformative in the context of climate change, a moving target for which static interventions are not always the ideal response” (Béné *et al.*, 2014).

The main objective of the Conference of the Parties (COP), which has been held annually since 1995 and is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, is to continue the fight against climate change worldwide and assess the progress achieved. Its ultimate goal is to prevent any dangerous human interference in the climate system. Climate change and environmental degradation pose an existential threat to every country and the world.

To overcome these problems, a new development strategy has been defined - the “green transition”. Current production and consumption patterns are unsustainable and require new comprehensive actions to move towards sustainable development. An integrated, systemic approach makes the transition to a green economy necessary, requiring that policies in these areas complement each other to achieve the goals of socio-economic development and environmental protection. The transition to green growth is possible in stages. This, in turn, implies a green transition phase.

The green transition is a transition phase aimed at turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities by achieving climate neutrality over the next 20 to 30 years, growing the economy through green technologies, creating sustainable industry and transport and reducing air pollution. It includes a transition phase that involves moving away from resource-intensive and polluting production methods to more sustainable and environmentally friendly alternatives in order to mitigate climate change, reduce environmental impacts and contribute to a more sustainable future.

“Climate change affects all facets of human and societal life. It is transforming the risks individuals and households face, with potentially profound socio-economic consequences such as increased poverty, inequality and social instability” (Costella *et al.*, 2023). In the area of health, the World Health Organisation (WHO) notes that climate change impacts on the social and environmental determinants of health, such as; clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter (WHO, 2023).

At the same time, climate change affects government and institutional capability to fulfil the fundamental right to social security for all, by exposing social security systems to bi-directional pressures that widen the financing gap. Firstly, climate change catalyses the materialisation of contingencies such as poverty, illness as well as unemployment especially in rural and agrarian communities. These necessitates an improved provision of social security benefits and services with the corresponding financial strains on social security systems. Secondly, the loss of productivity due to climate change translates to the erosion of the financing base for social security.

In essence, “climate change and social protection are intertwined. Effective access to adequate social security benefits and services can play the dual role in addressing climate change and climate induced risks. It supports measures aimed at promoting climate resilience as well as

mitigating the negative socio-economic impacts of climate-related risks through social assistance, social insurance and active labour market interventions” (ILO, 2023).

As the impacts of climate change become more pronounced, social protection will play an essential role in fostering resilience and reducing vulnerability- according to a UN report. Social protection systems are also uniquely positioned to support climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. The transition to a low-carbon economy can bring economic disruptions and without proper social protection, workers may find themselves unable to adapt to the changing job market. Sectors like agriculture, construction and energy are expected to experience significant transitions, but new opportunities in sustainable industries can provide a path forward - if social protection systems support workers through these changes and transitions, for instance through unemployment benefits, reskilling programs and job transition support.

“Public employment programs, coupled with social protection, are instrumental to support people adapt to unavoidable risks or events and set incentives to build infrastructure (e.g. restoring natural habitat, reforestation, building sea walls, etc.) that promotes resilience against climate change events and adaptation to these. Furthermore, rising temperatures and extreme weather events increase the incidence of heat-related illnesses, air pollution-related diseases and vector-borne diseases. Universal access to healthcare and climate-informed health benefits can ensure that the most vulnerable populations are protected against these health risks” (<https://social.desa.un.org/sdn/social-protection-in-the-age-of-climate-change>).

Climate change poses a major threat to reducing poverty, eradicating hunger and achieving sustainable development. It accelerates the frequency and intensity of extreme natural hazards, thus affecting the lives and livelihoods of those living in rural areas.

Climate change poses a major threat to achieving Agenda 2030, particularly efforts around eliminating poverty (SDG 1) and reaching zero hunger (SDG 2). “Climate variability and extremes are among the key drivers of the recent rise in hunger, especially in rural areas. The reasons are twofold. Climate change is accelerating the frequency and intensity of extreme natural hazards, leading to an increase in disasters, which have severe impacts on people’s lives and livelihoods. While some longer-term impacts of climate change may not be apparent for many decades, observed changes – such as increases in temperature - are already significant and relevant to poor and vulnerable households depending on agriculture, as they contribute to declining productivity and to the spread of harmful plant pests and diseases” (Hallegatte *et al.*, 2016).

Last year the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change - COP29 was held in Azerbaijan (<https://cop29.az/en/home>). At COP29, Azerbaijan presented its initiatives to the world community on the transition to “green” energy.

Against the above background, COP29 Azerbaijan Presidency has announced the first-ever holistic Human Development Day at COP29 - the “Baku Initiative on Human Development for



Climate Resilience” as the first-ever COP Presidency initiative aimed at tackling intersectoral synergy and complementarities between education, health, social protection, skills and jobs, with a special focus on children and youth.

COP29 Presidency-led initiative entitled “Baku Initiative on Human Development for Climate Resilience” are aimed at achieving the some important results in different areas. Baku Initiative accented, that, the concept of human development goes beyond economic productivity, focusing on the overall well-being of individuals, including health (physical, mental and psychosocial well-being), education, jobs and a decent standard of living. On one hand, human development brings economic benefits to society; on the other it puts human well-being at the center of the debate. Healthier, resilient, better educated and skilled people are spurring innovative climate solutions and powering the green industries of tomorrow.

Human development enhances resilience to climate events through better health, social protection, informed education and improved skills, all of which contribute to greater adaptability and recovery capabilities.

“Approximately half of the 100 countries assessed lack any reference to climate change in their national curriculum frameworks and fewer than 30% of teachers feel adequately prepared to address it within their local context. Alarmingly, 70% of surveyed youth express an inability to articulate climate change beyond general principles, coupled with anxiety about their future. Ensuring climate-smart education systems that are safe and resilient to climate change-related risks is the basis for protecting the right to education. Social protection reduces vulnerability, builds resilience to the impacts of climate change and enhances adaptive capacities, including of future generations. Social protection also mitigates unintended consequences of the green transition on workers, enterprises and affected communities, thereby garnering public acceptability and political support for climate and environmental policies. Strategic planning and financing should ensure that everyone, including the most vulnerable, has access to social protection. The provision of social protection must be based on rights which will ensure the sustainable and just transition and empower populations. Several sessions of UN Climate Change Conferences have addressed issues related to climate change and various human development aspects (health, education, jobs and skills, as well as children and youth and gender), however, less attention has been given to human development as a thematic area” (<https://cop29.az/en/pages/baku-initiative-on-human-development-for-climate-resilience-concept>).

Concluding, climate change is increasing uncertainty in programme planning: There are different levels of awareness of the impact of climate change and disasters between the three communities of practice, leaving many practitioners feeling poorly informed. Climate change is expected to have serious impact on the lives of social protection beneficiaries: Climate is expected to increase the vulnerability of those who are already ill equipped to cope. Social protection is a

key instrument for building disaster- or climate-resilient livelihoods: Social protection policies, however, are less likely to be combined with either disaster risk reduction or climate change adaptation.

Potential negative impact of social protection on climate change adaptation consists in the fact that, finally, it cannot be assumed that social protection interventions will systematically improve individuals' and communities' capacity to adapt to climate change. A "targeting trap" is one instance in which social protection could lead to maladaptation. In such a scenario, SP could help increase households' resilience in a location prone to long-term climatic degradation, while a more appropriate adaptation strategy would in fact be an alternative option, such as resettlement in a less environmentally marginal area. For example, SP interventions targeting pastoralist communities in drought-prone areas could reduce households' short-term or seasonal vulnerability. However, creating an incentive to stay in areas with poor long-term prospects might instead constitute such a "trap".

Social protection plays a key role in countering climate change impact but countries most impacted by the climate crisis are the least prepared. Governments must do more to utilize universal social protection to adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change and achieve a just transition.

**Keywords:** Climate crisis, impact, social protection, social development, COP29.

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## **ARE MEDICAL-CARE SERVICES BECOMING MONEY-MAKING MACHINE(S) UNDER PHYSICIANS' HEADSHIPS IN THE 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS-DRIVEN WORLD?**

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### **Background**

The world we live in today is a dynamic and interconnected tapestry of diverse cultures, behaviors, societies and systems. From technological advancements to global challenges where people mostly behave with business-mentality without considering moral obligations today no matter where they reside. In this behavioral changes, service-market, particularly Medical-care service-market has appeared to be vulnerable country-wise such as Bangladesh. Since by definitions medical care focuses on treating illness and injury, while healthcare focuses on preventing illness and promoting health, this study concentrated on issues evolved from medical-care service-market in economy country-wise.

### **Objectives**

The aim of this study is to give an insight over the medical care service-market in economy country-wise such as Bangladesh. It then analyzes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of today's medical-care market. Finally, this study cross-examines whether "a patient works for a doctor in medical-care service-market when the patient visits the doctor services" in economy country-wise such as Bangladesh.

### **Methods**

The search was done from electronic database: public search engines: Google Scholar and Google with key search words used as "medical-care services". Additionally, SWOT analysis of medical-care services in Bangladesh was conducted. Finally, under Consumer Choice Theory Lens, this study cross-examines the claim "a patient works for a doctor when the patient visits a doctor for medical-care services" in literature (Rahman, 2020).

## Results

The Bangladesh medical-care services were analyzed for different components of the system where medical-care services are provided mainly in two faucets: Government Sector and Private Sector. The medical-care system in Bangladesh has full package of strategic plans and policies. Despite this, there is poor implementation and organization along with frail medical-care information systems. The main external factors that drawback the system is the overall economic cost where the private sector is expensive and Govt sector services are limited.

The SWOT Analysis identifies a range of factors under categories of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in medical-care services in Bangladesh. For example, in case of weakness, there is no adequate number of medical-care service-providers in the Govt. Sector. On the other hand, the private sector faces higher costs in multi-faucets where some are justified motivationally.

Today medical-care is the most criticized profession in world-economy country-wise such as Bangladesh. In the private sector, sometimes doctors here are blamed for requiring unnecessary tests of patients for doctor's own monetary gains through service providing companies. In some cases, doctors' efforts are assumed to relate to pharmaceutical-products promotion by writing lengthy prescriptions. Sometimes physicians write medical-test clearance certificates - for example Subrina-ism approaches known in literature (Rahman, 2022).

## Conclusion

In today's world of Tech-advancements to challenges, people mostly behave with business-mentality without considering moral obligations no matter where they reside. In this behavioral changes, service-market, *particularly* medical-care service-market has appeared to be vulnerable country-wise such as Bangladesh. The Bangladesh is a middle-income country in terms of resources and population. Its medical-care service system has strengths and weaknesses. It needs to build on its qualified & good moral values human workforces, stress on its well-designed short & long-term strategies on medical-care system. Government efforts on partnership with external funding institutions and for overcoming challenges on creating the proper health information system, economic support system and centralization of health service and professionals in profession with strict regulations.

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## CHALLENGES AND RISKS OF USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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The current research addresses the issue of “*Challenges and Risks of Using Artificial Intelligence Applications in University Education*” by raising several questions related to how artificial intelligence is used, the challenges and barriers accompanying its use, the associated security and ethical risks, possible strategies to deal with these challenges and risks and how to improve the successful integration of AI in university education. The aim is to explore and understand the extent of AI usage and its impact on the university educational process, identify its benefits, uncover the barriers and challenges, examine the related ethical and security concerns and propose potential strategies and recommendations for improvement and risk mitigation.

The research adopts the descriptive-analytical method, applied through a social survey using a sample of academic staff at Sultan Qaboos University. An electronic questionnaire was used as a data collection tool during the period from May 15 to June 30, 2024. The research aims to reveal the perspectives and attitudes of academics towards the use of generative artificial intelligence in university education and the associated risks. Based on the expected findings, the study will provide suggestions for enhancing the effective use of generative AI applications in higher education.

### **Introduction**

The current research problem, titled “*Challenges and Risks of Using Artificial Intelligence Applications in University Education*”, addresses several key areas by raising questions regarding how artificial intelligence is used, the challenges and barriers accompanying its use, the related security and ethical risks, possible strategies to address these challenges and risks and ways to enhance the successful integration of AI into university education. The aim is to explore and understand the extent of AI usage and its impact on the university educational process, identify its benefits, uncover existing barriers and challenges, examine the ethical and security concerns associated with it and propose potential strategies and recommendations for improvement and risk mitigation.

### **Research Problem**

Amid rapid digital transformation and the increasing reliance of educational institutions on technology to enhance the learning process, artificial intelligence emerges as a potential strategic tool aimed at improving the quality of university education and the overall learning experience. However, the effective integration of AI technologies in university education still faces several challenges and risks that may impact both its effectiveness and ethical use.

This study seeks to examine and analyze how AI is currently used within the university educational environment, identify the barriers hindering its successful integration, explore the associated security and ethical risks and assess the extent to which these factors influence the educational process. Through this examination and analysis, the study aims to develop and propose effective and innovative strategies to overcome these challenges and risks, in order to achieve a successful and impactful integration of AI technologies into university education - ultimately benefiting all stakeholders, including students, academic staff, and the educational community as a whole.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the current use of artificial intelligence in the educational process.
2. To determine the benefits of using AI applications in university education.
3. To identify the challenges hindering the full integration of AI in higher education.
4. To explore the ethical and security issues related to the use of AI technologies in the educational environment.
5. To propose potential strategies and recommendations for minimizing risks and maximizing benefits.

### **Research Questions**

1. How is artificial intelligence currently being used in the university educational environment?
2. What challenges and barriers hinder the effective use of AI in education?
3. What are the security and ethical risks associated with the use of AI in university education?
4. What are the possible strategies for addressing these challenges and risks?
5. How can the integration of AI in university education be improved to ensure an effective learning experience?

### **Significance of the Study**

Addressing the topic “*Challenges and Risks of Using Artificial Intelligence in University Education*” is particularly important in light of the technological revolution currently reshaping the educational process. This research provides an in-depth exploration to understand both the potential and the risks associated with using AI technologies in the educational environment. Such understanding may lead to the development of new strategies that enhance the effectiveness of these tools and reduce potential gaps.

### **Research Methodological Procedures**

1. **Theoretical Research:** Reviewing literature and previous studies related to the topic to establish a strong theoretical foundation for the research scope.
2. **Research Design:** Developing a questionnaire aimed at collecting data from university students and faculty members.
3. **Data Collection:** Distributing the questionnaire and gathering responses from the selected sample.
4. **Data Analysis:** Using appropriate statistical methods to analyze responses and extract results.
5. **Assumptions and Hypotheses:** Testing assumptions and hypotheses based on the analysis results.
6. **Findings and Recommendations:** Presenting the findings and offering recommendations based on the study results.

### **General Findings and Recommendations**

The findings reveal that faculty members generally hold a positive attitude toward the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in enhancing the quality of higher education. However, there are clear concerns regarding its potential impact on academic integrity, fairness in assessment and creativity. Therefore, it is recommended to establish clear educational policies that guide the use of AI in a way that harnesses its technological potential while safeguarding core academic values. Raising ethical awareness among both students and faculty is also essential to ensure the responsible and informed use of AI tools.

There is also strong support among faculty members for integrating AI in ways that enable personalized learning, strengthen security standards and foster a data-driven educational environment. Key recommendations include evaluating the impact of AI, tailoring learning experiences to individual needs, offering continuous professional development and building strong partnerships with industry. These steps reflect a shared commitment to developing an innovative and sustainable learning environment that uses AI thoughtfully and effectively.



Moreover, the analysis shows a broad consensus on the need for a comprehensive approach to AI integration in higher education. It is recommended that academic institutions adopt long-term strategies focused on capacity building, infrastructure development and the formulation of responsible policies. These efforts should aim to enhance the quality of the learning experience while respecting individual differences among both students and faculty.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, applications of artificial intelligence, university education, risks, challenges.

## THE PRACTICE OF VOLUNTEERING IN THE STRENGTHENING OF SOCIAL POLICIES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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With a focus on social work specifically, this paper examines the complementary function that volunteering plays in strengthening social policy within local governments. This study contends that volunteering enhances, rather than replaces, the role of subject-matter specialists, defying the notion that greater volunteerism may lessen the need for professional expertise. By serving as intermediaries between beneficiaries and experts, volunteers can increase communication, build trust and make services more relevant and easily accessible. Thus, local volunteer practices improve the effectiveness and productivity of social protection for vulnerable populations, including women, girls, migrants, the elderly, individuals with disabilities and children and teenagers.

Volunteering is seen as a type of micro-level engagement that allows people to co-create social realities and establish mutual recognition in ordinary settings. It is based on Simmel's theory (1950) of social interaction. Volunteers mediate between experts and beneficiaries by virtue of their close proximity and embeddedness in local environments, fostering empathy, trust and more context-sensitive solutions. Volunteers assist professionals in creating more effective and long-lasting interventions by utilizing their local expertise and emotional connection to the community. In addition to raising the caliber of services provided, this relational dimension helps make local policymaking processes more responsive and inclusive.

