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THE PREVENTION OF BAD HABITS AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract

We consider the problem of preventing bad habits among adolescences. On the basis of existing theoretical approaches and the results of survey conducted by us at Kazan Federal University we identifies the factors which contribute to the formation of harmful habits among students. Adhering to the principle that it is always better to prevent a disease than to treat it, we pay careful attention to the prevention of harmful habits and to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle among young people. In this article we present a pedagogical approach which enabled us to develop a system of practical measures for effective prevention and treatment of harmful habits among students. These measures can be practically applied both in humanitarian and technical universities. The important point in this article is that it is necessary to create an integrated system which includes various university structural units for the purpose of coordinating all kinds of activities aimed at preventing bad habits among students, encouraging them to pursue a healthy lifestyle and preserve their health. Based on the realization of axiological foundations of a healthy lifestyle, these activities should be performed systematically, providing a certain impact on students' structure of needs and their self-improvement processes. As a value *health* should be a priority in students' value system while self-improvement should be based on their spiritual-moral qualities. Students must be taught the skills of adherence to a healthy lifestyle, and we believe that our concept can be helpful in this respect.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The relevance of the research

The relevance of this research relates to the fact that modern social development is inhibited by the lack of readiness in people to lead a healthy lifestyle. Moreover, despite the increased levels of attention of the current Governments to health issues, such negative phenomena as drug abuse and alcoholism still represent serious problems in Russia. First of all, this concerns young people. The activity aimed at preventing bad habits among school children and students is often inefficient. Therefore the study of the problem of preventing bad habits among young people is fundamentally important.

1.2. Literature review

Such habits as smoking, alcoholism, and drug addiction are detrimental to people's health. The problem of preventing such habits among young people was studied by many authors. For example, Ellickson et al. (2003) studied public health problems associated with youth drinking. Wills, Sargent, and Gibbons (2009) considered adolescent alcohol problems. Vries et al. (2003) viewed parents' and friends' smoking habits as a predictor of future smoking among children. Madarasova-Geckova et al. (2005) scrutinized the influence of socio-economic status, parents and peers on smoking behaviour of teenagers. Minkin and Dobrotvorskaya (2002) described the current state of spiritual-moral health of the youth and outlined relevant problems. Pilyushenko (2014) made an attempt to define the value status of a healthy lifestyle.

What are reasons for bad habits? It is well known that an important role in this phenomenon is being played by social factors. Thus, the unprecedented growth in smoking in Russia in 1990th is connected with the fact that the demand for cigarettes differed from the volume of tobacco production. Bad habits may be stipulated by the desire of a person to belong to a particular social group. Certain unmet needs of young people may cause a psychological stress which, in turn, may promote the use of psychotropic drugs. Human needs are individual for every person. The wider the spectrum of spiritual needs of a person is, the less likely they are to develop bad habits. At the same time, low self-esteem can contribute to the formation of bad habits. Even the prevalence of spiritual needs over material ones does not guarantee the absence of bad habits. Thus, a drug addiction can be caused by dissatisfaction with oneself, which is strongly pronounced with a high development of spiritual needs. Another reason for forming bad habits can be connected to the gaps in education such, to a weak will, and a lack of need for a healthy lifestyle. Emotional fatigue can also cause the formation of bad habits, but this more often takes place among people of mature age. Mental disorders also predispose to the development of bad habits. We mean a psychopathic nature of a person, neuroses, craniocerebral traumas, and weak somatic health. Hereditary factors, though they are also predisposing, do not necessarily cause the formation in children of the same harmful habit as in their parents. Thus, the hereditary complication is observed in 37 – 40% of patients with alcoholism. And yet, this is a very high value. The problem of the genetic predisposition to alcoholism was thoroughly studied by many researchers, but no specific gene for alcoholism was found (Fedoseev, 1992; Chisholm, 1994). The mentioned reasons are mainly characteristic for adults.

