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Changing National Health Values of Russian Youth Aged 13-17: Motivation for Engagement in Physical Culture and Sports in Regions



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Abstract



Keywords

health sociology; health values; healthcare; healthy lifestyle; medicine sociology; Russian youth health; The article is devoted to the study of the attitudes of contemporary Russian youth to a healthy lifestyle, healthcare in general, and physical culture and sports. As a result of a qualitative sociological study, the main trends and perspectives in the perception of a healthy lifestyle, physical culture, and sports in Russian regions are discovered and defined. The study specifies the motivational aspects of young Russians' attitudes to a healthy lifestyle, healthcare, physical culture, and sports. The specific features of the development of regional physical culture and sports in Russia, as well as the characteristics of the perception of physical culture and sports by various groups of Russian youth in the regions of the country, are identified. The attitudes to social stereotypes concerning a healthy lifestyle and sports in the minds of Russian citizens are discovered. The practical significance of the study results: the conclusions of the project can be used for the development of youth policy, as well as the development of new programs for the optimization of young people's lifestyle and the development of physical culture and sports in Russia. The study results can be utilized for the innovation of courses on the sociology of health and disease, sociology of physical culture and sports, and sociology of medicine.

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1 Introduction

Recently, a lot of information is devoted to the priorities in Russia's future national policy (Government of the Russian Federation, 2018). Russian President Vladimir V. Putin names the improvement of people's welfare and life expectancy as the main goals of Russia's national policy. Within the framework of the President's projects, it is planned, among other things, to develop the sports infrastructure of educational organizations. In other words, the principal importance is attributed to physical culture and sports as powerful levers that determine the nation's health (Kataeva & Fomicheva, 2017). According to VTsIOM, 76% of Russians engage in physical culture and sports with varying frequency (VTsIOM, 2020). By 2024, it is planned to organize the development of educational programs focused, among other things, on healthcare in every educational organization. Life expectancy in Russia is planned to be increased to 78 years by 2024 and to 80 years by 2030. The promotion of self-preservation behavior among Russians is one of the priority tasks of the Russian government. Russian youth is the social group that is especially important for the development of sustainable self-preservation attitudes (Knyazev et al., 2004; Woan et al., 2013).

2 Materials and Methods

Due to the increasing interest of Russian society in the problem of healthy lifestyle and engagement in physical culture, a sociological study was conducted to explore the attitudes to physical culture and sports in the groups of Russian youth (Wilson, 2003; Spence & Lee, 2003). The goal of the study was to reveal the regional specifics in motivation to engage in physical culture and sports in contemporary Russia. The utilized research method was focused on online interviews; the respondents recruited for the study represented the age group of 13 to 17 years old and lived in the cities of Volgograd and Sevastopol. The study procedure included two focused interviews with 18 respondents surveyed. The online interviews were conducted in July 2021. The conducted study was qualitative and was indicative for the study of the specifics of regional consumption. In addition to the focused online interview, document analysis methods were used (analysis of secondary sociological information, normative and legal documentation, etc.).

3 Results and Discussions

3.1 Positive perception of physical culture and sports

The study respondents mainly associate sports with joy, good mood, and load in the best sense of the word: *"health benefits", "good mood", "new acquaintances", "a chance to have a good rest"*. The purpose of engaging in physical activity is defined by the study participants as *"keeping the body in good physical shape", "exercising", "wellness procedures",* etc. In some cases, the respondents view sports as a way to become stronger and a means of achieving aesthetic goals in terms of one's body and mind (Oosterhoff et al., 2020). Some people note the following pattern in their need for sports: *"people who engage in physical culture come in two types: those*"

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who already have no choice and exercise for health reasons and those who take care of their condition in advance (preventively)".

Interestingly, the respondents see the difference between amateur and professional sports in the amount of time devoted to sports, as well as the effort spent on sports, the financial infusion, and the coaching work (Kurtieva et al., 2021). At the same time, the respondents note that sport is *"something different"* for each of them. The respondents who engage in professional sports report having long, exhausting training sessions, having done a lot of physical work on themselves (Duffield et al., 2010; Widana et al., 2021). The respondents often associate *"harm to health, injuries"* with professional sports. It is noted by the study participants that it takes a long time for an amateur to become a professional.

Regarding the availability of sports in Russian regions, the study participants generally report that they do have the opportunities to engage in the most popular types of sport in Volgograd, except for winter sports (e.g. hockey, figure skating). Nevertheless, such sports as swimming and judo are developed. This can be explained by the specifics of climate in Volgograd. The availability of sports in Sevastopol is noted by the respondents mainly to paid services (Pogodaeva et al., 2015; Sharafutdinov et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2020).