Methodologically, the paper employs a qualitative approach, synthesizing recent comparative studies of local government-led volunteer programs in Türkiye. Some studies in urban Europe reveal how structured volunteering programs - especially those embedded within municipal social work departments - can extend outreach, reinforce professional practices and support community resilience without eroding the standards or ethics of professional care (Brandsen *et al.*, 2016; Voßemer & Heyer, 2022).

Based on the results of the project “Modelling Volunteering Practices in Local Governments” supported by the Turkish Academy of Sciences, this paper discusses how volunteering practices can strengthen social policies and services at the local level.

**Keywords:** Volunteering, social interaction, local government, social policy, social work, urban belonging.

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## INTERSECTION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING DURING PANDEMICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF PAKISTAN

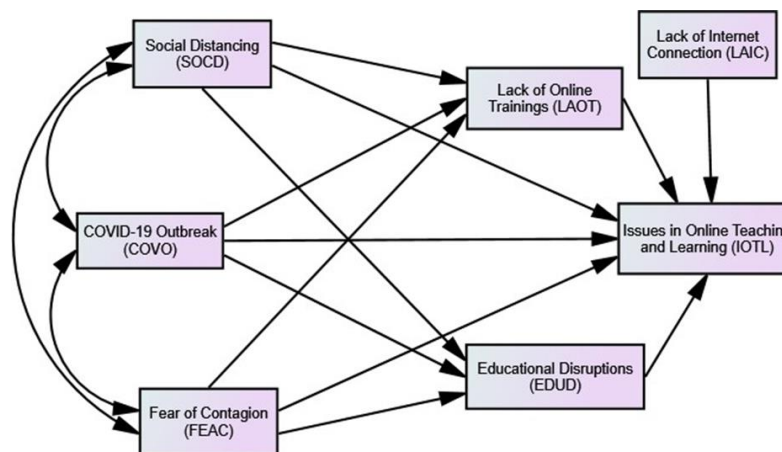
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Pandemics has substantial effects of academic institutions the world over. Enclosure of universities was deemed to curtail the pandemic effects. Thus, universities shifted the learning activities to online mode. This article aimed to know the educational disruption due to pandemics in academic institutions and sheds light on the issues faced in switching to the online mode in universities of Pakistan. I used quantitative research design in positivist traditions by employing an online survey method. A questionnaire was designed and shared with 12870 students and teachers in different public sector universities. A total of 2384 responded. Findings of the study revealed a fear of contagion among teachers at university which resulted in educational disruption. Likewise, the study findings also indicated that lack of online training and internet connectivity also marred the learning and teaching process. The study suggests that online processes are vital in the current uncertain and challenging time. It may reduce the loss of time, finance and enhance educational activities. Further, online training and internet connectivity should be improved to promote the education process of Pakistan as well as other developing regions of the world.

**Keywords:** Fear, contagion, online learning, teaching, pandemics COVID-19.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework

## THE INFLUENCE OF AI-ENABLED SERVICE QUALITY AND E-WOM ON CUSTOMER TRUST: A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL SERVICES

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The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in service industries is reshaping consumer experiences, particularly in social service sectors where trust and engagement are critical. This study examines how AI-enabled service quality and electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) influence customer trust and contribute to the sustainable adoption of social services. As digital innovations continue to transform service accessibility, understanding these technological drivers is essential for building trust-based, consumer-centric service models. Quantitative research approach was used and data was collected from 500 respondents through structured survey. Finally, this paper analyzes the relationships between AI-enabled service quality, E-WOM, customer trust and repurchase intention based on PLS-SEM. The results show that customer trust is facilitated by both AI enabled service quality and E-WOM, which improves the repurchase intention. Furthermore, customer trust mediates the relationships between AI-enabled service quality, E-WOM and repurchase intention. At the end, these insights inform future social service providers, policymakers and also the technology driven initiatives about the importance of ethical AI deployment, transparent communication with the help of AI and the trust building strategies. Using AI and digital engagement well can help social services heighten trust and ensure a sustainable long term. Further research on AI is needed to find industry specific applications and regulatory challenges and to investigate other moderating factors of AI's contribution to sustainable social service ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence (AI), social services, electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM).

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## THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACTS OF DEPORTATION FROM WESTERN AZERBAIJAN

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### **Introduction**

The call made by the country's leader holds significant importance. The issue highlighted by the President, which he emphasized and urged attention to, concerns the historical and cultural heritage of Azerbaijanis who were forced to leave historical Azerbaijani lands such as Irevan, Goycha and Zangezur and are now residing in the present territory of Azerbaijan. The historic victory achieved in the Patriotic War opened new horizons for our people, laying the foundation for a new phase in their destiny. The victory and achievements gained in the 44-day war provided a powerful push for the national self-awareness, national revival and the filling of a long-standing gap in our historiography. This, in turn, created the necessity for the study and promotion of the issue of Western Azerbaijan

### **History of Western Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijanis have been living in the present-day territory of Armenia since the 2nd century BC. In the early 19th century, under the influence of major powers, treaties such as the Kurekchay (1805), Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) agreements and later the Edirne Peace Treaty (1829) between Türkiye and Iran, facilitated the mass relocation of Armenians to Azerbaijan's lands.

As a result of the Armenians' migration to the Caucasus, especially to Western Azerbaijan, the "Armenian Province" (1828-1848) was established and the Armenian population was artificially increased. As part of the policy to Armenize the region, Azerbaijanis in the areas of Irevan, Goycha, Zangezur and Zengibasar were subjected to deportation and genocide.

The mechanical increase in the number of Armenian settlers, backed by major powers with vested interests in the region, led to the proclamation of an Armenian state on May 28, 1918. This declaration was made by the nationalist "Dashnak" party and its supporters within the territory of the former Irevan Khanate-historically Azerbaijani lands. In 1921, as a result of Bolshevik policies, a portion of Zangezur district was transferred to the newly formed Armenian SSR, effectively isolating Nakhchivan from Azerbaijan.

### **Social Impact of the 1905-1907 Deportations**

The first mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from Western Azerbaijan took place between 1905 and 1906. Armed Armenian groups carried out massacres and forcibly expelled Azerbaijanis from their ancestral lands (Arzumanli & Mustafa, 1998).

During this wave of deportation, not only were Azerbaijani homes destroyed, but over 50 mosques, 41 shrines, 5 madrasahs, 1 school and 150 cemeteries were also demolished. Many Azerbaijanis were killed, while survivors were forced to flee. Women and children, in particular, suffered severe psychological trauma due to the deportation.

Although many Azerbaijanis attempted to rebuild their lives and homes after the conflict, the long-term social effects of genocide and deportation continued to impact the community.

### **Social Impact of the 1918-1920 Deportations**

One of the most extensive massacres of Azerbaijanis in history occurred between 1918 and 1920. Following the collapse of the Russian Empire, the Armenian National Council, based in Tbilisi, declared the establishment of the Republic of Ararat on May 28, 1918, with Irevan as its capital. The declared state was historically Azerbaijani land, with a majority Azerbaijani population.

Before 1918, approximately 575,000 Muslims lived in what is now Armenia. By 1920, only slightly more than 10,000 Azerbaijanis remained. Under Soviet rule, by 1922, only about 100,000 Azerbaijanis managed to return to their historical homeland (Aliyev, 2004). During the 1918-1920 massacres, Azerbaijani settlements were devastated: 400 mosques, 60 Albanian churches, 90 shrines, 17 fortresses, 6 caravanserais and 200 cemeteries were destroyed. Over 1,000 architectural monuments were looted. Homes and mosques were set on fire with people inside and thousands of cultural artifacts belonging to Azerbaijanis were obliterated.

After Soviet rule was established in Armenia, from 1921 onwards, some Azerbaijanis began returning to their lands in Western Azerbaijan.

### **Social Impact of the 1947-1953 Deportations**

On December 27, 1947, the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued Decree No.4083, ordering the forced relocation of Azerbaijani farmers and other residents from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Aras lowland in Azerbaijan SSR. As a result, between 1948 and 1953, 144,654 Azerbaijanis were forcibly deported from Armenia to Azerbaijan. In 1989, the Soviet government issued a decree restoring the rights of peoples deported in the 1940s. However, Azerbaijanis displaced from Armenia between 1948 and 1953 were excluded from this list (Sardarov, 1997).



During this period, over 60 Azerbaijani settlements had their names changed. Under the pretext of resettling incoming Armenians, Armenian authorities settled large numbers of Armenians in areas bordering Nakhchivan.

After Stalin's death, only about half of the displaced population managed to return to their ancestral homes. However, many of their former villages had been occupied or destroyed, leaving them with no choice but to settle in Armenian-dominated areas.

### **Social Impact of the 1987–1991 Deportations**

During the final wave of deportations between 1987 and 1991, over 300,000 Azerbaijanis were forcibly expelled from 22 districts, including 172 Azerbaijani-majority settlements and 89 mixed-population villages. Historical records indicate that 216 Azerbaijanis, including 57 women and 23 children, were murdered. According to investigations submitted to Soviet and Azerbaijani authorities, 203 victims suffered brutal deaths, including 14 shot, 45 beaten to death, 13 burned alive and 131 subjected to severe torture.

### **Azerbaijani Cultural Heritage in Western Azerbaijan**

For centuries, Azerbaijanis in Western Azerbaijan built a rich cultural and historical legacy, reflecting their deep-rooted presence in the region.

However, from 1987 to 1991, following the forced displacement of Azerbaijanis, Armenian authorities seized 234 schools, 214 libraries, 268 cultural centers, 235 medical facilities, 112 kindergartens and 152 public service institutions. Additionally, 223 cemeteries, 600 Albanian churches, 400 mosques, 150 shrines and 1,500 tombstones were systematically vandalized. In total, over 5,000 historical, religious and cultural monuments were either destroyed or appropriated by Armenians.

Today, only the Blue Mosque in Irevan and a few other mosques, altered to resemble Persian (Iranian) mosques, remain as remnants of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage in Armenia. These acts of destruction were driven by racial and religious hatred.

### **Summary**

This systematic process intensified in the 20th century, culminating in the near-total erasure of Azerbaijani presence in Western Azerbaijan. The fact that no Muslim heritage sites were recorded in recent Armenian censuses further supports claims of deliberate historical revisionism.

As time passes, a nation's cultural legacy grows more significant. The cultural heritage created by generations of Azerbaijanis stands as a testament to their historical presence and resilience.

Over the past 200 years, Armenian-occupied Western Azerbaijan has seen its religious and cultural landmarks systematically targeted. Documenting and preserving the Muslim-Turkic cultural heritage of these regions, both in written and visual formats, remains of great importance.

**Keywords:** Western Azerbaijan, appropriation, material and cultural heritage.

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## SECTION III

### Education, Research, Inequality

#### WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES IN AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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The 2005 earthquake in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), particularly the devastating impact on the state, highlighted the critical role of women in social work during and after disaster response. This paper explores the evolving contributions of women in social work post-earthquake, focusing on their involvement in community mobilization, relief efforts and long-term rehabilitation. Women, as caregivers and community leaders, exhibited resilience and innovation, addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly and survivors of gender-based violence. I used qualitative research design and conducted an exploratory research. I collected data, conducted interview of 20 women, by means of interview guide while using purposive sampling technique. Their roles in recovery extended beyond traditional care, encompassing policy advocacy, mental health support and the promotion of gender-sensitive approaches to rebuilding. This study emphasizes how women in social work not only provided immediate relief but also contributed to reshaping disaster response frameworks, integrating a gendered perspective into humanitarian aid. It argues that the post-2005 earthquake context provided a platform for women's empowerment within the social work profession, promoting greater inclusion of gender-specific strategies in disaster management and social recovery efforts. The paper concludes by highlighting the significance of gender-inclusive policies in disaster response and the growing importance of women in shaping the future of social work in disaster-prone regions.

**Keywords:** Social work, women, earthquake, inclusion, empowerment.

## INTEGRATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS INTO SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF KAZAKHSTAN

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Social work, as a relatively new profession, is going through a period of institutionalization in Kazakhstan. In this process, professional social workers become an important element for the implementation of international conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. In addition, they play a significant role in the implementation of the European Agenda for the Protection of Human Rights and Children's Rights, as well as in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Kazakhstan.

Social work is directly linked to 117 of the 169 SDG indicators, which is about 70% of all goals, which emphasizes its critical importance in the global sustainable development agenda. One of the main areas of social work is the fight against poverty, inequality, unemployment and violence. Social workers help people overcome life's difficulties, provide access to social services, protect the rights of citizens and promote their integration into society. An important aspect is the human rights approach, which helps to minimize discrimination and ensures equal opportunities for all.

Social work has a significant impact on the political and social structure of society, playing an important role in the implementation of the SDGs, especially those related to children and families. In this regard, authors such as Marti Haidar et al. (2023), emphasize the need to develop educational programs, support the professional development of specialists, create networks and provide financial assistance. Incorporating the SDGs into social work curricula will enable students to take these goals into account in their professional activities, which in turn will contribute to the successful implementation of social change.

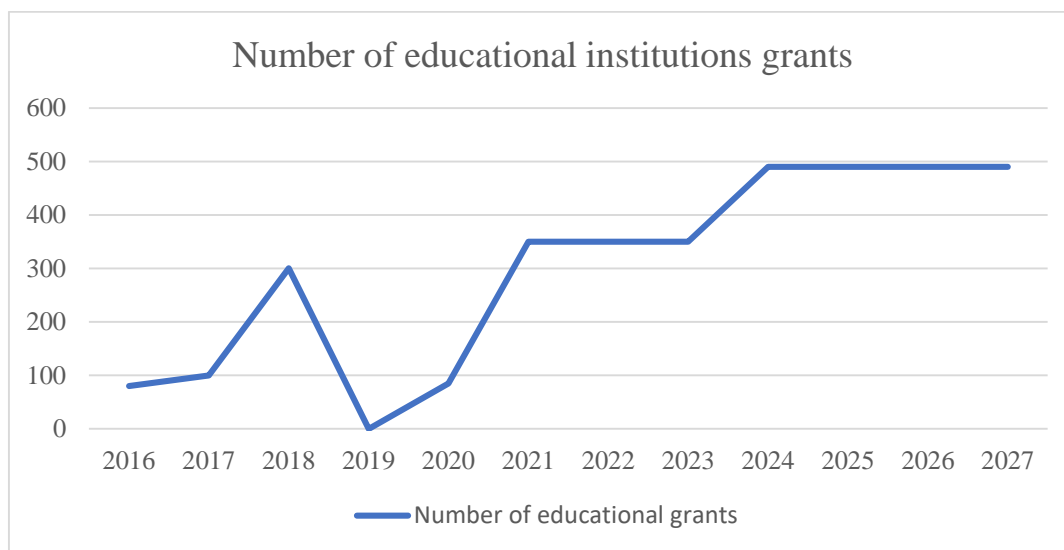
According to Marti Haidar et al. (2023), social workers play a key role in achieving the SDGs for several reasons. First, they are trusted members of their communities and have a deep understanding of people's needs. Second, social workers are trained in health and mental well-being, which is critical in crisis situations. Third, they actively advocate for social justice, improved policies and work with survivors of violence that worsens in isolation. Fourth, social

workers help meet people's basic needs and contribute to addressing social challenges in communities. Fifth, they collect and share data, sharing best practices and experiences to shape effective social policies.

Truell (2019), analysing trends in the development of the social work profession, notes the expected growth of this profession and justifies its importance in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In his opinion, the work of social workers contributes to reducing crime, improving public health, expanding educational and employment opportunities, which in turn brings economic benefits from investment in social services. He also emphasizes that community's function more effectively when they are supported to develop independently and their ability to control their lives is fundamental to the realization of human rights.

Thus, given the importance of social work for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, a system for training specialists in this field is actively developing in Kazakhstan.

The National Alliance of Professional Social Workers (NAPSW), which was established in 2019 and initiated the establishment of the Association of Schools of Social Work (ASSW) in 2022, plays a key role in this process. These initiatives contribute to the promotion and strengthening of social work education in the country. In December 2022, NAPW joined the International Federation of Social Workers, which demonstrates the high level of recognition of the profession and efforts to develop it in Kazakhstan.



**Figure 1.** Number of educational grants for training specialists in the field of “Social Work”

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of educational grants for training specialists in the field of “Social Work”.

If in 2016 only 80 grants were allocated for this specialty and in 2017 - 100 grants, then in 2018 their number increased to 300 grants.

However, in 2019 there was a sharp decline: initially, not a single grant was allocated for either undergraduate or graduate studies. Later, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) redistributed 85 grants from the reserve.

From 2021 to 2023, the situation improved significantly - 350 grants for undergraduate studies and 60 grants for master's studies were allocated annually, for a total of 1,050 grants for undergraduate studies and 180 for master's studies in three years.

The amount of support continues to grow in the period 2024-2027. Each year, 490 grants will be allocated for undergraduate studies (1,470 grants in total over four years), 60 grants for master's studies (180 grants for the entire period) and for the first time, 5 grants per year are provided for the doctoral program, 15 in total. These changes indicate that the relevance of social work in Kazakhstan in light of the implementation of the SDGs and international standards is becoming increasingly evident. Despite the fact that in recent decades Kazakhstan has been actively working on the institutionalization of social work, the training of specialists in this field remains insufficiently covered at the level of all regions of the country. Currently, training of social workers is conducted in 12 out of 20 regions and in 9 out of 20 universities, which emphasizes the need for further expansion and standardization of education in this field.