Reasons for developing bad habits in young people may be different. Both in adults and young people, they are connected with a complex of social, economic, and personal factors. These factors were studied by many authors. For example, Matosova (2012) described factors that promote the consumption of alcoholic beverages by teenagers and youth. Psychological predispositions for the use of alcohol by adolescents were studied by Mares, Vorst, and Engels (2011), while the social impact of mass media to this phenomenon was considered by Gibbons, Pomery, Gerrard et al. (2011). Poor social adaptation, adverse social factors (especially those coming from the family) can also contribute to the development and retention of bad habits in adolescents and youth. Thus, 70% of young people who have an alcohol addiction developed it due to the influence of their parents or other adults in their lives who consumed alcoholic drinks in their presence (Chisholm, 1994). The desire of adolescents to imitate as well as their poor health awareness can contribute to the development of bad habits. Children and youth often misunderstand or underestimate the consequences of their exposure to smoking, alcohol, and drugs. The main argument for smoking among young people is the idea that smoking calms the nerves. False views on the impact of psychotropic substances are common not only in children but also in adults. These false views have deep historical roots. According to results of the research conducted at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century in Western Europe and South America, adults gave alcohol to children in order to ‘improve their health’, ‘increase appetite’, ‘accelerate growth’, ‘facilitate teething’, ‘warm the body’, ‘satisfy hunger’, and to ‘calm children’ (Bratus', 1985). As for young people, the formation of bad habits in them is often curiosity-driven. Discussing effects of the exposure to psychotropic substances may have a strong appeal. The danger is that many young people believe that they need to experiment and that then can easily give up any habit if they want to.

Bad habits are damaging to health. Wills, Sandy, and Yaeger (2002) studied the interconnection between the consumption of psychoactive substances among adolescents and problems they faced. Usually a teenager starts smoking and then he/she proceeds to try alcohol and drugs. Preferences of tastes depend on the social status of a person, his/her financial means, psychological characteristics, and so on. Adults and adolescents differ in their preferences of psychotropic drugs. Moreover, teenagers and youth are more sensitive to such substances. The mortality rate among young alcoholics and drug addicts is very high. The main causes of death are suicides, accidents, somatic diseases, over dosing, and intoxication (Morozov & Romanenko, 2004). As for drugs, it should be noted that young people are more likely to use more powerful drugs, while adults prefer weaker ones (Mol', 1983). This fact is connected with the specificity of young organisms. The scale of youth alcoholism, smoking, and drug addiction in the world is frightening.

Is there a solution to this problem? Vorob'eva and Babaeva (2015) consider the promotion of a healthy lifestyle as a key to the successful social development. Belova (2014) proposes some concrete approaches to preventing alcoholism among students. Pilyushenko (2014) treats the value status of a healthy lifestyle as the main motive for its realization. The attitude of the Russian population to a healthy lifestyle was also studied by Valieva, Mefod'eva, and Yarullina (2016). The authors consider levels, leading principles, and pedagogical conditions for forming the proper attitude of students to a healthy lifestyle on an interdisciplinary basis in the framework of educational programs. Alekseeva (2014) analyses the advantages and disadvantages of some forms of a healthy lifestyle which are being promoted in Russia in the framework of the strategy for the development of physical culture and sports. Mitsan

(2016) studies the impact of the motor activity of students of higher educational institutions on changes in their functional state during the study period. Konyaeva (2016) considers indicators of students' physical preparedness and their motivation for preserving health. Novikova and Kuz'min (2017) connect the problems of preserving students' health to the involvement of students in sports. University faculty should take into account the psychology of students, their abilities, types of mental activities, and much more. The most important task is to instil in students self-discipline, which allows them to preserve their health.

2. Problem Statement

2.1. The elaboration of the problem

The most important question is how to significantly improve the efficiency of preventive measures against bad habits in students? We have succeeded to

- reveal reasons for the formation of bad habits in youth and adults;
- describe the main features of the influence of psychoactive substances on a human organism;
- establish a moral basis for a healthy lifestyle;
- propose certain ways to form a healthy lifestyle in various categories of the population, including students.

However,

- the approach to preventing bad habits among students by integration of educational efforts is not thoroughly developed yet within the pedagogical theory; there is neither a proper theoretical basis, nor methodological guides for teachers and students;
- no methods for the effective encouragement of young people to pursue a healthy lifestyle are proposed, no barriers preventing this process are described;
- the development of sustainable motivation to a healthy lifestyle is not thoroughly studied in pedagogical scholarship yet;
- neither psychological nor pedagogical recommendations for higher school teachers effective for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle among young people have been developed yet;
- teachers are still not provided with an effective assessment tools (appropriate for estimating the readiness of an individual to a healthy lifestyle).