In the course of the study, the respondents were asked to describe their environment and the stereotype of a "hero of our time". Speaking about their environment, the respondents mainly note that their acquaintances and friends lead a rather sporty lifestyle – "sportspeople". Describing the "hero of our time", the respondents state that the main attribute of modern heroization is a person's life success and the character traits worth respecting. It does not matter if a person does sports or not. Rather, the hero may or may not be connected with sports (Silakarma et al., 2021). One striking view is heroism-altruism: "a hero is someone who unselfishly does something for others, such as risking their own life to pull others from a burning bus. It is not strength that makes a person a hero, it is their spirit". The respondents were also asked to identify the motivating factors for doing sports. The list of the reasons that may motivate the respondents to do sports includes primary health, staying fit, gaining useful skills, awards, etc (Coutts & Duffield, 2010).

3.2 Ambiguous perception of physical culture and sports

The factors that can be viewed as barriers to doing sports identified by the respondents are *"injuries," "laziness," "fatigue," "lack of time," "not being able to find the fitting format of relationship with sports"*. Among such barriers is also the long-term result of the expectation of success in sports: *"laziness, the lack of understanding that sport is a deferred result, there can be no result 'here and now"*. The long wait for results in sports discourages many people. Other arguments noted include *"lack of money", "laziness", "health restrictions", "lack of time"*, etc.

Many respondents point out that they got into sports thanks to their parents, who once enrolled them in sports clubs. Parents continue to support their children's sports hobbies even now. The associative series related to sports can be defined as follows: "*sports are important, beneficial, entertaining*…". Speaking of the respondents' parents, they are rather uninvolved in sports. In the cases when they do sports, it is more like an exercise in the morning or some other type of "supportive activity".

The sources of information about sports and sports-related events for the respondents are social networks (YouTube, Instagram, Vkontakte, TikTok, etc.); training videos and competitions are popular content. The content on social networks motivates people to do sports. The young respondents are mostly not interested in mass media. Touching upon the topic of the dynamics in the development of attitudes to sports in Russia, the respondents argue that it is rather positive: "sports have become fashionable thanks to bloggers"; "in recent years, more and more people get involved in sports", etc. In some people, personal attitudes to sports develop along a certain trajectory: "at first, there was enthusiasm, then I got involved, kept training, burned-out...". When talking about the emotions associated with sports, the respondents most often recall "disconnection from normal life", "positivity", "relaxation", "excitement", "sports is a lot of work and patience", etc.

Sport is believed to perform several functions, including educational, developmental, communicative, and patriotic, uniting social groups and developing the nation (Beliaeva, 2021; Khetagurova *et al.*, 2018; Kryukova *et al.*, 2018; Kryukova & Khetagurova, 2020; Kryukova *et al.*, 2021; Yudina *et al.*, 2018). Researchers typically view sports and physical culture as the most simple way of preserving health and restoring a person's ability to work (Tanatova *et al.*, 2020). Considering the future of Russia, mass sport is a vital instrument of preserving the health of the population. Many demographic indicators show the trends of decreasing birth rate and rising

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mortality. Some countries already face the realities of the natural loss of population (Grigoriev et al., 2018). The birth rate is often below the level necessary for societal reproduction. Because of demographic trends and trends of declining population health, mass physical education and sports and the popularization of a healthy lifestyle are among the priority tasks of the Russian leadership (Bazi et al., 2020; Rabilero et al., 2020). The Strategy for the Development of Physical Culture and Sports in Russia until 2030 assumes that by 2020, the proportion of citizens regularly engaging in physical culture and sports will reach 40% (Government of the Russian Federation, 2020, 2021). The idea of utilizing social networks to popularize sports finds an active response among young people (Drobyshev et al., 2017; Drobyshev et al., 2017; Kryukova et al., 2018; Kryukova et al., 2017; Mosalev et al., 2018).

4 Conclusion

The majority of respondents generally confirm the fact of their regular physical activity (and sometimes professional sports). The study reveals the respondents' suggestions for the popularization of sports. It is worth noting the almost complete focus on social networks (Instagram, etc.) (Fomicheva, 2021; Yudina et al., 2018). Respondents suggest carrying out propaganda and agitation mainly in the form of demonstrative performances (for children and other categories of citizens). They note that "someone else's positive example" has a particular influence on participation in sports. As for the suggestions on how to strengthen the position of sports in the life of modern youth, some respondents propose further activation of the Ready for Labour and Defence complex and even its expansion.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected many respondents, having reduced the rate of their physical activity, as many gyms got closed and no training was available. Some respondents switched to remote interaction with their trainers. Working with Russian youth to introduce them to physical culture and sports undoubtedly has to begin in the family and continue in schools. This is the way that can allow improving the health of the Russian nation.

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