An important step in improving the training of specialists is the analysis of educational programs in social work which was conducted by the authors of this study. For this purpose, the method of content analysis of educational programs was used, which allowed for a systematic assessment of current practices of training specialists in social work in Kazakhstan. The study also used a comparative analysis and expert interviews with representatives of educational institutions and professional associations, which allowed for identifying strengths and areas for improvement in existing educational standards.

Based on the analysis, the authors offer recommendations for improving educational standards and approaches in Kazakhstan, taking into account global trends and best practices in the field of social work. This study has high practical significance, since it suggests ways to improve the quality of education and enhance the professionalism of social workers, which contributes to the successful implementation of Kazakhstan's international obligations, including the UN goals for the protection of human rights and children's rights.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development goals, social work, institutionalization, human rights-based approach, educational programs, standards.

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## CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TO WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AZERBAIJAN

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Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. GBV is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world, including Azerbaijan. It knows no social, economic or national boundaries and is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. While GBV is not limited to violence against women and girls, according to data from 2021, almost one in every three women, or approximately 736 million women in the world, have been subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence or both at least once in their lifetime (WHO, 2021). Globally 81,000 women and girls were killed in 2020, around 47,000 of them (58 percent) died at the hands of an intimate partner or a family member, which equals a woman or girl being killed every 11 minutes in their home (UNODC, 2021).

According to the information provided by the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the gender distribution of victims of crimes related to domestic violence in 2023 is as shown in the table below (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2023).

Types of crime	Percentage of total		Percentage	
	women	men	women	men
Intentional homicide	4.2	6.6	72.9	27.1
Attempted homicide	1.4	1.0	85.0	15.0
Intentional serious harm to health	2.2	9.0	50.9	49.1
Intentional less serious harm to health	5.7	7.6	76.1	23.9
Intentional slight harm to health	84.6	73.0	83.1	16.9
Inflicting suffering	0.5	-	100.0	-
Other	1.4	2.8	69.2	30.8
Total, percentage	100.0	100.0	80.9	19.1
people	1224	289	x	x

The states' commitment to prevent GBV is determined by international human rights standards. In this context, one of the pivotal documents is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was ratified by Azerbaijan on 10



July 1995. Although The Council of Europe's (CE) Istanbul Convention has not yet been either signed or ratified, the country has undertaken commitments to reduce violence against women in the frame of CEDAW and other international conventions signed and ratified. The Government of Azerbaijan has voiced a commitment to combat GBV through the adoption of Law on Safeguarding Gender Equality (2006) and the Law on Preventing Domestic Violence (<https://e-ganun.az/framework/20131>), which was followed in 2020 by the adoption of the National Action Plan (NAP) on Preventing and Addressing Domestic Violence for 2020-2023 that outlines a strategy to facilitate a multi-sectoral approach to addressing GBV through prevention and response interventions.

The Law on Preventing Domestic Violence outlines the establishment of support services, including centers for survivors of DV. According to Articles 14 and 15 of the Law, the measures in combating DV include the arrangement of social protection of the survivors, assisting them in getting relevant papers and social allowances established by the law; assisting the survivors in continuation of their education; rendering assistance to the survivors in employment and learning new trades; rendering medical care to the survivors at public expense; the arrangement of psychological rehabilitation courses for the survivors; creation of support centers for survivors; taking measures for providing survivors with social care; providing survivors with legal aid at public expense.

In Azerbaijan, GBV services, such as crisis support, counselling, referrals, outreach services, information and/or support through hotlines are provided both by the public and non-public organizations.

GBV case management, which is based on social work case management, is a structured method for providing help to a survivor. It involves one organization, usually a psychosocial support or social services actor, taking responsibility for making sure that survivors are informed of all the options available to them and that issues and problems facing a survivor and her family are identified and followed up in a coordinated way and providing the survivor with emotional support throughout the process.

When assessing the case management procedures and documentation, we referred to the GBV case management process and relevant documentation used in each step of the process, more precisely: Introduction and Engagement; Assessment; Case action planning; Case Plan Implementation; Case Follow-up and Case Closure.

In GBV case management, the assessment involves listening to the survivor to find out what has happened and what the current situation is, giving information and helping the person identify their needs and problems.

Article 11 of the Law of The Republic of Azerbaijan on Social Services states the following as the procedure for assessing and determining the need for social services:

11.3. An application for the provision of social services shall be addressed to a social worker within 5 working days of the date of receipt of the application by the relevant executive authority for the assessment and determination of the person's (family's) need for social services. The social worker shall assess and determine the person's (family's) need for social services within 10 working days of the date of receipt of the application.

11.4. A report on the assessment and determination of the need for social services, reflecting the form, type, place and duration of the provision of social services and an individual plan for the provision of social services to the person (family) shall be prepared by the social worker.

Article 9 of the Law of The Republic of Azerbaijan on Prevention of Domestic Violence deals with the procedure for considering a complaint if there are no signs of a criminal offense in the complaint about domestic violence.

“A complaint about domestic violence shall be considered by the relevant executive authority of the place of residence (stay) of the victim within 5 (five) days, taking into account the requirements of Articles 6.3 and 8 of this Law and in the case provided for in Article 11.2 of this Law, within 24 hours from the time of the application”.

A case action plan is a simple written plan specifying what action needs to be taken, by whom and when. In compliance with the Regulations, the case action plan (individual assistance plan) is designed by state or non-state assistance services. However, it is a bit confusing whether the case action plan is developed by the assistance services or the shelters. Thus, according to Article 2.7.4 of Regulations on the placement of persons (families) in difficult living conditions in state social service institutions (5 November 2013), following a short-term (3 days) initial rehabilitation service at the assistance center, a relevant act is issued confirming whether or not DV happened and the survivor is admitted to the shelter in accordance with the person's request and the individual case plan prepared by the social worker. It seems that a case action plan is prepared before admission to the shelter according to these regulations.

Overall, substantial gaps are observed in GBV case management system across the national level in Azerbaijan. While some service providers apply fragments of the case management procedures, the lack of standardized and cohesive practice is evident. The absence of an established referral system, including local pathways that safely link the survivors to qualified services according to their consent and lack of procedures for identifying, responding and clearly outlining the steps in referring survivors to appropriate services impedes the overall effectiveness of coordinated efforts to respond to GBV. Moreover, the lack of interagency or institutionally approved standard operating procedures (SOPs) for GBV case management, including step-by-step instructions on the management of cases requiring the coordination of services provided by social protection institutions, health, justice, police and NGOs hampers the ability to establish an efficient response system and to ensure a survivor-centered and Do No Harm approach.

While existing national law emphasizes the importance of confidentiality, the absence of GBV case management protocols on the safe and ethical management of GBV information poses potential risks to confidentiality. Ensuring data protection and privacy, as well as informed consent are critical aspects that require attention to establish a survivor-centric framework for responding to the needs of GBV survivors. Furthermore, the malfunction of the current database on DV and the absence of accurate data collection among stakeholders restrict access to reliable and exact data on reported cases and services provided.

Although some stakeholders have forms such as registration, initial assessment and case action plans on GBV, none of them have SOPs or internal protocols on GBV case management. Considering the existing gap, the government included interventions in support of improving the case management system, including increasing the qualification of the social workers and the establishment of electronic data management into the National Action Plan 2023-2026 on Development of Social Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan (August 28, 2023).

As per the research, neither institutional minimum standards nor interagency protocols or standard operating procedures (SOPs) on GBV case management are established in the country. Setting minimum standards and developing SOPs are essential for establishing a common understating of a standardized set of procedures for achieving and providing adequate GBV response, ensuring consistency in GBV support and enhancing the accountability of service providers, as well as all actors involved in GBV prevention and response programming.

If to look at the big picture, referring to the steps of case management defined by Interagency GBV Case Management Guidelines it can be said that there is no adequate and systematic case management process in GBV response in Azerbaijan. There are fragments of the case management process applied by different service providers, such as conducting an initial assessment, receiving consent for services and designing case action plans.

In conclusion, addressing the barriers and gaps reflected in this assessment and establishing a standardized GBV case management system and referral mechanisms is imperative for effective GBV response and well-being of survivors in Azerbaijan.

**Keywords:** Gender-based violence, case management, social worker, assessment, action plan.

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Interagency Gender-Based Violence Case Management Guidelines (2017).

# **INTEGRATING MODERN TECHNOLOGY INTO SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: ENHANCING LEARNING AND PRACTICE IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

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Integrating modern technology into social work education is essential for preparing future professionals to navigate the complexities of the digital age. By incorporating tools such as online learning platforms, virtual simulations and mobile applications, educators can create dynamic and interactive learning environments. These technologies not only enhance theoretical understanding but also provide practical skills through real-world scenarios.

For instance, virtual simulations allow students to engage in role-playing exercises that mimic real-life social work situations, fostering critical thinking and decision-making skills. Additionally, online resources enable access to a wealth of information and diverse perspectives, enriching the educational experience.

Moreover, technology facilitates collaboration among students and professionals across geographical boundaries, promoting a global understanding of social issues. As social work increasingly intersects with technology, integrating these tools into education ensures that graduates are well-equipped to meet the challenges of contemporary practice and advocate effectively for their clients.

## **Introduction**

In today's rapidly evolving world, the integration of modern technology into social work education has become increasingly vital. As social workers face complex challenges that often intersect with digital landscapes, it is essential for educational programs to adapt and equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge. The digital age presents unique opportunities for enhancing learning experiences, fostering collaboration, and improving practice outcomes (Brown & Smith, 2020).

Technology can transform traditional teaching methods, allowing for a more interactive and engaging curriculum. Online learning platforms, for instance, provide flexibility and accessibility, enabling students to learn at their own pace while accessing a wealth of resources. Virtual

simulations and case studies can immerse students in realistic scenarios, helping them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills essential for effective practice.

Furthermore, the use of mobile applications and social media can facilitate communication and outreach, allowing future social workers to connect with clients and communities in innovative ways. By embracing these tools, educators can prepare students to navigate the complexities of modern social work, ensuring they are equipped to address the diverse needs of the populations they serve (Davis & Thompson, 2022).

Ultimately, integrating technology into social work education not only enhances the learning experience but also prepares graduates to thrive in a digital world, making a meaningful impact in their communities and beyond.

## Methods

Integrating modern technology into social work education requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses various methods to enhance learning and practice (Anderson, 2021).

Here are several effective strategies:

1. **Blended Learning Models:** Combining traditional classroom instruction with online components allows for a flexible learning environment. Students can engage with course materials at their own pace while benefiting from face-to-face interactions with instructors and peers. This hybrid approach fosters deeper understanding and retention of knowledge.

2. **Virtual Simulations:** Utilizing virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies can create immersive learning experiences. Students can participate in simulated client interactions, allowing them to practice assessment and intervention skills in a safe environment. These simulations can replicate diverse scenarios, helping students develop cultural competence and empathy.

3. **Online Collaborative Tools:** Platforms like discussion forums, video conferencing, and collaborative document editing enable students to work together on projects, share insights, and engage in peer learning. This fosters a sense of community and encourages diverse perspectives, which are crucial in social work practice.

4. **Mobile Applications:** Incorporating mobile technology into the curriculum can enhance accessibility to resources and support. Apps designed for case management, mental health assessments, or community resources can be integrated into coursework, allowing students to familiarize themselves with tools they will use in their professional practice.

5. **Social Media Engagement:** Encouraging students to use social media for professional networking and advocacy can enhance their understanding of contemporary social issues. By engaging with organizations and communities online, students can learn about current trends and challenges in the field.

**6. Data Analytics and Research Tools:** Teaching students to utilize data analytics software can enhance their ability to assess community needs and evaluate program effectiveness. Familiarity with research methodologies and data interpretation is essential for evidence-based practice.

By employing these methods, social work education can effectively prepare students for the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age, ensuring they are equipped to make a positive impact in their communities (Johnson, 2020).

## **Results**

The integration of modern technology into social work education has yielded significant positive outcomes. Students have reported enhanced engagement and motivation, largely due to the interactive nature of blended learning models and virtual simulations. These methods have not only improved their understanding of theoretical concepts but also provided practical skills that are directly applicable in real-world settings.

Feedback from students indicates that virtual simulations, in particular, have been instrumental in building confidence and competence in handling complex client interactions. By practicing in a controlled environment, students feel better prepared to face the challenges of their future roles. Additionally, the use of online collaborative tools has fostered a sense of community among students, promoting teamwork and diverse perspectives that are essential in social work practice (Carter, 2019).

Moreover, the incorporation of mobile applications and social media has expanded students' understanding of contemporary issues and resources available in the field. They have become adept at utilizing technology for outreach and advocacy, which is increasingly important in today's digital landscape.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the integration of modern technology into social work education is not merely an enhancement; it is a necessity in preparing future professionals for the complexities of the digital age. The methods employed-ranging from blended learning and virtual simulations to mobile applications and social media engagement-have proven effective in enriching the educational experience (Lee, 2021).

As social work continues to evolve, embracing technology will enable educators to equip students with the skills and knowledge required to navigate the challenges of contemporary practice. By fostering critical thinking, cultural competence, and effective communication, technology integration prepares graduates to make meaningful contributions to their communities. Ultimately, the successful incorporation of these tools not only enhances learning outcomes but

also ensures that social workers are well-prepared to advocate for and support the diverse populations they serve in an increasingly interconnected world.

**Keywords:** Social work, education, modern technology, digital learning, online training.

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## **BETWEEN OPPORTUNITY AND CONCERN: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON AI IN EDUCATION - VOICES FROM SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY**

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Amid rapid digital transformations, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a vital tool in the development of modern educational systems. AI is expected to enhance learning quality, personalize content delivery and improve the efficiency of academic assessments. Despite these promising capabilities, students' perceptions-whether of acceptance or rejection-remain a crucial factor in the successful integration of AI into educational practices.

This study aimed to explore the attitudes of social work students toward the acceptance of AI in education, identifying both perceived benefits and potential challenges that may hinder its use. The research was conducted on a sample of 40 undergraduate students from the Department of Sociology and Social Work, College of Arts and Social Sciences, at Sultan Qaboos University.

Data were collected using an electronic questionnaire covering several key dimensions: awareness of AI tools, trust and acceptance, perceived impact on learning quality and concerns about ethical and technical issues. The results revealed that the majority of participants held positive attitudes toward the use of AI, with over 80% expressing comfort and trust in its effectiveness, particularly in areas such as research writing and data analysis. Prior experience with digital tools appeared to reinforce acceptance. However, the most prominent concerns were related to plagiarism risks, weakened critical thinking and limited institutional support.

The study recommends enhancing academic awareness and training regarding the use of AI tools, alongside providing institutional support to ensure the responsible and effective integration of AI within educational contexts.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Social work education, student attitudes, higher education, ethical concerns, Sultan Qaboos University.



## **GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE AS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL DISCOURSE**

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It is known that high-quality organization of the activities of the social worker institution presupposes high communication skills, multifaceted training of representatives of this profession. Since, in modern society, a social worker (as an institution as a whole and not a specific social worker) is a representative of society responsible for organizing the high-quality life of the most vulnerable groups of the population: women, children, representatives of the older generation, migrants and refugees, as well as people with alternative (non-binary) gender identity. It is not surprising that, at the origins of the formation of the social worker institution, there were largely public activists, fighters for gender equality. In particular, we can note the names of such outstanding feminists and fighters for women's rights as Dorothy Height, Frances Perkins, Janet Rankin and many others (<https://onlinemsw.fsu.edu/blog/social-worker-role>). It is also known that many activists of the transgender movement are involved in social work to some extent.

Social work with this limited group of the population requires the employee of this institution to have special training in the field of new gender terminology, which has long been not limited to the dichotomy that distinguishes between binary and non-binary gender identity. A modern representative of this profession should be aware of new subgroups of people with non-traditional gender identity, such as intersex people, gender radicals, transvestites. A person who is not aware of the specified gender classification will find it difficult to build high-quality communication with representatives of the specified (vulnerable, in terms of social work) group of the population.

It is known that the ethical code of a social worker clearly states the requirement for representatives of this profession on the importance of adequate gender characteristics of representatives of the queer community (<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>). Focusing on this aspect of the work of a social worker, Roy and Dey (2023) in their study “Social Work Practice with the Trans Community” note the importance of special professional training of a social worker (including deep awareness of gender neologisms: intersex people, transsexuals, lesbians, bi-genders, cross-dressing married males, transvestites, gender radicals, drag kings and queens, gender-blenders, queers, gender queers).

Whalley (2016), being a representative of the transgender community, as well as a social worker, attaches particular importance to the choice of pronouns in communication with people

with non-traditional gender identity (instead of the accepted, traditional: He / She, gender-neutral language offers alternative pronouns: Ze / They, respectively derivatives of the latter: Hir / Them (instead of: Him or Her), also: His or Hers (instead of: Hirs / Theirs).