2.2. The theoretical and practical value of the paper

We develop a concept of systematic stimulation aimed at the prevention of bad habits among students. This concept includes principles, conditions, and factors that have a specific impact on the structure of needs of an individual and on his/her self-improvement processes. The value of health in students' system of values should be a priority, and the self-improvement should, first of all, be based on spiritual-moral qualities of a personality. Students must be taught the skills of adherence to a healthy lifestyle.

We describe a system of pedagogical measures aimed at prevention of bad habits among students. These measures can be applied practically both in humanitarian and technical universities.

3. Research Questions

3.1. Characteristics of how bad habits spread among students

In 2015 and 2017 we conducted a survey among students at Kazan Federal University (KFU). The findings show that only 7% of KFU students view their health as perfect, while 11% view it as unsatisfactory. Many students complained about the state of their nervous, digestive, and cardiovascular systems, frequent colds, and bad eyesight.

It is well known that bad habits affect health. However, none of the questioned KFU students have admitted abusing alcohol, while 49% of respondents have admitted drinking alcohol at clubs and parties.

Another bad habit is smoking tobacco and smoking various smoking blends. 14% of the respondents at the Faculty of Law of Kazan Federal University have admitted smoking cigarettes which is a smaller percentage in comparison to previous years. The smoking statistics in KFU this year is better than in 2015. Many KFU students are proud of the fact that they follow the modern trend of being healthy.

Though the percentage of smokers among students is not so high, about 47% of respondents have answered positively to the question «Do you smoke a hookah when you are offered one?». This makes one think hard. Many people refuse tobacco now, but at the same time they switch to smoking other substances ignoring the danger.

Because of their insufficient awareness many young and adult people do not entirely understand that bad habits can seriously undermine their health. Even if they are aware of the possible harm, they hope that nothing bad will happen to them.

In recent years, a wide range of countries has been overwhelmed by drug addiction. Drug addicts are often young people. Note that KFU students are insufficiently informed about drugs. Thus, in 2017 about 13% of KFU students believed that there are addiction-free drugs, while 5% of students did not answer this question at all. However, the situation in KFU is much better now than in previous years. Thus, in 2015, about 68% of Journalism students believed in the existence of harmless drugs. The quantity of students that had tried drugs at least once now equals 10%, which is a little bit less than 12% in 2015.

Though the situation in the university has improved in recent years, outside the university it has become even worse. It is rather difficult to resist harmful impacts. Thus, in 2015 about 42% of KFU students were offered to try drugs, while by now this figure has increased to 46%. In addition, 37% of KFU students have drug addicts among their friends.

At the same time, in certain issues the university students are informed very well. Thus, 27% of Law students in KFU are aware of prices for drugs and of places where drugs can be bought.

Undoubtedly, it is better to prevent a disease than to treat it.

3.2. The concept of the systematic promotion of a healthy lifestyle among students

The concept of the systematic promotion of a healthy lifestyle among students allows one to effectively prevent the development of bad habits in students and thus to preserve their health. Its essence

consists in pedagogically sound formation of the general and valeological culture of individuals during their education. The prevention of harmful habits among students is realized on the basis of the continuous improvement of the following factors:

- all units of the university structure should be involved in orienting students to a healthy lifestyle, namely, the university administration, heads of faculties, departments, research centers, youth organizations, etc;
- the educational process as a whole should be aimed at preventing bad habits among students and at preserving their health;
- the pedagogical practice related to preventing harmful habits in young people should be continuous.

The development of the system of measures aimed at orienting students to a healthy lifestyle has the following stages:

- Stage I – ‘Planning and organization’.
- Stage II – ‘Educational process’.
- Stage III – ‘Systematic improvement’.
- Stage IV – ‘Estimation and correction’.

The success in orienting students to a healthy lifestyle depends on the whole system of measures aimed at forming the structure of the value system and self-improvement of individuals. This system can help in raising the value of health in the value system to higher positions and to involve the moral sphere in the self-improvement processes.

3.3. The principles of preserving students' health and preventing them from developing harmful habits.

The process of students' self-improvement should be based on their own creative aspirations for self-development and self-improvement, on their understanding of the meaning of life, rejection of selfish psychological attitudes, and the practice of a healthy lifestyle.

