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DEVELOPING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SOFT SKILLS: SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL GUIDANCE MODEL

This article evaluates the effectiveness of a model of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the university students' soft skills development in the context of the modern educational process. The object of the study is the development of students' soft skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, emotional intelligence, and teamwork skills.

The aim of the study is to determine the effectiveness of the developed model by analyzing the dynamics of the specified skills' 2formation and conducting a SWOT analysis. The study utilized a comprehensive methodological approach, including theoretical analysis, empirical research, and mathematical statistics.

The empirical part of the study involved pre- and post-testing of 114 undergraduate students at Toraighyrov University. The assessment was conducted using a combination of psychodiagnostic methods to evaluate the development of each soft skill component. The results were processed using descriptive statistics and the Pearson correlation coefficient.

The conducted analysis of empirical data demonstrates positive dynamics in the development of university students' soft skills. The greatest

changes are observed in emotional intelligence and teamwork skills. Significant changes were also recorded in the development of critical thinking and students' ability to solve complex problems, while no clear improvement was observed in creativity. The SWOT analysis presented in this article allowed us to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the model and assess the opportunities and threats to its implementation.

The study's results suggest that the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance is an effective tool for developing university students' soft skills. These findings can be used in designing educational programs aimed at developing soft skills, as well as in organizing psychological and pedagogical support in higher education.

Keywords: soft skills, psychological and pedagogical guidance, higher education, model, SWOT analysis, students.

Introduction

In the context of rapid economic transformation, digitalization, and the globalization of the labor market, the importance of developing universal competencies, collectively known as soft skills, in students is growing. Modern educational policy is aimed at preparing specialists who are ready to meet the challenges of the labor market. This means that graduates must possess not only deep professional knowledge but also universal skills that enable them to easily adapt to new realities. In Kazakhstan, this goal is reflected in such fundamental documents as the "Concept for the Development of Higher Education and Science" [1], as well as in the strategic directions outlined by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Particular attention is paid to the development of human potential [2], critical thinking, creativity, and entrepreneurial skills [3].

In the scientific literature, the category of soft skills is presented as an integrative complex of personal, cognitive, and social-communicative characteristics that ensures the effectiveness and productivity of activities in various professional and personal situations [4]. Research in this area emphasizes that the development of soft skills requires not only a change in the content of education, but also a transformation of pedagogical approaches aimed at creating a developing educational environment [5]. Psychological and pedagogical guidance plays a special role in this process, allowing for the consideration of the individual characteristics of students, their motivation, value orientations, and the level of personal resources' development.

At the same time, an analysis of scientific sources and educational practices shows that the development of soft skills in higher education is often fragmented and not always supported by systemic pedagogical solutions. This necessitates the

development of comprehensive models of psychological and pedagogical guidance aimed at the targeted and integrative development of students' soft skills [6].

As part of a research project dedicated to developing soft skills in university students, the authors previously presented a model of psychological and pedagogical guidance focused on developing key soft skills. The model utilizes active educational technologies, facilitation methods, coaching, and psychological and pedagogical assessments, ensuring a systematic approach to soft skills development in the educational process [7].

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance for soft skill development in university students based on an analysis of the level of key soft skills formation and the application of SWOT analysis. To achieve this goal, objectives were defined, including assessing the level of soft skill development, interpreting the results, and identifying potential for improving the model.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in the development and comprehensive evaluation of a model for psychological and pedagogical guidance for the development of students' soft skills. The practical significance of this study is determined by the possibility of applying its results in the design of educational programs aimed at developing soft skills, as well as in the organization of psychological and pedagogical guidance for students in higher education.

Materials and methods

The primary research objective of this study is to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a model of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the development of soft skills in university students, aimed at fostering key universal competencies that ensure successful professional and social adaptation. The study aims to identify the effectiveness of systemic psychological and pedagogical interventions in developing students' soft skills, as well as to determine the potential of the proposed model in the context of modern higher education.

Research Questions:

RQ1: How does the implementation of a psychological and pedagogical guidance model impact the level of soft skills development of university students?

RQ2: Which components of the model have the greatest influence on the development of individual aspects of soft skills?

RQ3: What are the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats of implementing the soft skills development model for students based on a SWOT analysis?

The study's methodological framework utilized systemic, student-centered, and activity-based approaches, allowing for the development of soft skills to be viewed as a holistic, multi-level process. These approaches underpin the developed

model, which includes target, methodological, diagnostic, content, organizational, and result-oriented components, ensuring comprehensive psychological and pedagogical support for students.

The study utilized a comprehensive methodological approach, encompassing several sequential stages. The first stage involved a theoretical analysis of the scientific literature on soft skills development, which enabled the identification of key components of soft skills in demand in today's educational and professional environments. The second stage involved systematization and synthesis of the theoretical and empirical data used to develop the model.