The special, let even say, exaggerated sensitivity of Western (including American) society to the problem of presentation and self-presentation of people with non-binary identity, has introduced some chaos into gender terminology. Since the excess of new forms of address sometimes forces social workers to make rash decisions: to confuse gender terminology or elements of social deixis (a new format of pronouns) (for more details on this problem, see: (Heffernan *et al.*, 2023).

However, social workers should come to the aid of queer community representatives without any judgment and if possible, avoiding voicing their personal (different) opinion. In this process, the use of a certain conditional inclusive language plays an important role. Inclusive language, in other words, gender-neutral language recognizes the gender identity of all people (regardless of sexual or other preferences) and also offers a format for tolerant communication. As declared in the guide to building high-quality communication between social workers and representatives of the queer community: a social worker should avoid unacceptable terms and pronouns and use only those words and expressions to describe the sexual and gender identity (characteristic features of behavior, life activities, etc.) of representatives of the queer community that they themselves consider acceptable (<https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jjq0-NcZIU0%3d&portalid=0>).

Social workers in the United States, like their colleagues around the world, in some degree depend on the decisions of the political establishment in building the format of their work. It is not surprising that a change in the political situation inevitably entails a change in the format of work, including the vocabulary of a social worker. In this regard, it is predictable that social workers in the near future may say goodbye to the fragmented classification of gender identity, since the newly elected US President D. Trump has clearly vetoed the use of other verbal markers of determining gender, except for traditional gender terms: man and woman (Luhby, 2025).

In this respect, it is expected that in the near future the American gender discourse may undergo significant changes. Taking into consideration the role of American society in the global world and in the global gender discourse, these changes will subsequently affect the gender discourses of other national societies.

**Keywords:** Gender discourse, social worker, social worker's code of ethics, gender-neutral language, gender neologisms, social deixis.

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## AI AND DIGITAL FRONTIERS: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

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The role of Social Work Education and Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence) along with digital technologies has changed in a Social Work division as a result of new opportunities emerging to enhance service provision, education and even client results. This study looked at the reasons why social workers adopt AI technology through the lenses of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theories, evaluate the ethical implications for AI adoption and estimate the effects the AI adoption has within social work practice. This study filled a sociological gap in understanding the benefits and problems of the adoption of AI technology with special attention to ensuring that the technology is used in a reasonable manner within the social work profession. This study relies on two concepts in order to achieve the objectives of the concept.

In order to understand the ramifications of AI on social work practice, the researcher employs Davis' (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which provides justification for accepting the application of AI technology in social work.

According to Yazadanpanahi et al. (2024), TAM claims that the adoption of new technologies by an individual depends on their perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Now, there is increasing evidence that social work practitioners are willing to use AI tools in their practice if these tools are helpful and effective (Wassal *et al.*, 2024). AI applications, such as predictive analytics and virtual case management, have significantly improved decision-making and service delivery in social work practice (Singer *et al.*, 2023). Although these technologies can enhance social work practice, issues such as data privacy, ethical and political concerns and the digital divide hinder the adoption of these technologies (Osasona *et al.*, 2024).

Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI) is especially pertinent in this case because it clarifies the phenomenon of diffusion artificial intelligence social work. DOI claims that new technologies are integrated and accepted within a specific area of work via social relations and lists relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability as some of the basic components (Uzumcu & Acilmis, 2024).

The adoption of AI in social work is greatly motivated by its relative advantage in automating administrative processes and engaging clients as well as enhancing predictive assessment

(Neumann *et al.*, 2024). In any case, the adoption of these technologies is constrained by the reluctance to this level of implementation due to the severe intricacy of these systems and the neglect of adequate training programs (Aderibigbe *et al.*, 2023). Some of the literature reviewed suggests that such social work institutions are adopting AI and assuming the role of change agents and lead users in the organizations as they promote the acquisition of digital competencies and encourage their peers to adopt the changes (Kelly *et al.*, 2023).

The ethical issues surrounding AI, in particular, continue to be an area of concern even with its benefits, as noted by Oye *et al.* (2024). Providing social services through the aid of AI can deepen existing biases and inequalities if not properly managed. With Extreme Confidentiality, Informed Consent and Algorithmic Transparency as ethical boundaries, Fernando and Ranasinghe (2023) argue that AI must also adhere to specific ethics. Professional organizations such as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) call for the creation of uniform ethical principles for the use of AI in social work (Ahn *et al.*, 2025).

AI-assisted tutoring systems, digital simulation tools and virtual learning environments are also changing how students learn in social work (Strielkowski *et al.*, 2024). Educators can now change their instructional approaches due to the incorporation of AI learning analytics (Bin-Salem, 2024). Still, students and teachers being ready to embrace technology is not easy and requires specific training courses (Aithal & Aithal, 2023).

Despite the constructive possibilities that AI integration into social work guided by TAM and DOI poses, there are still some issues that need thorough examination. In social work, further studies should be conducted on how to improve the digital skills of practitioners while developing policies that guarantee the ethical use of AI in teaching and practicing social work.

The inclusion of AI and other digital technologies in social work education and practice marks a new era that profoundly affects service delivery, ethical issues and professional development. There is a growing importance of this study as it seeks to prepare social work practitioners for an ever-evolving digital world. This research aids in understanding the impact of AI adoption in social work practice through the established theoretical concepts of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI). Furthermore, the research exposes the ethical problems of AI application regarding social privacy, biases in algorithms and the gap in technology so that implementations are done in accordance with professional and social justice ethics. These insights are expected to enhance responsible policy-making concerning AI in social work, as well as better curriculum design and planning.

In consideration with the objectives of this study, TAM helps assess the concerns social work practitioners have regarding the use of AI- based tools with respect to their perceived ease and usefulness. This assists in formulating strategies to encourage adoption as well as improve the digital skills of social workers. In contrast, DOI provides a broader context understanding the

diffusion of AI innovations within social work departments considering the impact ex-users, institutional sponsorship and acceptance policies of the institution have on its use.

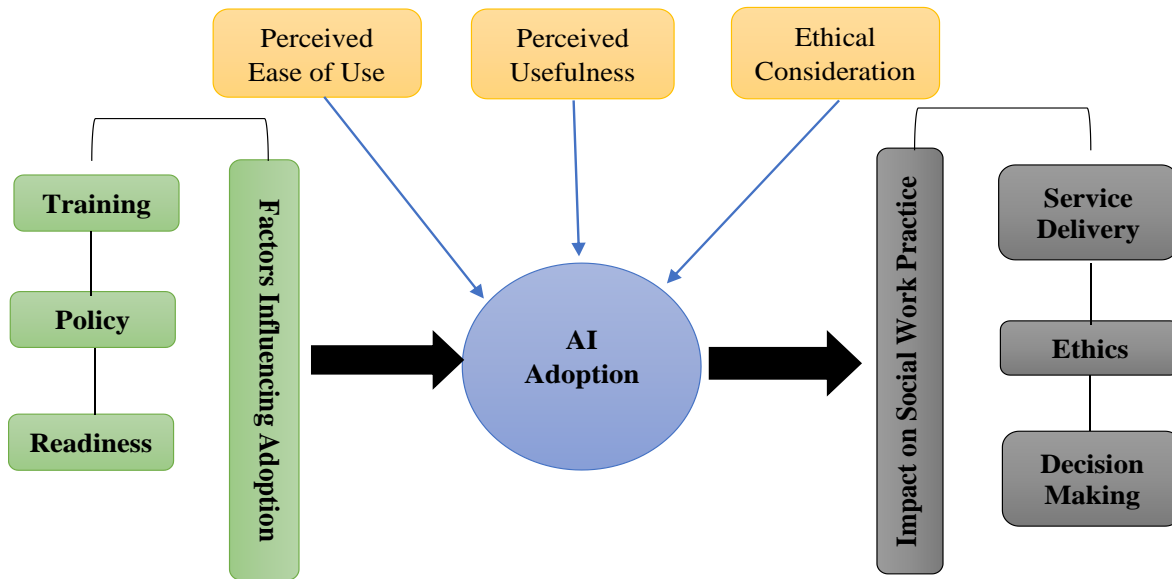
In addition, this research intends to solve the concerns of privacy infringement, algorithmic discrimination and the AI powered gap from the standpoint of social justice ethics and professional responsibilities. This work will seek to inform the policymaking process, curriculum development and aid in setting ethical standards in the use of AI for social work. Using these approaches, the aim of the research is to contribute to the discussion of the use of AI in social work and develop guidelines for its responsible and effective usage.

A comprehensive survey was undertaken with two hundred fifty social work practitioners and educators as part of a mixed method convergent parallel design study. Various demographic and organizational covers were ensured by stratified random sampling.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) along with Diffusion of Innovations Theory served as the exemplar framework fusion, which was beneficial for examining the impact of AI integration in Social Work settings.

This study's conceptual framework was made around the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in social work education and practice with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory. TAM describes the relevance and ethical issues as determinants of AI adoption, while DOI Theory accounts for diffusion and impacts of the profession on practice. Ethical issues operate as a connection between these models, which have to deal with the adoption and social systems integration. The integration of AI in social work changes the provision of services, ethical and professional values and decision-making which makes understanding its acceptance and consequences fundamental.

This research uses a stratified random sampling method for the quantitative survey (which has 250 respondents) to capture equal proportions of university teachers, social work practitioners, policy makers and technology educators. For the qualitative interviews (30 participants), a purposive sample is taken consisting of senior educators, social work managers and AI policy experts, who are chosen based on their professional seniority and the decisions they influence. This approach is useful for illustrating general patterns while also allowing for the capturing of intricate details thereby helping to understand the impact that AI has on the education and practice of social work.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework of the Study

**Table 1.** Population and Sample size of the Study

Data	Population	Sampling Technique	Sample Size
Quantitative	Social work educators & professionals in universities and social service organizations	Stratified Random Sampling	250
Qualitative	Senior professionals in social work education & practice	Purposive Sampling	30

The AI tools usage claim by 68% of the sample is surprising, given the results of the descriptive and regression analyses of the quantitative data collected. Moreover, a statistically significant result correlation was found between the perceived ease of use and actual adoption ( $p < 0.05$ ). To deepen the understanding of the quantitative findings, qualitative interviews were conducted with 30 purposively selected participants. These interviews explored the paradigms of AI application in client decision making and the ethics of client privacy and data disclosure. It also anticipates results where the provision of services and educational achievements will be greatly enhanced by the use of AI, however, ethical dilemmas alongside training and skill inadequacy gaps still linger further. Formulate comprehensive policies on the integration of AI into social work practice with attention on ethical concerns. Additionally, social work education should be reconceptualized to integrate AI competences so that social workers are able to respond to the evolving technological demands in the field.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, social work education, digital technologies, technology acceptance model, diffusion of innovations theory.



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## THE ROLE OF NEW MEDIA IN ADVANCING SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

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New media use in social work education and practice revolutionizes the way students and educators interact with practitioners for service for diverse communities. The present study will explore how these media platforms, including social networking sites, digital storytelling tools and interactive multimedia, support increasing the accessibility, effectiveness and inclusiveness of social work education. This volume illustrates how digital technology may support evidence-based practice, cultural competency and critical thinking through case studies, survey data and new trends. This also brings up some of the practical and ethical issues with new media in this field, such as hurdles to access, differing degrees of computer proficiency and privacy concerns. . Other key recommendations include embedding media literacy into curricula and development of standards for guidelines on ethical engagement in digital ways. Such a finding points out how new media offer a set of competencies to help social workers address some of society's most complex problems in a digitizing world.

**Keywords:** New media, social work education, digital tool, cultural competence, ethics of practice and digital literacy

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## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

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Education plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable development by equipping future social workers with the knowledge, skills and values necessary to address complex social, economic and environmental challenges. This article explores the intersection of social work education and sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of integrating sustainability principles into curricula. It highlights the role of social workers in advocating for social justice, environmental stewardship and community resilience. The article also discusses challenges and opportunities in aligning social work education with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Finally, it offers recommendations for enhancing the contribution of social work education to sustainable development, including interdisciplinary collaboration, community engagement and innovative pedagogical approaches.

**Keywords:** Social work education, sustainable development, community, environmental stewardship.

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## **SOCIAL PRESSURE AND SOCIAL VIOLENCE: CHALLENGES FACED BY CAREER WOMEN**

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Through interactions with their social environment, individuals acquire their identity and establish their place within society. However, this process of socialization can sometimes lead to pressures that limit rather than support an individual's freedom. During the socialization process, individuals are shaped by the cultural and social structures they are a part of. However, this shaping does not always have a positive impact; sometimes it can turn into a pressure that restricts individual freedoms and forces them into certain molds. This pressure, known as peer pressure, social pressure or societal pressure, can directly or indirectly influence individuals to conform to the norms, values and expectations of society. It can be said that women, from childhood, are socialized to live a certain "norm" of life according to roles, molds and expectations set by society and when they deviate from this, they face pressure from both their immediate surroundings and other members of society. This societal pressure that women face can be considered a form of violence against women, as it restricts their ability to freely express themselves, make decisions and have full control over their lives, thus transforming into a kind of social violence. Women face this violence and pressure on individual (continuing education, having a job), social and structural levels. However, being educated, having a career or achieving economic independence is not sufficient for women to fight against this social violence and societal pressure. Based on this, the main focus of this study is to explore the societal pressures that career women face in social life.

In the "World Report on Violence and Health" by Krug et al. (2002), violence is addressed within the ecological model framework at four levels: individual, relational, community and societal. This model demonstrates that violence is not only related to individual factors but also to social and structural dynamics. In this study, the social violence and societal pressure that women experience will be examined within the framework of the ecological model, which includes individual, relational, community and societal levels. The study is designed using a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. The participation criteria for the study are being female, over 35 years old, having at least a bachelor's degree, having a career and being single. These criteria are established to highlight that economic independence and having a career do not fully protect women from societal pressures and social violence. Data for the study will be

collected through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview technique. The collected data will be analysed within the ecological model framework at individual, relational, community and societal levels and themes regarding the dynamics of pressure will be created.

**Keywords:** Social pressure, violence against women, social violence.

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## **BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS IN PAKISTAN**

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Social protection has received immense attention from the researchers across society. It is pertinent to assert that social protection is considered a key measure to reduce poverty and ensure gender equality in society. It is appropriate to mention that despite achieving huge success in some countries, the social protection programs has yet to alleviate poverty and achieve gender equality in Pakistan. Like all other fields, social protection programs are not equally accessible to women and girls in Pakistan. As mentioned by Gondal and Hatta (2024) that the norms and policies are discriminatory that make it difficult for women and girls to have equal access to social protection programs in Pakistan. This is in line with the finding given by Azeem et al. (2019), who stated that women and girls are not even aware of the social protection programs. This study, thus, is an attempt to unpack the gender dimensions of society and its impacts on women and girls access to social protection programs. The study particularly focuses on the barriers that women encounter in the way of availing social protection programs. Women and girls are kept derived from the benefits of the social protection program due to multifaceted and complex reasons. The study has been conducted in line with qualitative research methodology. The data for the study come from 80 respondents. The sample size of 80 respondents was selected through purposive sampling technique. It is pertinent to mention that sample size was not fixed in advance, I kept on intervening the respondents until reaching the point of saturation. In-depth interviews using interview guide with open ended questions were carried out. Each interview lost from 45 to 70 minutes. All the interviews were analysed in line with thematic analysis technique. It is pertinent to mention that, all the six phases of the thematic analysis i.e. transcription, reading, familiarization with data, coding, assigning broader themes and refining the themes were rigorously followed. The study engaged feminist scholarship for informed analysis of the filed data. The main study findings were that women and girls face hindrances which stop them to benefit from the social protection programs. The main themes derived from the interviews were gendered roles, male centred and supportive norms, women economic dependency on family and patriarchy.

**Keywords:** Feminist theory, gendered norms, patriarchy, social protection, gender equality, thematic analysis.

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## SECTION IV

### Addictions and Family Issues

#### TRANSNATIONAL PARENTING: NAVIGATING FAMILY BONDS ACROSS BORDERS

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This paper explores the phenomenon of transnational parenting in Romania, where international migration has led to parents working abroad and children remaining at home. It examines the historical context, defining characteristics and challenges faced by these families. Statistical data from 2008 to 2023 highlights the impact of migration on children left behind. The study emphasizes the role of communication technologies in maintaining family bonds and the renegotiation of gender roles. Cultural influences on parenting practices and resilience strategies adopted by transnational families are also discussed. The findings underscore the importance of family and community support in mitigating the adverse effects of migration on family well-being.

**Keywords:** Transnational families, international migration, parental separation, social services, communication technologies.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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### **Introduction**

In the context of a systemic crisis of the family institution and the weakening of the educational potential of the school, the role of subjects of social and psychological protection at various levels increases, designed to ensure the preservation of the rights of minors, comprehensive support for their psychological and social development and provide assistance in crisis situations (Aliyev et al., 2011; Firsov & Studenova, 2018).