3.4. The structure and components of students' readiness to a healthy lifestyle

The structure and components of students' readiness for a healthy lifestyle include high valeological culture and practical adherence to a healthy lifestyle.

3.5. Factors of pedagogical prevention of bad habits among students

Factors of pedagogical prevention of bad habits among students include the following measures:

- the creation of a university environment that encourages both students and academics to lead healthy lives;
- the active involvement of teachers and students in physical activities and sports;
- the development of academic disciplines that help raise the value of health, prioritise it over other values;

- setting positive examples;
- encouraging all of the participants of the educational process to engage in spiritual and moral self-development.

3.6. The system of pedagogical measures to encourage students to lead healthy lives

The approach to orienting students to a healthy lifestyle should be systematic and integrated. It is necessary to create an integrated university system aimed at the youth's orientation to a healthy lifestyle. This system should include various services and structures that can help in preserving students' health. The basis of such a system is a complex of pedagogical measures as a part of the all-university system of measures aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle among students and academics. In addition to educational activity, this system should have some other functions. Therefore all of the activities of the structural components of such a system should be clearly coordinated. Moreover, there is a necessity in a special structural unit for coordinating the work of university structures involved in orienting students and faculty to a healthy lifestyle. This, in turn, requires the development of local regulatory documents for all aspects of the activity related to the prevention of bad habits and promotion of a healthy lifestyle. This is a task for specific structural university units. The need for research in the stated area is also very high. This implies the conduction of pedagogical, sociological, psychophysiological, valeological, and other studies and the creation of a theoretical and methodological basis for the prevention of certain diseases. These are the tasks for research structures to create theoretical foundations for effectively promoting a healthy lifestyle among university students and staff. A holistic system of healthy lifestyle promotion should be dynamically developing, being aimed at the preservation of students' health. It should include university sports and health services, social, medical and valeological centers, the system for sanatorium treatment for students, student cafes, bars, and discos. An integrated approach is also necessary to develop health programs. Since the causes of various diseases are interrelated and, when some mechanism of the disease development is turned off, the organism can switch to some other mechanisms, the student's self-improvement process should be based on a complex system that defines basic parameters of a healthy lifestyle. An integrated approach also involves the use of potential opportunities for parents in upbringing the younger generation. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to orient family education towards a healthy lifestyle. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle should be carried out systematically, by all educational means. It is necessary to adjust the university education process with this goal in mind, i.e., the preservation of students' health. Only a systematic approach to creating conditions allowing students to orient themselves towards a healthy lifestyle can lead to success, so the entire higher education institution should be oriented towards a healthy lifestyle

4. Purpose of the Study

4.1. The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to establish the principles and conditions for preventing bad habits among students.

4.2. Objectives of the study

During the research we have succeeded in attaining the following objectives:

- 1) analyzing the main theoretical approaches to preventing bad habits among students;
- 2) developing and justifying a pedagogical concept which allows one to prevent bad habits among students;
- 3) characterizing the structure of the system of pedagogical orientation of students to a healthy lifestyle;
- 4) describing factors of preventing bad habits among students.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Research techniques

We used the following research techniques:

- theoretical methods, including the theoretical analysis of the research problem, as well as the analysis of modern advanced pedagogical, psychological and medical experience in preventing harmful habits and orientation of young people towards a healthy lifestyle, the scientific forecasting of the process of prevention of bad habits in students, and modelling;
- empirical methods, including the pedagogical observation, conversation, questioning, self-assessment, and self-analysis).

5.2. The experimental research base

In 2015 and 2017 we conducted a questionnaire of 345 law students at Kazan Federal University. To this end we have developed an original questionnaire for identifying the attitude of students towards bad habits.

5.3. Research stages

The research was carried out in the following logical sequence: firstly, we have formulated the problem, secondly, we have developed and justified the research strategy, determined and justified its goals and objectives, formulated and interpreted main theoretical premises, and designed a research plan. Then we conducted the questionnaire among KFU students and analyzed the obtained results.

6. Findings

[1. The main technique for preventing harmful habits among children and young people is based on pedagogical prevention measures.