This article focuses on evaluating the developed model, which led to the empirical phase of the study, aimed at assessing the students' soft skills development and analyzing the effectiveness of the proposed psychological and pedagogical guidance. The study involved 114 undergraduate students enrolled in educational programs at NJSC «Toraighyrov University». The sample was selected with accessibility in mind and provides a generalized understanding of the students' soft skills development (Table 1).

Table 1 – Characteristics of the study participants

Group	Total (n)	Female	Male	Mean age (M)	SD
Control Group (CG)	54	34	20	19.7	1.3
Experimental Group (EG)	60	32	29	20.0	1.2
Total	114	65	49	-	-

The study was conducted using pre- and post-testing. The initial stage (pre-test) assessed the students' initial soft skills development. Following the implementation of the interventions within the developed psychological and pedagogical guidance model, a follow-up assessment (post-test) was conducted, allowing for the identification of change dynamics and evaluation of the proposed model's effectiveness.

Pedagogical interventions aimed at developing key soft skills were carried out in accordance with the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance and included the use of active and interactive teaching methods, coaching sessions, trainings, group assignments, case methods, etc. This made it possible to activate the work of students and immerse them in an environment of comprehensive soft skills development [8].

To assess the level of soft skills development, the following components were identified: critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, emotional intelligence, and teamwork skills. These components were selected based on their importance in

the professional competencies' framework and their alignment with the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance for soft skills development.

The diagnostic tools used were methods corresponding to each soft skills component: the group project method for assessing teamwork skills, the Torrance Creative Thinking Test (adapted by E.E. Tunik), the Starkey Critical Thinking Test (adapted by E.L. Lutsenko), the case method for assessing the ability to solve complex problems, and the Hall Emotional Intelligence Test (adapted by E. I. Ilyin) [9]. The students' soft skills development level was assessed using a tiered approach (high, medium, low), which made it possible to determine the distribution of respondents by the degree of development of each of the skills studied. For a more accurate interpretation of the data obtained, a tiered characteristic of the students' soft skills development was developed, presented in Table 2.

Table 2 – Level characteristics of the development of students' soft skills

Level	Characteristic
High	The student demonstrates the ability to independently analyze information, make informed decisions, interact constructively and effectively in a team, and demonstrates a high level of emotional intelligence and a creative approach when completing various tasks.
Medium	The student possesses an intermediate level of basic soft skills, but demonstrates them situationally. May experience confusion in unusual situations, sometimes requires support when making decisions, demonstrates limited initiative, and demonstrates a partially creative approach to task completion.
Low	The student is characterized by a low level of soft skills: they often experience difficulties analyzing information and completing tasks in teamwork. They exhibit significant limitations in expressing and managing emotions, and lack initiative and creativity.

Statistical analysis of the obtained data was performed using mathematical statistics. During the pre- and post-testing stages, the Pearson χ^2 test was used to assess the effectiveness of the work implemented with students, which allowed us to record changes in soft skill development and determine the impact of the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance.

The identification of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and existing limitations of the model was carried out using a SWOT analysis, which allowed for its comprehensive assessment in the context of implementation in educational practice.

Thus, the selected research methods provided a comprehensive analysis of the assessment of the development of students' soft skills level and made it possible to prove the effectiveness of the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance.

Results and discussion

The dynamics of students' soft skills key components development in the experimental and control groups based on the results of the implementation of the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 – Results of pre- and post-testing of the students' soft skills development level

Skill	Level/ scale	CG (Pre-test)		CG (Post-test)		EG (Pre-test)		EG (Post-test)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Critical Thinking	High	17	31.5	17	31.5	19	31.7	27	45
	Medium	25	46.3	25	46.3	32	53.3	30	50
	Low	12	22.2	12	22.2	9	15	3	5
Solving Complex Problems	High	17	31.5	17	31.5	22	36.7	33	55
	Medium	22	40.7	23	42.6	30	50	23	38.3
	Low	15	27.8	14	25.9	8	13.3	4	6.7
Creativity	High	19	35.2	19	35.2	16	26.7	17	28.3
	Medium	30	55.5	32	59.3	36	60	36	60
	Low	5	9.3	3	5.5	8	13.3	7	11.7
Emotional Intelligence	High	18	33.3	18	33.3	35	58.3	40	58.7
	Medium	17	31.5	17	31.5	18	30	18	30
	Low	19	35.2	19	35.2	7	11.7	2	11.7
Teamwork	High	20	37.1	19	35.2	32	53.3	33	55
	Medium	16	29.6	15	27.8	17	28.3	18	30
	Low	18	33.3	20	37	11	18.4	9	15

An analysis of pre- and post-test results shows that no significant changes were observed in the control group across the soft skills studied. However, the experimental group demonstrated positive dynamics across most soft skills: the proportion of students with high levels of critical thinking, complex problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and teamwork skills increased, while the proportion of those with low levels decreased. Less pronounced changes were observed in creativity development, where the distribution of levels remained relatively stable.