Our work presents a description of the system of psychological knowledge in social work with disadvantaged children and adolescents. The psychological base, social and psychological aspects, as well as the rich social and psychological experience accumulated in practice, comprehensive social assistance to dysfunctional families, prevention of deviant behavior, neglect and homelessness in the children and adolescent environment, support for social orphans and rehabilitation of disabled children are considered.

### **Main part**

Social work with representatives of the most vulnerable categories of minors is considered as the most important tool in achieving the optimal level of well-being of children in society (Bayramov & Alizade, 2002; Ahmadov, 2013).

Many theoretical and applied issues, despite their relevance, are not fully covered in the professional literature. These include the causes of widespread domestic violence and ways to prevent it, social and psychological prevention of violations in the formation of the parental sphere of the individual, leading to the emergence of the phenomenon of social orphanhood, the introduction of new forms of life arrangements for children left without family care, social aspects of early intervention in the comprehensive rehabilitation of children with disabilities and a number of others.

Analyzing these and other pressing issues, we adhere to an interdisciplinary approach, referring to authoritative scientific sources and reinforcing knowledge related to the field of theory and practice of social work, data from sociology, psychology, pedagogy and jurisprudence (Alizadeh, 2024; Agapov & Voloshchukova, 2010).

The system of social protection of childhood is understood as a set of organizational, legal, financial and economic, social, psychological and pedagogical measures implemented by the state to ensure guaranteed living conditions and harmonious development of children in order to protect their rights, protect their legitimate interests and meet their needs. Among the main trends and directions of social protection activities, the following can be distinguished:

- Strengthening the role of the state in the development of the social protection system;
- Development of new approaches to family protection;
- Improvement of the legal framework for the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of children;
- Orientation of the state to comprehensive assistance to children in difficult life situations;
- Organization of active social work with children from various risk groups;
- Providing support to the family in creating a favorable climate for the normal psychosocial development of children;
- Increasing the role of specialized institutions in supporting children and promoting a responsible attitude to the protection of children's rights;
- Involvement of public organizations and citizens with a high social status in the social protection of children;
- Expansion of the network of additional education and out-of-school children's institutions;
- Cooperation with international organizations for the social protection of children and compliance with international law in the field of child protection.

Against the background of all the above, it is necessary to note, psychological. The processes of socialization and social adaptation are closely interconnected, as they reflect a single process of interaction between the individual and society. The difference is that in the course of socialization of the individual, a person acts as an object that perceives, accepts, assimilates traditions, norms, roles created by society; socialization ensures the normal functioning of the individual in society (Zinchenko & Smirnov, 1982).

In the course of socialization, the development, formation and formation of the individual takes place. Social adaptation implies ways of adaptation, regulation, harmonization of the interaction of the individual with the environment. In the process of social adaptation, a person acts as an active subject who adapts to the environment in accordance with his needs, interests and aspirations and actively determines himself. The individual enters a new social environment, becomes its full member, asserts himself and develops his individuality. Because of social adaptation, social qualities of communication, behavior and activity accepted in society are formed.

Consequently, the socialization of the child's personality is a necessary condition for his adaptation in society. Social adaptation of a child is one of the mechanisms of socialization, one of the ways of more complete socialization at school.

Of particular importance in the modern world are children from the “risk group”, which implies the following categories of children:

- 1) Children with developmental problems that do not have a clearly expressed clinical and pathological characteristic;
- 2) Children left without parental care due to various circumstances;
- 3) Children from disadvantaged, asocial families;
- 4) Children from families in need of socio-economic and socio-psychological assistance and support;
- 5) Children with manifestations of social and psychological-pedagogical maladjustment.

The work of a social worker and psychologist is aimed at the mental development of these children, which is manifested, first of all, in the development of the system of their relationships with others. All children brought up in boarding schools are characterized by distortions in communication with adults. On the one hand, children have an increased need for adult attention and goodwill, human warmth, affection and positive emotional contacts. On the other hand, this need is completely unsatisfied: a small number of interactions between adults and children, a virtual absence of personal, intimate appeals in these contacts, their emotional poverty and monotony of content, mainly aimed at regulating behavior. All of the above-mentioned features of communication with adults deprive children of the most important experience for their psychological development of their own significance, necessity and value for other people and at the same time, the experience of the value of another person, deep affection for people.

Social work with children is an integral part of the social policy of specific states. It is built in accordance with the basic principles of the social structure of a particular country and evolves depending on the dynamics of socio-political changes both at the level of state power and at the level of civil society institutions. Social workers, psychologists, doctors, lawyers, teachers and other specialists who, in accordance with Russian legislation, are responsible for out-of-family upbringing, education, protection of life and health, social services for children, ensure the implementation of social protection activities in practice. It should be noted that the effectiveness of the social work system with minors is a very sensitive indicator of not only the general socio-political well-being of the state in the current historical period, but also its prospects in the global political space, since it demonstrates how responsibly the authorities treat the future of their country, its strategic development.

## Results

For the social development of a teenager, the content of his life plans, his dreams, desires, aspirations, that is, the projected image of his future, are of great importance. The position of living for today, without thinking about the future, prevails among the pupils of boarding schools. They imagine their life prospects very vaguely, without filling them with real content. They can hardly ever say what and how they are going to do to achieve their goals. Lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem lead to the fact that teenagers almost never set long-term goals for themselves aimed at improving their professional level and finding a profession. The lag in physical and intellectual development of children left without parental care is often complicated by disturbances in the emotional-volitional sphere and behavior. This is facilitated by the system of education in boarding schools, including constant life “in formation”, “on orders”; collective dormitories, where the child can never be left alone with his thoughts; transfers from one children's institution to another, accompanied by separation from the usual teaching and children's team, brothers and sisters, etc. The success of socialization is largely determined by the acceptance of others, knowledge and assimilation of relevant social norms and values, possession of certain communication skills and a profession. However, the conditions of raising orphans in boarding schools do not allow the above-mentioned qualities to develop to the proper extent, but, on the contrary, children develop personality traits that isolate them from the real world.

**Keywords:** Psychological, foundations, social, work, children, teenagers, development, influence, future, society.

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## **SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND PEER SUPPORT NETWORK AS PREDICTORS OF FOSTERING RESILIENCE TOWARD SOCIAL MEDIA RELATED VULNERABILITY: INSIGHTS FROM YOUTH PERSPECTIVE IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN**

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It is impossible to exaggerate the pervasive impact of social media on the lives of young people in the modern digital age. Social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok have made young people content creators as well as consumers; this has profound effects on their self-perception, interpersonal dynamics and view of the world. Social media vulnerabilities affect and cut across people worldwide, regardless of boundaries and impose on privacy, mental health. Among these, cyberbullying, misinformation, online radicalization and fraud are the common problems that affect people universally. For the current study quantitative research design and survey was designed to determine the relationship among social media literacy, peer support networks, emotional intelligence and resilience to social media-related vulnerability of young people in Punjab, Pakistan. The study was conducted among students at the institute of Southern Punjab Multan, the University of Sargodha, the University of Central Punjab Lahore and Women's University Rawalpindi. The sample size was 350 students, with accessible students from each university. Convenience sampling was selected when studying types of participants. The study found strong, positive relationships between social media literacy, emotional intelligence, peer support networks and resilience toward social media-related vulnerabilities among youth in Punjab, Pakistan. The model fit well with the data, supported by a statistically significant ANOVA result.

**Keywords:** Social media literacy, emotional intelligence, peer support network, resilience, social media vulnerability.

## FOOD WELL-BEING OF AT-RISK POPULATIONS: A STUDY OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN URBAN AREAS

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While food security is often associated with developing countries, food insecurity and its related impacts on well-being are increasingly recognized as significant challenges within wealthy societies. The assumption that economic prosperity automatically translates into universal access to adequate food and nutritionally balanced diets is patently false. Pockets of vulnerability exist even in megacities with robust economies, where low-income residents may face significant barriers to achieving food-related well-being (Tian & Henseler, 2025).

In the context of Russia, rapid economic transformations, rising income inequality and the spatial organization of megacities have created conditions where certain populations are at risk of food insecurity. The increasing cost of living, combined with stagnant or declining real wages for low-income residents (Mareeva & Slobodenyuk, 2023), can strain household budgets and limit the resources available for food purchases. Moreover, the availability of adequate food and nutritionally balanced (healthy) diets can vary significantly from one area to another, exacerbating inequalities in access (Didenko *et al.*, 2021).

Food well-being (FWB) is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond the mere absence of hunger. It encompasses the physical, psychological, social and economic dimensions of individuals' relationship with food. While objective measures of food security (e.g., caloric intake, access to specific nutrients) are important, they do not fully capture the subjective experiences and perceptions that shape individuals' well-being.

Some scholars correlate FWB primarily with health outcomes (Vaqué-Crusellas *et al.*, 2023). Instead of solely focusing on health as the lack of disease, the "food well-being" model promotes a different perspective. It emphasizes well-being as a beneficial connection with food, both personally and within the community (Luca *et al.*, 2023). Others propose a more comprehensive framework that includes sustainable consumption practices and socio-cultural aspects (Tian & Kamran, 2023).

This study uses an integrative approach, viewing FWB as encompassing both health-related factors and broader well-being indicators, including emotional satisfaction, social connections through food and economic accessibility.

The proposed framework of FWB consists of four interconnected components: physiological (incorporates nutritional adequacy, food safety perceptions and health outcomes), psychological (encompasses emotional responses to food experiences, mindfulness in consumption and self-restriction practices), social (includes community food practices, family meal patterns and social support systems) and economic (examines affordability strategies, shopping patterns and budget management techniques) dimensions. Within the framework of this research, food-related well-being is understood as a product of three interconnected elements: 1) perceived quality, safety and accessibility of food products; 2) price perception and coping strategies; 3) self-imposed restrictions in food consumption.

These elements are embedded in individuals' food purchasing behavior strategies. When residents navigate their food choices, the interplay of perceived quality, price perception and self-restraint shape their food-related well-being. Therefore, these components can significantly affect residents' ability to access nutritious foods, leading to potential limitations in their diets. This, in turn, can have serious consequences for residents' physical, psychological and social health, exacerbating issues such as food insecurity and related health disparities.

In the food studies literature, consumer conceptualizations of well-being (WB) can be qualitatively examined through the lens of interconnected concepts, including overall well-being, hedonic experiences ("feeling good"), satisfaction with one's food-related life and adherence to healthy eating patterns (Jaeger *et al.*, 2022). Despite the multifaceted nature of these terms, research suggests that consumers perceive food-related WB as a multidimensional construct, aligning with broader definitions of WB employed across various disciplines. Specifically, food-related WB has been linked to physical health outcomes, pleasurable sensory experiences and the emotional and social dimensions inherent in food consumption.

Given the focus of this study on food well-being among at-risk populations in Russian megacities, it is imperative to delineate the specific manifestations of these dimensions within this context. Specifically, it is necessary to concretely define how these aspects of food well-being are experienced and impact on the daily lives of low-income residents. For instance, access to adequate food and nutritionally balanced diets, a key determinant of physical health, may be compromised for low-income residents. In a comparable manner, social isolation or restricted availability of varied food choices may influence the enjoyment and social dimensions associated with eating. This underscores the necessity of considering both the material and non-material (psychological) factors of food security in order to enhance food well-being among at-risk groups in urban environments.

The aim of this research is to investigate the food-related well-being of low-income families residing in Russian megacities, with a specific emphasis on their perception of food quality, safety and affordability. Qualitative in-depth face-to-face interviews were undertaken with 18



participants from three Russian megacities - Novosibirsk (1.6 million people, Siberia Region), Nizhny Novgorod (1.27 million people, Volga Region) and Perm (1 million people, Ural Region), from February 1 to March 30, 2024. The inclusion criteria were as follows: 1) individuals living in the three megacities not less than 3 years, 2) family's monthly income per person is below 277\$ (25000 rubles in February 2024; the average per capita income in Russia was 53000 rubles in 2023). The method of analyzing data was inductive. The results are reported according to the Standards for the Presentation of Qualitative Research Results (SRQR).

Through in-depth interviews, this study attempted to confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis that different low-income families build rather similar strategies to archive food well-being. These strategies are based a) on the search for quality food products at reduced prices, b) on flexible consumer choices, c) on the desire to maintain a decent standard of consumption.

The interview data supported that low-income families pay a lot of attention to food prices and try to economize due to rising costs of living (*«For proper nutrition money is needed first queue» (women, 19 years, Novosibirsk)*). This specifically results in a decision not to buy certain products and a decrease in how often they are consumed (*“I don't buy meat every day” (women, 83 years, pensioner, family with two disabled persons, Perm)*). But on the other hand, the idea of “not skimping on quality” is pretty popular: *“Of course, we don't buy very expensive products, but we don't focus on quality savings” (women, 46 years, family with disabled person, Perm)*. Consumer behavior regarding food is centered around finding a balance between quality and cost: *“I try to buy food products of normal quality. With discounts. I try to look for some discounts somewhere and buy at discounts, well, so that there is normal quality» (women, 51 years, single mother, Novosibirsk)*. It requires additional time and information resources from low-income families. Independently growing vegetables, fruits and berries in a family garden plot (“dacha”) is one way to ensure this balance: *“We plant everything - potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, parsley, dill. Everything is ours” (man, 67 years, non-working pensioner, Nizhny Novgorod)*. Another way is to make homemade preserves for the winter - jams, pickled vegetables, zucchini and eggplant spread (“ikra”): *“The daily diet includes our [homemade] pickles, tomatoes, cucumbers” (man, 65 years, non-working pensioner, Nizhny Novgorod)*.

A key element of implicit concepts of food well-being is “home” - “homemade meals”, “eating at home”, “dacha” (seasonal second home), “family recipes”, that is not quite typical for an urban lifestyle. It turns out that the modern city as a space of food-related activities and new food expressions is poorly developed by people with low incomes in everyday life. This leads us to the wider problem of social inequalities in the cities. On the one hand, urbanization reduces poverty and inequality by developing infrastructure and increasing access to a variety of food products; on the other hand, the city, despite its capabilities, does not allow “expanding the food repertoire and realizing personal preferences” for all citizens.

**Keywords:** Food well-being, nutrition behaviours, food choices, low-income families.

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## FORMULATION OF A SOCIAL MARKETING MECHANISM FOR RESOLUTION OF SUBSTANCE USAGE PROBLEM IN AZERBAIJAN

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The substance usage problem in Azerbaijan has been showing an increasing tendency in the registered drug related crimes. Thus, it is important to take notice of this situation and come up with right methods and ways of resolution. Formulation of a detailed social marketing mechanism with clear communication plan has to be in place. Also, M&E framework together with selected KPIs are needed for overall assessment of the social marketing program. Additionally, CBSM framework can be used for a smother installation of the set social marketing mechanism.

### **Social Problem and Social Marketing Background**

In some cases, a social problem might be not noticed by a certain part of the population or society and thus it is vital to have an observation on the actual status of wellbeing in the set part of population or society. Based on this case Coleman (1994) had identified an opening for the respective term in the following way: “A *social problem is a harmful social condition characterized by a widespread consensus that it exists and that something should be done about it*”. Also, self-awareness is playing huge role in early conditions of a particular social problem set in society or population at large. Rubington and Weinberg (2011) have originated their own definition of the social problem term as follows: “A *social problem is a situation in which some people in society become aware of a societal condition or behaviour that they believe to be harmful or threatening*”.

In more general terms social marketing is based on diverse tactics and techniques to affect the lives of a certain group of people in a positive direction and sustain a healthy form of life. Concerning this aspect Kotler et al. (2002) redefined the definition of social marketing in the following way: “*Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify or abandon a behaviour for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole*”. It is important to mention that the actions towards a certation change should be made in a voluntary setting, as it is designed to improve the state of life of a particular individual or group of people.

The social marketing process involves several steps in its interpretation as planning, research, analysis, implementation, evaluation and a sustainability aspect for further development. The key

objective in all research by the individuals and institutions is to identify the crucial points in the analysis of the social problem or social cause and identify its many resolution ways for the selected target audience or part of the society.