2. The way out of today's situation is to change the opinion on harmful habits among young people through preventive work starting from early childhood. The fashion for health should be "vaccinated" in young people. A proper family education is very effective. Children, adolescents, and young people

should be equipped with knowledge and skills to lead a healthy lifestyle. Moral education and self-improvement also help to resist bad habits.

3. It is necessary to actively promote physical culture, sports, and a healthy lifestyle among the youth. It is important to warn students of the danger of bad habits and it is useful to regularly conduct surveys in order to assess the spread of bad habits among young people.]

7. Conclusion

The main thing is not to underestimate the influence of bad habits. Therefore it is necessary to conduct anti-drug, anti-alcohol and other forms of healthy propaganda in children's educational institutions and universities; this reduces the probability of forming bad habits. Preventive activities should include both individual and group forms of psychological and pedagogical work as well as work with parents of young people.

How to prevent or eradicate smoking? In several countries, massive public companies have resulted in forming a negative attitude towards smoking and in reducing the number of smokers. A lot of smokers have given up smoking due to the public's negative attitude towards tobacco and the deterioration of their health. Usually, the older a person is, the stronger his/her desire to quit smoking is; it also depends on the self-assessment of one's health condition and on the position of health in one's value system. Teachers can influence their students' value systems with preventive goals.

There are many methods for giving up bad habits. The best results are achieved through a complex therapy. A teacher can suggest that pupils should consider replacing cigarettes with something else when experiencing stress, being aware of their possible irritation and anxiety that comes when a person is trying to give up a harmful habit.

How to prevent or treat alcoholism? The treatment of alcoholics with a gradual reduction in dosages rarely leads to recovery. Methods that are based on threats and intimidation are also inefficient. The information about the damage that alcohol can cause to one's health rarely cures alcoholics from their bad habit because the meaning of an alcoholic's life is distorted. Moreover, at the later stages of alcoholism, alcohol becomes the only meaning of their life. Administrative measures against alcoholism usually give a short-term effect, and then the consumption of alcoholic beverages may even exceed the initial level. Prohibitive measures are usually unpopular. They are often accompanied by smuggling, black markets, underground brewing enterprises, etc. Prohibitive measures are effective only for people who do not abuse alcohol. Alcoholics should necessarily be medically treated though the treatment of alcoholism is a difficult task. An alcoholic rarely admits that he/she is has a problem, even to himself/herself. For this reason, alcoholics often receive no medical treatment. The prevention of alcoholism and drugs addiction, especially in cases when a person has not yet begun to use psychotropic drugs, is much more efficient. It is better not to intimidate young people, but to give them an opportunity to assess the risk of harmful addictions and to show them possible ways to prevent bad habits, to demonstrate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. In education, it is important to use not only negative incentives, but also positive ones. Preventive methods used for children and for adolescents should be different.

How to prevent and treat drug addiction? The treatment of drug addicts is extremely difficult process. It should be also noted that preventive programs against drug addiction which work well in the West may fail in Russia. The effective prevention of drug addiction requires a scientific approach, financial investments, and special training programmes for teachers.

There are many forms and methods to prevent harmful habits, but when developing preventive programs, it is necessary to take into account that young people do not understand the consequences of inappropriate actions. Once certain habits in regards to sex, food consumption, alcohol, drugs, and smoking are formed it is very difficult to change them. An important factor in changing the behaviour of those young people who use psychotropic substances concerns the satisfaction of their need for communication. It is the need for having friends and, above all, friends who have been able to give up the bad habit themselves. Therefore, in order to effectively conduct preventive work among the youth, it is necessary to involve in the process young volunteers who have succeeded in giving up the bad habit already.

Forms and methods of preventing harmful habits are different, and one of such methods is education. However, the information about harmful effects of bad habits on human health cannot always prevent them from forming. Moreover, the description of the impact of psychotropic drugs on a human organism can provoke the development of bad habits. It is necessary to inform young people about the effects of psychotropic substances on the body and mind of a person. It is better to talk about the harm of their use. In preventive activities directed towards eradicating harmful habits, various methods can be used. It is desirable to appoint young leaders to distribute proper information about psychotropic substances and give their own reasons for refusing drugs. Such programs are usually short-term, from two to six sessions. Any teacher can conduct preventive work without significant financial costs, minimizing the probability of forming bad habits among his/her students.

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