### **Substance Abuse Problem Overview**

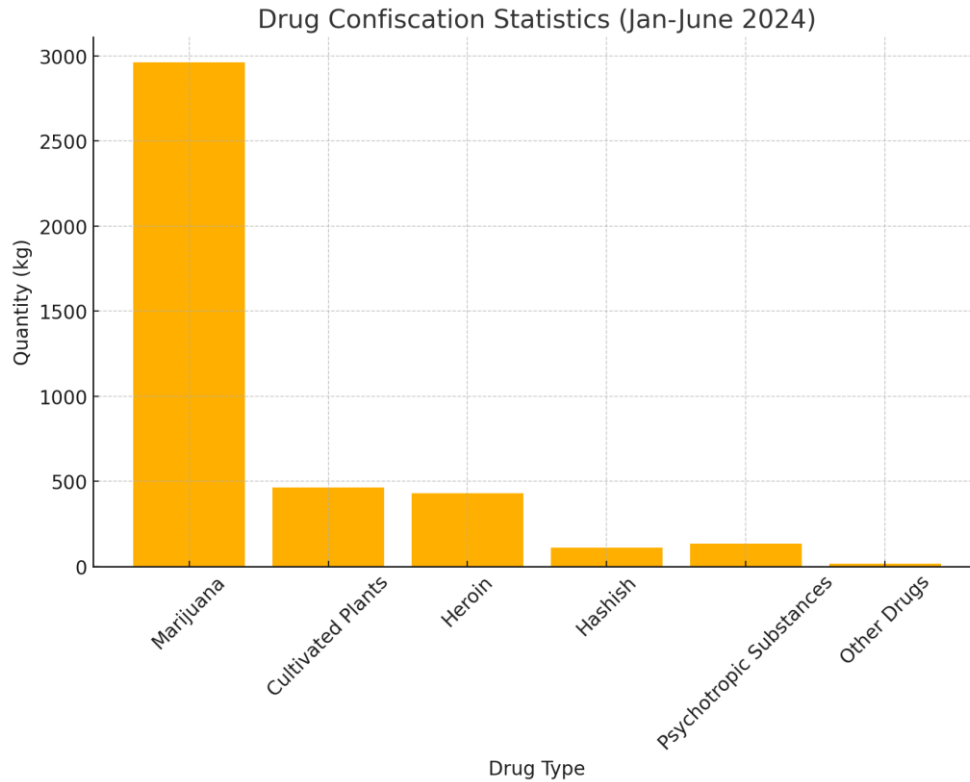
The rising number of drug-related offences in Azerbaijan poses a serious threat to social stability, economic growth and public safety. A number of important concerns that demand immediate action are revealed by analysing the most recent crime data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Following is a brief outlook on high prevalence of drug-related crimes, social and economic factors driving drug-related crimes, drug abuse and youth involvement, link between drug use and other criminal activities, increase in drug trafficking and seizures, insufficient rehabilitation and reintegration programs:

1. In the first six months of 2024, 5,674 drug-related crimes were recorded, accounting for 30.6% of all registered criminal cases.
2. A substantial 67.8% of offenders were of working age but had never worked or studied, highlighting a strong link between unemployment, lack of education and criminal involvement.
3. While 76.5% of offenders were aged 30 and above, a worrying 7.6% of offenders were 24 years or younger, suggesting that drug-related crime is beginning to affect younger age groups.
4. 91.2% were related to drug trafficking, showing that addiction is closely linked to drug distribution networks.
5. Authorities confiscated 4,111.4 kg of drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors in the first half of 2024 - a 17.2% increase compared to the previous year.
6. Despite a high number of drug-related crimes and arrests, the lack of comprehensive rehabilitation programs contributes to high recidivism rates. (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2024a)).

Considering the significant increase in the amount of total confiscated drugs, the importance of an immediate action is unquestionable. Below is a more detailed breakdown of the situation regarding the confiscated drugs in Azerbaijan from the period of January to June in the year 2024.

The rise in drug confiscations suggests either an increase in law enforcement efficiency or a rise in drug trafficking activities, requiring a more in-depth investigation into supply chain networks.



**Chart 1.** Drug confiscation statistics

Source: <https://www.stat.gov.az/news/index.php?lang=en&id=6057>

### **Social Marketing Mechanism Formulation**

A social marketing mechanism should emphasise behavioural change through awareness, prevention, rehabilitation and enforcement tactics in order to successfully lower drug-related crimes. The strategy should make use of media, technology and community involvement to reach young people, vulnerable populations, legislators and the general public. Following is a four-phase social marketing mechanism with relevant actions that are to be taken and optimal duration period for each phase and action.

By implementing set social marketing mechanism, it is possible to minimise the number of drug related cases and improve well-being of not only the lawbreakers but the affected communities and population as a whole. For a clearer communication of social marketing program, the following call to action might meet all the aims of the program:

*Let go of the darker days. Step into a brighter life.*

The right message of communication of social marketing program is crucial for achieving the upmost positive results.

**Table 1.** Social Marketing Mechanism for Resolution of Substance Abuse Problem

Phase	Action	Duration
Phase 1: Research & Planning	Conduct surveys, identify high-risk groups, design social marketing campaigns	1-2 months
Phase 2: Awareness & Education	Launch social media campaigns, workshops, school programs	3-6 months
Phase 3: Policy & Law Enforcement	Strengthen drug laws, improve reporting & enforcement	6-12 months
Phase 4: Rehabilitation & Reintegration	Support and establish community rehab centers, reintegration programs	Ongoing

**Source:** Self-elaboration

### Monitoring and Campaign Success Measurement

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework are required to guarantee the efficacy of the social marketing mechanism in tackling drug-related crimes in Azerbaijan. To monitor progress and improve the approach over time, this part describes key performance indicators (KPIs), data gathering techniques and success assessment measures.

### Conclusion

Overall, the situation in Azerbaijan regarding the substance abuse problem is pretty significant and urges immediate action. Following are the key notes that need to be addressed:

- 1) The formulation of a right and comprehensive social marketing program with right mechanisms and communication strategy is of high need;
- 2) For assessment of the respective social marketing program CBSM (Community-based Social Marketing) framework might be in place;
- 3) A thorough monitoring of whole process and results' analysis of social marketing program is important for identification of key missing points and further reinstallation.

With the mention above points the social marketing program can be successfully employed and moreover bring positive influence on the representatives of the set social problem and the affected target groups, communities and society.

**Keywords:** Sociology, social problem, social marketing, social marketing program, social marketing mechanism, social marketing framework, behavioural change, substance abuse.

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## STUDY OF THE PREVALENCE OF ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES AMONG THE POPULATION OF AZERBAIJAN

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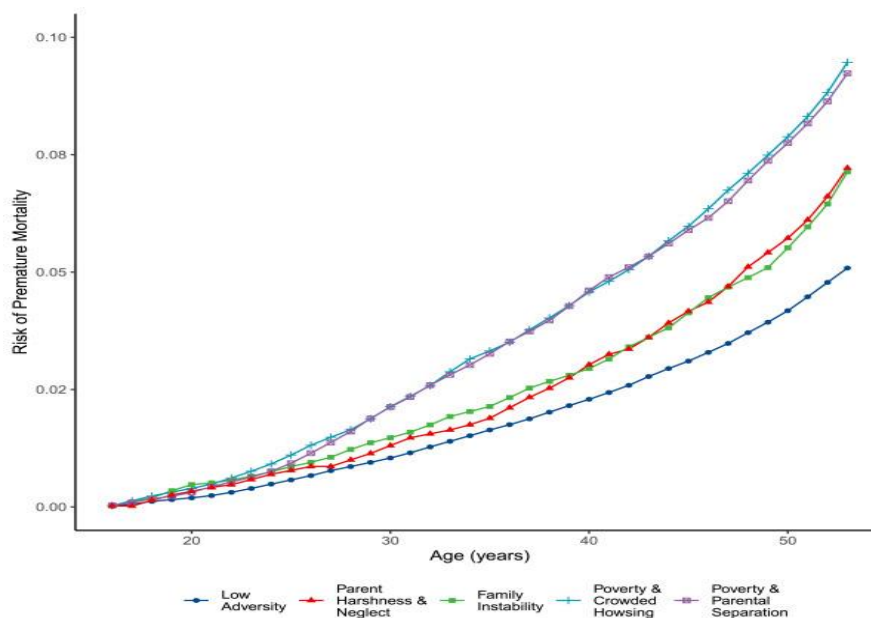
Adverse Childhood Experiences attract the attention of many researchers as a field of study, primarily due to their long-term effects rather than their immediate impacts. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) refer to experiences that occur during childhood and negatively impact an individual's future psychological, emotional and physical development.

ACEs are traumatic events that occur during childhood (ages 0-18), including violence, abuse, neglect, harsh parenting methods, witnessing domestic violence, a family member's suicide attempt or death, war, natural disasters or severe living conditions. As shown by Mirzayeva (2023), such traumatic events in childhood can be emotionally painful or distressing, as well as having effects that last for years. During adverse childhood experiences, children may respond to these experiences with trauma, anxiety disorders, depression, loss of self-confidence or other psychological difficulties.

The long-term effects of ACEs have become the subject of various research studies today. Furthermore, several studies have shown that individuals who experienced ACEs are at a higher risk of facing mental health issues in adulthood (Oladeji *et al.*, 2010), early death (Anda *et al.*, 2009) and autoimmune disorders (Dube *et al.*, 2009). Additionally, as shown in another study by Jackson *et al.* (2019), conducted among young adults aged 18-34 in the United States, Adverse Childhood Experiences can contribute to the development of cardiovascular problems and their underlying causes. In general, heart disease is the fourth leading cause of death among young adults in the United States.

In a study titled "Adverse childhood experiences and premature mortality through mid-adulthood: A five-decade prospective study" conducted by Yu *et al.* (2022), the relationship between various individual ACEs and early death was examined, as depicted in the table below.





The fact that Azerbaijan ranked second in the world in the latest ranking table published by the World Health Organization in 2020, based on the number of total deaths due to coronary heart disease, with a notably high rate, has motivated us to investigate the prevalence and other characteristics of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Azerbaijan. The prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) during the first 18 years of life in Azerbaijan has been investigated and the percentage of individuals within the high-risk group among those who experienced such events has been determined. Questions such as what kind of experiences or violence were experienced, whether these experiences were related to family or society, etc. were also addressed. For the study, the ACE-Q international survey tool (from Novo Psych platform) was selected. Its ability to be easily completed by respondents without external interference and its provision of anonymity made it suitable for the research.

In our study conducted between August and October of 2024, 491 respondents aged 19 and older participated in the survey. Additionally, the respondents encompassed individuals with various levels of education and different professions. Considering the context of Azerbaijan and the differing levels of approach, education and awareness between urban and rural areas, a question was also added to the survey section regarding whether the respondents spent their childhood in a rural or urban setting. It was determined that 50.2% of the participants spent their childhood in the city, 19.6% in the district center and 24.2% in the village.

Furthermore, as a result of our study, it was determined that the prevalence of respondents who scored 1 or more points, indicating exposure to domestic ACEs, was 48.8%, while the prevalence of respondents who did not experience ACEs was 51.2%.

Regarding the prevalence based on scores, 31% of respondents reported experiencing one ACE, 23.8% reported two ACEs, 16.3% reported three ACEs, 12.1% reported four ACEs, 6.3% reported five ACEs, 5.4% reported six ACEs, 1.3% reported seven ACEs and 1.7% reported eight ACEs.

According to international studies, respondents with an ACE-Q score of 4 or higher are likely to have greater health risks compared to people with an ACE-Q score of 0. Overall, the results of our study indicate that 26.8% of people who experienced NUT in the first 18 years of their lives are at high risk.

In international studies on this topic, the majority of adults (52%-75%) score one or more points on the ACE-Q. Another study conducted by Hughes et al. (2017), highlights that only a small portion of the general population (5%-10%) scores 4 or more points on the ACE-Q.

Our findings, like those in other populations, show that ACEs are widespread in Azerbaijan and the statistical indicators we encountered, as mentioned above, with Azerbaijan ranking first in coronary diseases, lead us to consider this a significant issue for the health and well-being of the population. The comprehensive study of this field, not only in relation to heart diseases but also regarding psychiatric disorders, early mortality, addiction to harmful habits and other long-term effects of ACEs, is essential in Azerbaijan. Moreover, addressing ACEs as a problem and exploring solutions to these issues, along with implementing preventive measures, is crucial. Because, as research shows, many of the problems we face in adulthood stem from childhood. Our return and correct assessment of this period will play a role in solving some of the social problems we face as a society. In this regard, it is important to evaluate and improve the Children's Social Protection system and apply a multidisciplinary approach.

**Keywords:** Adverse Childhood Experiences, violence against children, effects of divorce on children, health risks caused by ACEs, early death, early cardiovascular diseases, domestic violence, premature death.

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## ORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL WORK WITH CHILDREN EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Domestic violence is a global problem that seriously impedes children's psychological, social and academic development. Children growing up in this environment are more likely to experience trauma, stress and behavioral disorders, which negatively affect their emotional stability, educational success and integration into society. In this context, social work with victims plays an important role in the protection and rehabilitation of children. Because multidisciplinary approach and specialized intervention models are tools and methods to ensure their safety and well-being. This thesis analyses social work models and legal frameworks applied in different countries in order to determine the most effective intervention strategies for child victims of violence. The study provides important recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of social work and establishing stronger advocacy mechanisms.

### **Introduction**

Domestic violence is a global social problem that seriously affects not only adults but also children. A significant proportion of children worldwide are exposed to violence at home, which has adverse effects on their physical, emotional and social development. Isolation measures, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated the situation. During this period, the risk of children being exposed to trauma increased significantly. Children growing up in such an environment face post-traumatic stress disorder, behavioral disorders and other psychological problems that negatively affect their future lives.

Social work has an important role in the protection and rehabilitation of these children. Social workers work with children who have experienced or witnessed violence to ensure their safety and emotional well-being. Intervention strategies such as individual therapy, child-parent psychotherapy, school-based programs are essential components of this process. This scientific study aims to identify the most effective and practically applicable intervention methods and to investigate ways of solving problems by comparing social work models and legal frameworks applied in different countries.

### **Domestic Violence and Its Impact on Children: A Global Overview**

Domestic violence is a phenomenon that occurs all over the world and seriously affects the psychological and social development of children. “Between 133 and 275 million children worldwide have witnessed domestic violence, but these figures vary over time due to methodological problems” (Harris *et al.*, 2024). The variation in these figures over time is due to methodological problems, but the general trend shows that violence is widespread. According to research, “10% of adults have witnessed one of their parents being violent towards the other as a child” (UNICEF, 2014). In developing countries, 33-51% of women have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime, which results in a large number of children growing up in violent environments in those societies. According to a report by the World Health Organization (2021), “approximately 30% of women have experienced physical and sexual violence from their intimate partners”. This indirectly affects children, increasing their likelihood of encountering violence. Exposure of children to violence negatively affects their psychological and social development. Therefore, social workers and policy makers need to work on more effective intervention models to address this problem.

Domestic violence does not have a specific impact; on the contrary, it has an impact in many areas. Below, the types of impact are listed and their functioning is explained:

**Psychological effects:** Domestic violence causes serious stress and trauma in children. Children growing up in an environment of violence are more likely to experience emotional and behavior disorders. Even if they are not directly exposed to violence, domestic violence negatively affects their mental state. Increased levels of fear, anxiety and depression in these children may lead to social isolation and withdrawal. On the contrary, aggressive behavior and high levels of anxiety are observed in some of them. In the long term, these psychological effects can negatively affect their social relationships and mental health. In the absence of intervention and support, these complications can continue into adulthood.

**Academic and social effects:** Domestic violence creates serious obstacles in the educational and social lives of children. Such children may fall behind in academic achievement, lose motivation and drop out of school. As their self-confidence is weakened, they have difficulty in communicating with their peers and develop shyness and social isolation tendencies. These situations prevent them from establishing healthy friendships and professional relationships in the future. Therefore, violence negatively affects the social integration of children not only in childhood, but also in adulthood and professional life.

**Effects on physical health:** Domestic violence poses a serious threat not only to psychological but also to physical health. Constant stress in childhood weakens the immune system and increases the risk of chronic diseases. Such children may face health problems such as frequent headaches, cardiovascular problems and obesity in adulthood. In addition, the experience of

violence predisposes them to substance abuse and they have difficulty adapting to social life. As a result, traumas experienced at an early age shape not only childhood, but also one's overall health and quality of life.

Experience from around the world shows that timely and effective interventions are vital for children exposed to domestic violence. Reactions to violence vary according to the individual characteristics of children: While some are resilient and survive the trauma relatively lightly, others face long-term psychological and social consequences. Social services therefore need to develop support mechanisms tailored to the individual needs of each child and implement intervention in a timely manner. Delayed or inadequate assistance can seriously affect the future well-being of these children.

### **Organization of Social Work in Different Countries: A Comparative Analysis**

There are significant differences between countries in the employment of children exposed to domestic violence. Each country or region has developed strategies appropriate to its legal, cultural and institutional context. In this section, the approaches of the USA, European Union countries (especially the example of the United Kingdom), Scandinavian countries and some developing countries will be compared.

US model: In the US, protection of children from domestic violence is achieved through both legal and social protection systems. The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires states to establish procedures to identify and report child abuse (including witnessing domestic violence in the home) as child abuse and neglect. As a result, in most states, children who witness violence are automatically registered with Child Protective Services and appropriate interventions are implemented.

Studies show that, “children's exposure to domestic violence directly affects their psychosocial development and such interventions are essential for children's long-term well-being” (Cross *et al.*, 2020). In addition, in some states, exposure of the child to violence is considered an aggravating factor and perpetrators are sentenced more severely. The aim of this approach is to prevent violence, protect children's rights and reduce the risk of trauma.

In the USA, there are comprehensive social support programs for children exposed to domestic violence. Intervention models such as Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) help children cope with trauma. According to a study by Lieberman *et al.* (2015), “CPP is an effective method for restoring emotional stability and strengthening trusting relationships with parents in young children who have witnessed violence”. Such approaches are implemented under the guidance of social workers and accelerate the rehabilitation of children.

European and UK model: While European countries have common strategies to address domestic violence, each country has different legal frameworks and social protection systems. The Istanbul Convention (2011) includes the children of women victims of violence in the special protection category and requires state parties to provide legal and psychological support to these children. For example, under Italian and Dutch law, “If a child sees one of their parents being abused, this is considered child abuse and requires state intervention” (Council of Europe, 2022). In countries such as Montenegro and Andorra, such circumstances are considered an aggravating factor and children are automatically provided with support.

The UK has made significant changes in this area in recent years. The 2021 Domestic Violence Act recognizes children as independent victims and forces judicial authorities to take their trauma into account. “If a child witnesses violence and is directly affected by it, then he or she should be considered a victim of domestic violence” (Crown Prosecution Service, 2021). With this law, automatic support mechanisms for children who witness violence were initiated and the government allocated resources for the expansion of these services. However, research shows that not all children in need are able to benefit from these services and that there are gaps in implementation.

In developing countries (Asia, Africa, Latin America), domestic violence interventions are implemented under the influence of resource constraints and social norms. In many societies, the issue is still seen as taboo and most women and children victims of violence do not approach formal institutions. According to the UN, “more than half of women in these countries accept domestic violence as normal” (UN Women, 2020). Moreover, only 10% of victims of violence report to law enforcement, which makes it difficult to implement protection mechanisms for children.

However, progress has been made in recent years. UNICEF and local NGOs have expanded community-based intervention systems, including hotlines, for victims of violence. “In South Asia, these hotlines provide psychological and legal support to children, as well as police intervention to ensure safety” (Gregson & Muna, 2021). The sharp increase in requests for these services during the pandemic indicates that domestic violence is becoming more severe.

Some developing countries are gradually strengthening legislation to combat domestic violence. For example, Liberia passed the Domestic Violence Act in 2019, creating stronger protection mechanisms for women and children and “introduced a mandatory reporting obligation for medical professionals, social workers and teachers in case of suspicion of violence” (UNDP, 2020). Similar laws are being adopted in other countries in Africa and Asia. However, difficulties remain in the implementation process. Therefore, professional training of law enforcement officers, public awareness raising and effective enforcement of laws are still among the main problems.



In conclusion, the experiences of different countries show that each model has its own strengths and weaknesses. The US model is characterized by comprehensive therapeutic programs and integrated child protection systems, but inequalities exist between services. While European countries have made progress in strengthening the legal framework and the multi-agency approach, in some places continuity of services remains a challenge. The Nordic countries have developed one of the most effective social protection systems, but there are challenges in terms of resource balance and adapting the model to other countries. Although community-based initiatives are emerging in developing countries, a lack of infrastructure and resources prevents these interventions from being implemented at scale. Each country therefore needs to strengthen child protection by adapting best practices to its specific context.

### **Social work methodology and intervention strategies**

The correct definition of social work methodology and intervention strategies plays an important role as well as their implementation. When conducting social work with children affected by domestic violence, professionals rely on various theoretical and methodological approaches. The goal is not only to solve the problems that have arisen, but also to help the child grow up in a safe and supportive environment, ensuring their long-term well-being. For this purpose, various therapy methods and social support models are applied. Examples of these include the following:

**Psychosocial Support:** Experiences of violence cause trauma, anxiety and behavioral problems in children. Their recovery from this situation is supported by methods such as individual and group therapies, play therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy. These intervention methods aim to restore the child's emotional stability, increase their sense of trust and strengthen their social skills.

**Family Approach:** Parents are the child's biggest source of support. Social workers help to establish strong bonds, especially between abused mothers and children. Parents receive psychological support and are taught post-traumatic parenting skills. This approach is important to increase the resilience of the child and create a protective environment within the family.

**School-Based Programs:** Special programs are developed to improve the academic and social success of children exposed to violence at school. School social workers and psychologists support children's adaptation to education and help them develop emotional regulation skills. A safe school environment facilitates the integration of these children into society.

**Trauma Informed Approach:** Social services prioritize the safety and emotional well-being of children. A trauma-informed approach ensures that all institutions working with children (schools, social services, legal system) are sensitive to the experience of violence and work in a



rehabilitation-oriented manner. The aim of this approach is to recognize children's strengths and to see them as empowered individuals, not as passive victims.

**Multidisciplinary co-operation:** For social work to be effective, psychologists, teachers, law enforcement and health professionals need to work together and put the needs of children at the centre. Multidisciplinary co-operation enables child protection to be provided in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

The aim of social work is to see these children not only as victims of violence but also as empowered individuals and to create a safe and supportive environment for them. Based on experience in the field, it is important that the voice of social workers is heard at the legislative and administrative levels. The Australian example shows that school-based psychological help programs initiated by social workers have been successfully implemented and disseminated across the country. Social work methodology is therefore being shaped by fundamental innovations such as a trauma-informed approach, interdisciplinary co-operation and continuous learning. These principles enable social workers to overcome the obstacles they face with the right strategies. In the next section, general conclusions based on a comparison of global experiences and recommendations for development will be presented.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Domestic violence is not only an individual problem, but also a global challenge that hinders the social and economic development of entire societies. To reduce its consequences, complex and multidisciplinary approaches based on the integration of law, health and social work are essential. Studies show that early intervention and long-term support programs play a crucial role in the rehabilitation of child victims of violence.

Success in this area also depends on the level of available resources. While rich countries can establish strong protection systems and rehabilitation programs, the lack of resources in developing societies poses serious challenges. Therefore, international organizations and governments should declare child protection a priority and make sustained investments in this area.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The legal framework should be strengthened - Children should be recognized as independent victims of violence and provided with automatic support.
- Psychological and social support systems should be strengthened - Rehabilitation centers and psychological assistance services should be accessible to child victims of violence.
- Multidisciplinary cooperation should be increased - Links between the police, social work, education and health systems should be established more effectively.
- The training and working conditions of social workers should be improved - Professional development and psychological support systems should be introduced.

- Public awareness should be expanded - Education on the consequences of violence should be provided in schools and public awareness should be raised through the media and social platforms.

- Research and data bases should be strengthened - Statistical and research mechanisms in line with international standards should be established to monitor the scale and impact of violence against children.

It is not only their right for children to grow up in a safe and violence-free environment, but it is also essential for building a healthy society. Social work plays a key role in this process and its impact can be increased with stronger support and resources.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, child protection, social work and intervention, psychosocial support, legal framework and legislation, trauma and rehabilitation.

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## VICTIMS OF ADDICTION: DRINKING ADDICTION

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Drinking addiction is a widespread issue that affects individuals, families and society as a whole. It leads to severe physical, psychological and social consequences, trapping victims in a cycle of dependency. This addiction can result in health complications, financial struggles and broken relationships. Despite its dangers, many struggle to break free due to emotional and physical cravings. Understanding the causes, effects and possible treatments is crucial in addressing this problem and supporting those affected.

What is drinking addiction?

Drinking addiction is a chronic relapsing disorder associated with compulsive drinking, the loss of control over intake and the emergence of a negative emotional state when alcohol is no longer available (<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/cycle-alcohol-addiction>). All of drinking addictions are considered to be alcohol addictions. But this option is wrong. Because drinking addiction is divided into types. There includes.

1. Alcohol addiction;
2. Energy drinks addiction;
3. Aerted drink addiction.

Alcohol drink addiction - also called alcohol use disorder (AUD), is a chronic condition where a person has difficulty controlling their alcohol consumption despite negative effects on their health, relationships or daily life. There are 3 stages:

1. Early Stage - This is begening of alcohol addiction. And addiction person drinks only relax and cope with stress;
2. Middle Stage - person drinks more frequent and excessive. Some withdrawal symptoms (e.g., anxiety, irritability) when not drinking;
3. Late stage - Dependence on alcohol, both physically and psychologically. Significant health issues such as liver damage, memory loss or other organ problems.

### **Reasons**

There are common reasons.

1. **Family history and enviroment.** Family history is essential, because growing up in an environment where alcohol use is normalized can increase the risk.

2. **Stress and depression.** Some people turn to alcohol to cope with stress and depression though this can lead to dependency over time.

3. **Social Pressure.** Peer influence or cultural norms can encourage excessive drinking.

4. **Trauma or Stressful Life Events:** Experiencing trauma or significant stress can push individuals toward alcohol as a coping mechanism.

Symptoms of energy drink addiction are strong cravings, mental imagery of drinking energy drinks, inability to control intake, physical dependence, tolerance development, disruption of daily life and health complications (<https://diamondrehabthailand.com/what-is-energy-drink-addiction/#:~:text=Symptoms%20of%20energy%20drink%20addiction%20are%20strong%20cravings%2C%20mental%20imagery,daily%20life%2C%20and%20health%20complications>).

There are side effects. There includes increased heart rate, palpitations, stomach pain, insomnia, fatigue, hypertension, heightened anxiety, irritability, disrupted daily routines and social withdrawal.

What are the symptoms of energy drink addiction? (<https://diamondrehabthailand.com/what-is-energy-drink-addiction/#:~:text=Symptoms%20of%20energy%20drink%20addiction%20are%20strong%20cravings%2C%20mental%20imagery,daily%20life%2C%20and%20health%20complications>).

1. **Strong cravings:** Individuals with an energy drink addiction often experience intense and frequent urges to consume these beverages.

2. **Mental imagery of drinking energy drinks:** A common symptom is repeatedly imagining or visualizing oneself drinking energy drinks. These mental images are vivid and intrusive, often occurring spontaneously throughout the day.

3. **Inability to control intake:** People struggling with energy drink addiction frequently find it challenging to limit their consumption. Despite efforts to cut back or stop, they continue to consume large quantities, often beyond what they intended. A 2023 study by Girán et al. published in *Heliyon* found that consumption of energy drinks among 157 students ranging from grades 3 to 8, with ages ranging from 10 to 15 years old, begins in the third grade and increases in frequency and quantity as they age. 13.1% of students in grades 7-8 drink energy drinks every day and 8.7% do so more than once a week.

4. **Physical dependence:** Regular consumption of energy drinks leads to physical dependence, where the body becomes reliant on caffeine and other stimulants.

5. **Tolerance development:** Over time, individuals need to consume increasing amounts of energy drinks to achieve the same stimulating effects. Regularly consuming extremely high amounts of caffeine, such as 750-1200 mg per day, can lead to a total or partial tolerance to the subjective, blood pressure-raising and neuroendocrine effects of caffeine, as per a 2009 study

titled, “Caffeinated Energy Drinks - A Growing Problem” published in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.

**Aerted drink addiction or soda addiction.** Soda is a drink made with potentially habit-forming ingredients like caffeine and sugar, making it uniquely enjoyable and leading to cravings.

If soda cravings turn into dependency, mental and physical health issues can follow. Soda addiction or dependence on soda, can lead to unwanted weight gain, type 2 diabetes, fatty liver disease, dental issues, weakened bones, heart disease and depression (<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/soda-addiction>).

There are few side effects. Soda is acidic and over time, it can discolor your teeth and wear out the enamel, thereby weakening your teeth and making you more prone to cavities and other dental issues (Korte *et al.*, 2019).

If you drink full-sugar soda instead of diet soda, this problem is magnified because sugar feeds the bacteria that form plaque, thus speeding up the process of tooth decay (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30889593/>).

The phosphoric acid in dark types of soda may also contribute to osteoporosis, a condition characterized by brittle bones (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30889593/>).

Symptoms of soda dependency are mostly related to your brain and nervous system function. For instance, symptoms you may experience include:

- Strong cravings;
- A thirst that can only be satisfied by soda;
- A mental preoccupation with drinking soda;
- The inability to moderate your soda intake.

Another symptom is experiencing withdrawal symptoms, such as a headache, irritability, depressed mood or grogginess, when you’re unable to have soda.

What is the role of a social worker in treating drinking addiction?

First of all, it should be noted that the person with the addiction must want to seek treatment himself. In this treatment, the social worker only plays a mediating role. Here are some key aspects of their role:

**1.Assessment and Diagnosis:** Social workers assess individuals to understand the extent of their addiction and any underlying issues, such as mental health disorders or trauma.

**2.Treatment Planning:** They collaborate with clients to create personalized treatment plans, which may include therapy, support groups or rehabilitation programs.

**3.Counseling:** Social workers offer individual and group counseling to help clients explore the root causes of their addiction and develop coping strategies.

**4.Resource Connection:** They connect clients with community resources, such as housing assistance, employment support or healthcare services, to address broader challenges.

**5.Advocacy:** Social workers advocate for clients, ensuring they have access to necessary services and support systems.

**6.Education:** They educate clients and their families about addiction, recovery and healthy lifestyle choices.

**7.Relapse Prevention:** Social workers help clients identify triggers and develop strategies to prevent relapse.

But it is also important to have rehabilitation centers for people with disabilities. However some people do not wonder this treatment. Because treatment is a very difficult and painful way. However, the development of medicine helps them a little on this way. The production of various medicines and their unhindered delivery to patients helps to make this treatment easier.

It is important to find new, easy-to-use treatment methods for addiction victims. However, it must be said that this is not easy at all because, day by day, the demand for the use of these drinks is increasing day by day. Some countries have bans on the consumption of these substances, but this does not seem to have any effect on reducing the number of addiction victims.

**Keywords:** Drinking addiction, soda addiction, alcohol use disorder, nergy drinks addiction.

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## **NON-INSTITUTIONAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY IN RUSSIA: BALANCE OF FAMILY AND OUT- FAMILY TYPES OF SUPPORT**

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### **Relevance and research question**

This paper examines elderly care in the context of recent demographic shifts. Experts associate the new phase of demographic transition with increased longevity, reflected in rising life expectancy due to declining mortality among older populations (Eggleston *et al.*, 2019). For instance, in Russia, life expectancy for men over 60 increased from 13.26 years in 2005 to 16.71 years in 2022, while for women over 55, it rose from 22.85 years to 26.08 years during the same period (<https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13877>).

The growing proportion of older age groups poses challenges not only to Russia's economy and social systems but also to households. The strong tradition of non-institutional elderly care in Russia, coupled with underdeveloped non-governmental support systems, places a disproportionate burden on families (particularly women) to care for elderly relatives. This study explores the balance between family and non-family, as well as institutional and non-institutional forms of elderly care, a topic of increasing relevance in Russia.

The study focuses on non-institutional care practices, presenting empirical data to address two key questions: How are care practices distributed between household members and external caregivers (e.g., neighbors, friends, relatives)? And how are family resources and roles allocated in elderly care?

### **Empirical base and research methodology**

The data from the National Survey of the older generation is used. National survey of older generation based on the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe. National survey of people 50 years old and over were conducted by CESSI in cooperation with Highest School of Economics in the fall 2023 (second wave) on random probability sample by face-to-face interviews in respondent's homes.

The research model analyzed care practices along two dimensions: types of care and subject-object relationships. Care types were categorized by content (personal care, household help, document assistance and "other" forms, such as digital support) and by caregiver (household

relatives or external helpers). Respondents were asked: “What kind of assistance have you received over the past 12 months?” and “Who provided this care?”.

The subject-object dimension examined caregiver-consumer dynamics across gender, age groups and family roles.

### **Some results of the study**

The sample included 2,781 respondents: 999 aged 50-59; 551 aged 60-64; 449 aged 65-69; 469 aged 70-74 and 313 aged 75+. Household compositions varied: 1,373 lived alone; 558 with a spouse; 405 with children (no spouse) and 415 in other arrangements.

Less than 40% of respondents received any assistance: 15% (415) relied on non-family caregivers, while 19% (529) received help from household members. Usage rates increased with age -35% of those 75+ received external help and 44% relied on household caregivers. Gender disparities emerged: men reported higher rates of family care, while women more frequently cited non-family support.

The most common need was personal care (59%), followed by household help (39%) and document assistance (9%). “Other” assistance included digital support (e.g., using technology, online services).

Caregiver-consumer configurations revealed gender, familial and age-based patterns. Balanced relationships were observed among women, spouses and age-matched groups, while shifts toward caregivers occurred among adult children, other relatives and men. Conversely, parents and older individuals were more likely to be care consumers.

### **Conclusion**

The study highlights the enduring importance of traditional non-institutional care (e.g., relatives, friends, neighbors) for older Russians. However, the prevalence of single-person households and the high demand for personal care (the most complex type of assistance) suggest these non-institutional forms of elderly care may be less effective for certain groups of populations.

**Keywords:** Ageing of the population in Russia, elderly care, non-institutional types of care for the elderly, family care, non-family care.

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<https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13877> Accessed on 12.03.2025.



## ADDRESSING DIVERSE NEEDS: THE IMPERATIVE FOR SPECIALIZED WOMEN'S SHELTERS IN TÜRKİYE

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Violence against women is a grave global issue, representing a fundamental violation of human rights and a significant impediment to public health and well-being. In response to this critical problem, women's shelters have emerged internationally as vital resources, offering immediate safety, essential support and crucial pathways to recovery for individuals, predominantly women and their children, who are escaping situations of domestic violence and abuse (Diner & Toktaş, 2013; Toktaş & Diner, 2015). Within the specific context of Türkiye, the problem of violence against women is further exacerbated by deeply rooted patriarchal social structures and persistent gender inequalities that contribute to its widespread prevalence and societal normalization (Ünver *et al.*, 2024). While general women's shelters in Türkiye provide indispensable initial assistance, the intricate and diverse needs of survivors necessitate a more nuanced and targeted approach through the development and implementation of specialized shelters designed to address specific vulnerabilities and lived experiences (Sharifi *et al.*, 2024).

The genesis of the women's shelter movement can be traced back to the late 1960s and 1970s, a period marked by the rise of the second-wave feminist movement across the globe, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States. The primary impetus behind this movement was the pressing need to confront entrenched gender inequality, challenge the pervasive issue of male dominance and establish secure havens for women fleeing violence, often in direct response to the perceived failures of mainstream institutions to offer adequate protection and support. Pioneering shelters, such as the first in England in 1970 and in the US in 1973, represented the formalization of community-driven efforts to address the urgent crisis of domestic violence (Harmon, 2024). Over time, the women's shelter movement has undergone significant development and expansion (Sharifi *et al.*, 2024). The scope of services offered by these shelters has broadened considerably, evolving beyond basic emergency accommodation to encompass comprehensive support systems that address the multifaceted needs of survivors, including crucial emotional support, essential childcare provisions, access to legal and medical assistance and increasingly, initiatives aimed at fostering women's empowerment and facilitating their journey towards regaining autonomy. Furthermore, the movement has witnessed the emergence of vital global and regional networks, most notably the Global Network of Women's Shelters (GNWS), which plays a critical role in

fostering international collaboration, facilitating the sharing of knowledge and best practices and undertaking collective advocacy to combat violence against women on a global scale (Bond & Phillips, 2001). Recognizing the diverse needs and contexts of survivors, the international landscape of women's shelters has also seen a diversification of models, including the development of second-stage and transitional housing options providing longer-term support, third-stage housing for continued assistance, safe homes networks offering temporary refuge within communities, emergency safe spaces for immediate protection, confidential private accommodation for heightened security needs and sanctuary schemes enabling women to remain safely in their own homes while removing the perpetrator.

Violence against women in Türkiye is a deeply concerning issue, accurately defined by the United Nations as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (CFCU, 2009). This violence manifests in various forms across the country, including prevalent intimate partner violence encompassing physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, as well as sexual violence, the tragic phenomenon of femicide, harmful practices like honor killings and early and forced marriages and the growing concern of technology-facilitated violence (Lauri *et al.*, 2023). Data consistently reveal the alarmingly high prevalence of violence against women in Türkiye, with UN reports, government surveys and independent research indicating significant rates of physical, sexual and emotional violence experienced by women across different demographics (Şenol *et al.*, 2021). The particularly devastating issue of femicide sees hundreds of women losing their lives to violence each year. The impact of this violence on women in Türkiye is profound, leading to severe physical and mental health consequences (including injuries, chronic pain, reproductive health problems, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide attempts), significant socioeconomic repercussions (such as job loss, poverty and homelessness) and detrimental effects on the well-being of their children who may witness or experience abuse. The persistence and severity of violence against women in Türkiye are inextricably linked to deeply entrenched patriarchal structures and pervasive social inequalities that create a societal context where such violence is often normalized, justified and perpetuated (Sen & Bolsoy, 2017).

The journey towards recognizing violence against women as a violation of fundamental human rights gained significant momentum globally with the United Nations' 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, a pivotal moment that influenced the framing of this issue in Türkiye and beyond. In Türkiye, the second-wave feminist movement, which emerged in the mid-1980s, played a crucial role in bringing the experiences of violence against women into the public consciousness and onto the political agenda through various forms of activism, consciousness-raising initiatives and persistent advocacy for legal and policy reforms (CAWC,

2025). Early feminist initiatives included the establishment of the first independent women's shelter in Türkiye, Mor Çatı (Purple Roof), in 1990, marking a crucial step towards providing organized support for survivors outside of traditional state-controlled structures. The subsequent historical development of support systems for abused women in Türkiye saw initial efforts primarily driven by feminist organizations, followed by a gradual increase in the state's involvement through the establishment of "Women's Guesthouses" under the purview of the Ministry of Family and Social Services, as well as the development of municipal shelters in some areas (Ökten, 2019). However, these early support systems faced significant limitations, including an insufficient number and overall capacity of shelters to meet the widespread need, limited financial and human resources, a lack of specialized services tailored to diverse vulnerabilities and persistent challenges related to accessibility and ensuring the safety and security of survivors within a deeply patriarchal societal context.

The persistent and pervasive nature of violence against women in Türkiye, coupled with the demonstrated limitations of general women's shelters, underscores the critical imperative for the development and implementation of specialized shelters. These specialized facilities are essential to effectively address the complex and diverse needs of survivors, particularly those belonging to vulnerable groups such as women with disabilities, women in life-threatening situations and migrant women, whose experiences and requirements may not be adequately met within the framework of general shelters (Havali & Sepetcioğlu, 2023). The provision of holistic, interdisciplinary and trauma-informed care is paramount, extending beyond basic shelter to encompass the specific psychological, emotional, social and legal support necessary for different survivor groups to heal and rebuild their lives. Creating safe and supportive environments that are specifically tailored to the unique vulnerabilities and lived experiences of marginalized women is crucial, as these individuals may encounter additional and significant barriers in accessing and benefiting from the services offered by general shelters.

The current state of women's shelters internationally reveals a trend towards recognizing and developing diverse models, including specialized facilities, alongside general emergency and transitional shelters. These shelters offer a range of services, including safety, emotional support, counseling, referral services and advocacy, but often face challenges related to funding, staffing and effectively meeting the increasingly complex needs of survivors. In Türkiye, the current landscape of women's shelters is characterized by a limited number of facilities with an overall capacity that falls far short of the extensive need, particularly given the high rates of violence against women. While some specialized shelters exist, primarily for victims of human trafficking, there is a significant lack of facilities tailored to the specific needs of other vulnerable groups such as women with disabilities or migrant women (Havali & Sepetcioğlu, 2023). Women seeking shelter in Türkiye often encounter numerous challenges, including limited availability of spaces,

restrictive admission criteria and shelter rules, concerns about the security and confidentiality of shelters and in some instances, a lack of trust in the responsiveness and effectiveness of state authorities. The geographical distribution of shelters is also uneven, with a limited number available in metropolitan areas and even fewer in rural regions, impacting accessibility for women across the country. The services offered by women's shelters in Türkiye typically include temporary accommodation, meals, legal and psychological counseling and support in accessing social services and employment opportunities. However, the quality and comprehensiveness of these services can vary and shelters often face resource constraints and staffing challenges.

Academic and policy perspectives increasingly emphasize the critical need for specialized women's shelters in Türkiye to provide more effective and tailored support to diverse survivor populations (UN Women, 2023). Arguments for specialization highlight the importance of addressing the unique needs of different groups and the limitations of a generalized approach. Trauma-informed specialized shelters are seen as particularly beneficial in promoting healing and recovery for survivors with specific experiences of violence. However, the implementation of specialized shelters in Türkiye faces several potential challenges. These include significant funding constraints and the necessity of securing sustained financial support from governmental and non-governmental sources; staffing challenges related to recruiting and retaining qualified professionals with expertise in diverse areas of support, as well as the need for specialized training for all shelter staff; potential societal resistance arising from prevailing patriarchal norms and conservative ideologies that may oppose the establishment of women-only or migrant women-inclusive spaces and the existing lack of effective authority and coordination among the various stakeholders involved in addressing violence against women.

In conclusion, the development of specialized women's shelters in Türkiye is not merely an enhancement but a critical necessity for providing effective and equitable support and protection for women experiencing violence. Addressing the diverse and complex needs of all survivors requires a move beyond generalized approaches towards tailored interventions that cater to specific vulnerabilities and lived experiences. Overcoming the existing challenges, including increasing shelter capacity, securing sustainable funding, providing specialized staff training and addressing societal resistance, will be crucial for creating a robust and responsive shelter system. Ultimately, the establishment of a comprehensive network of specialized women's shelters in Türkiye holds significant potential for enhancing the safety, well-being and empowerment of women experiencing violence, thereby contributing to the broader societal goals of achieving gender equality and ending all forms of violence against women.

**Keywords:** Violence against women in Türkiye, women's shelters, specialized shelters, trauma-informed care.

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## IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING SOCIAL HARMS AFFECTING IRANIAN CHILDREN: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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Childhood is a critical developmental stage with profound impacts on individuals and society. In Iran, children face numerous social harms, yet comprehensive studies addressing these issues holistically are lacking. This study aims to systematically identify and prioritize the most pressing social harms affecting Iranian children, using a qualitative approach to analyze data from national and provincial reports (2013-2019). The research addresses three key questions:

1. What are the major social issues impacting Iranian children?
2. How prevalent are these harms?
3. Which issues require urgent intervention?

### Key Findings

The study identifies **12 major social harms**, including:

1. Child sexual abuse;
2. General child abuse;
3. Orphaned children;
4. Homeless children;
5. Child prostitution;
6. Child labor;
7. Children with addicted parents;
8. Lack of education;
9. Children associated with prostitution;
10. Stateless children;
11. Malnutrition;
12. Additional abuse cases;

A provincial-level analysis across 11 regions revealed severe disparities. For example:

- **Sexual abuse** scored highest in Tehran (85.42) and Mazandaran (86.96).

- **Child labor and homelessness** were prevalent in underdeveloped provinces like Sistan and Baluchestan.
- Over **90% of identified issues scored above 60** in severity, indicating widespread systemic challenges.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study highlights the **interconnected nature** of these harms, rooted in socioeconomic inequalities, legal gaps, and institutional failures. Key recommendations include:

1. **Policy and Legal Reforms:** Strengthen child protection laws and ensure enforcement.
2. **Education and Awareness:** Expand access to schooling and reduce stigma around mental health.
3. **Community-Based Interventions:** Develop local child protection networks and alternative care models.
4. **Multi-Sector Collaboration:** Coordinate efforts among government, NGOs and international bodies.
5. **Data-Driven Solutions:** Establish a national database to monitor trends and evaluate interventions.

Protecting children's rights requires **collective action** to dismantle systemic barriers. This research provides a framework for evidence-based, culturally informed strategies to safeguard Iranian children's well-being.

**Keywords:** Child welfare, social harms, Iran, policy interventions, qualitative analysis.

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## UPBRINGING AS A SOCIAL FACTOR DETERMINING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN SOCIALLY VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS

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In the process of upbringing, the development of competencies related to emotional intelligence is one of the most important factors. The ability to perceive, understand and manage our own and others' feelings helps us to take into account both our own and other people's emotional states and have a positive impact on them.

The development of an adolescent into a successful personality depends equally on well-developed cognitive abilities and a high level of emotional development. Despite the fact that genetic factors have the most significant influence on personality development, the above-mentioned skills are primarily formed in the family, surrounded by parents. This issue is especially important for families that have socially vulnerable status.

Based on the above, the present study aims to empirically study the influence of parental attitudes, behavioral styles and parenting methods on the development of emotional intelligence in socially vulnerable adolescents.

As a result of the study and analysis of relevant scientific literature, the following hypothesis was formulated - the level of emotional intelligence is related to the parenting style. According to the literature, parenting style as a social factor influences the development of emotional intelligence.

The object of the research is the process of developing emotional intelligence in adolescents with social status.

The subject of the research is the process of influencing the emotional intelligence of the parenting style used with adolescents.

Accordingly, the goal of the study is to empirically test this hypothesis and to empirically study the influence of parental attitudes, behavioral styles and parenting methods on the development of emotional intelligence in adolescents.

Quantitative methods were selected for the study, which involves fixing predetermined study variables and measuring them quantitatively.

The study was conducted in educational institutions of Georgia.

100 socially vulnerable adolescents participated in the study.

The following instruments were used in the study:

The “Emotional Intelligence” test developed by S. Belyaev.

The “Parental Behavior and Child Attitude Test” by E. Shafer.

The study discusses in detail scientific findings based on research from recent decades and modern theories about emotional intelligence. Within the concept of emotional intelligence, important aspects of the psychology of emotion are discussed, as well as those competencies and personal characteristics related to emotions that determine a person's success. This section of the paper also presents an analysis of empirical studies related to emotional intelligence and parenting style.

The study has both theoretical and practical value. The theoretical value of the paper is its contribution to the verification of existing theoretical assumptions and constructs about parental behavior and related phenomena. Analysis of empirical data obtained on the phenomenon of emotional intelligence, its predictors and the characteristics and mechanisms of the manifestation of this phenomenon in adolescents.

The practical value is primarily expressed in the fact that, in the complex psychological development process of adolescence, revealing the mechanisms of the process of positive transformation of adolescents will help practicing psychologists, teachers, parents and all those interested in this issue in planning and implementing effective interventions, developing relevant recommendations and creating the necessary training modules in this direction.

The study was conducted among primary school students in Georgia. Empirical analysis of the data revealed the highest percentages ( $n=100$ ) of positive (Poz), inconsistent (Ned) and hostile (Hos) parenting styles. It was also found that parents use a positive parenting style towards girls and boys, as confirmed by the high rate of positive interest. This means that the child's needs such as security, love, care and affiliation are fully met in the relationship with the parents.

The study showed that the overall lowest rate of authoritative-hostile parenting styles was reported by both girls and boys.

This means that parents do not express hostility towards their child and accept him/her unconditionally. In such a case, the relationship between parents and children is aimed at openness, goodwill and mutual understanding.

According to correlation analysis, a statistically significant relationship was confirmed between the directive parenting style implemented by the mother and father and both personal emotional intelligence and communicative emotional intelligence. This means that the more a parent uses a directive parenting style, the higher the personal and communicative intelligence of both boys and girls.

Based on the research conducted, appropriate recommendations are presented.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, parenting style, socially vulnerable, adolescent, family.

## FRAMING VICTIMHOOD: MEDIA COVERAGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PAKISTAN

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**Violence against Women:** violence against women persists as a private problem and an inherent part of cultural, social and patriarchal worldviews (Pourya Asl & Hanafia, 2024). According to World Health Organization (WHO), violence against women is a common and acceptable practice globally, though its prevalence varies widely from country to country (Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015). It affects people of all races, ages, ethnicities, religions, geographical settings and socio-economic classes. The highest rates of domestic violence have been observed in Africa, South East Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean. Among Asian countries, data from Pakistan reveals that more than one-third of married women have disclosed that they feel harassed by their partners and about two thirds have reported that they have witnessed violence in their parental homes (WHO, 2024). Studies reveal that domestic violence against married women is alarmingly high in Pakistan. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2023), 34% of ever-married women in Pakistan report experiencing spousal physical, sexual or emotional violence. Domestic violence in Pakistan is deeply rooted in the country's patriarchal social structures, where women's subordinate status and limited access to resources and decision-making power contribute to their vulnerability (Zafar & Batool, 2019). Furthermore, cultural stigmas and societal pressures discourage many women from reporting abuse. In many cases, victims face double victimization: first by their abusers and then by a system that inadequately addresses their grievances (NCHR, 2023).

**Violence against women and Media Coverage in Pakistan:** Violence against women in Pakistan remains a deeply ingrained issue, fundamentally intertwined with cultural, societal and patriarchal norms. In Pakistan, recent alarming incidents of married women subjected to extreme violence, including murder by their husbands or in-laws, underscore the critical need to explore how media coverage influences public perception and the justice system's inadequacies in addressing domestic violence. This research aims to investigate the interplay between gender-based violence, social justice and media representation, revealing how media narratives can either reinforce stereotypes or advocate for systemic change.

Despite the existence of legal protections, including the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act of 2012, challenges such as insufficient enforcement, societal stigma and

indifference continue to perpetuate a cycle of silence and injustice. This study utilizes a social justice perspective to assess how media coverage impacts the reporting and perception of domestic violence cases, analyzing the extent to which such coverage reflects or challenges societal attitudes and the justice system's response.

### Methodology

Employing a qualitative approach, this research involves a comprehensive analysis of media articles, broadcasts and digital content related to notable incidents of domestic violence in Pakistan. By scrutinizing how these cases are portrayed, the study aims to identify patterns in media framing, language use and the overall narrative surrounding domestic violence. Additionally, the research will include insights from reports published by human rights organizations and academic literature to contextualize media portrayals within broader societal frameworks.

The anticipated findings are expected to illuminate the significant role of media in shaping public discourse about domestic violence, highlighting how certain representations can either reinforce negative stereotypes or promote empathy and action. The study will conclude with recommendations for enhancing media accountability, advocating for responsible reporting practices and fostering awareness campaigns that challenge pervasive patriarchal norms, thereby contributing to a more just society for women in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, women's rights, gender inequality, social justice, media coverage.

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