Pearson χ^2 test was used to assess the statistical significance of differences in soft skill development between the experimental and control groups. This method allowed us to determine whether the observed differences were attributable to the implemented model or occurred randomly (Table 4).

Table 4 – Results of the Pearson χ^2 test calculation

№	Skill			H0/H1
1	Critical Thinking	5,991	9.48	H1
2	Solving Complex Problems	5,991	10.38	H1
3	Creativity	5,991	1.63	H0
4	Emotional Intelligence	5,991	10.73	H1
5	Teamwork	5,991	6.99	H1

The following hypotheses were put forward in the analysis:

- null hypothesis (H0): the distribution of indicators between the experimental and control groups does not show statistically significant differences;
- alternative hypothesis (H1): the distribution of indicators between the experimental and control groups differs significantly.

The obtained χ^2 values indicate that, for the most of the studied indicators, there are statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups. In particular, for critical thinking ($\chi^2 = 9.48$), problem-solving ability ($\chi^2 = 10.38$), emotional intelligence ($\chi^2 = 10.73$), and teamwork skills ($\chi^2 = 6.99$), the calculated values exceed the critical value ($\chi^2_{cr} = 5.991$), allowing the alternative hypothesis (H1) and conclude that the implemented model significantly influences the development of these soft skill components.

In contrast, no statistically significant differences were found for the creativity ($\chi^2 = 1.63$), as the obtained value does not exceed the critical threshold. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) is accepted, indicating that the changes in creativity are not statistically significant.

The results of the statistical analysis conducted in the study confirm the effectiveness of the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance in improving most components of students' soft skills, except for creativity, which requires further pedagogical intervention.

Based on the presented quantitative data reflecting the level of development of students' soft skills at the pre- and post-testing stages, a SWOT analysis of the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance was conducted.

An analysis of the developed model's strengths demonstrates its capacity to ensure a systematic and targeted development of key soft skill components, including critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, emotional intelligence, and teamwork

skills. The obtained results, particularly the high levels of emotional intelligence and teamwork skills, confirm the effectiveness of the interactive teaching methods, training formats, and group-based activities embedded in the model.

A significant advantage of the model lies in its comprehensive structure, which integrates interrelated target, methodological, diagnostic, content, organizational, and result-oriented components, ensuring the integrity and consistency of the soft skill development process. Additional value of the model is provided by the integration of psychological and pedagogical guidance into the educational process adds additional significance to the model, promoting the development of sustainable skills and increasing student engagement.

The findings indicate an uneven development of soft skill components, which can be considered a limitation of the model. Specifically, the post-diagnosis revealed lower growth rates for creativity compared to other skills. This may be attributed to the insufficient use of methods aimed at developing divergent thinking and creative activity among students. Another limitation of the model is the restricted transfer of developed skills to real professional contexts, which highlights the need to strengthen the practice-oriented component of the model.

Further development of the model envisions expanding the range of pedagogical technologies used, including the application of digital tools, simulation methods, and interdisciplinary assignments. Also, to enhance the practical relevance of the skills developed, an important focus is developing interactions with employers and integrating elements of the professional environment into the university's educational process. Furthermore, the model has the potential to be scaled and adapted to various educational programs and levels of training, significantly expanding its scope of application.

The SWOT analysis identified threats related to time and organizational resources in the educational process, which hinder the full implementation of the model. We also identified a lack of teacher readiness to use innovative soft skills development methods to effectively support this process through psychological and pedagogical guidance. External factors, such as changes in labor market requirements and educational policy, pose a significant risk, as they may also impact the effectiveness of the proposed model.

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Conclusion

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a model of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the development of university students' soft skills.

Pre- and post-test data obtained during the study indicate significant positive changes in key soft skills among university students.

A SWOT analysis revealed that the model of psychological and pedagogical guidance for soft skills development facilitates the comprehensive development of these skills and ensures their systematic integration into the university's educational process. Furthermore, the study's results allowed us to identify areas for improvement, including strengthening creativity development, expanding practice-oriented learning, and increasing the level of individualization of student engagement.

Thus, the obtained results demonstrate the effectiveness of the developed model of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development in university students and confirm its importance in the development of key competencies – critical thinking, the ability to solve complex problems, emotional intelligence, creativity, and teamwork skills – which are in demand in a dynamically changing labor market.

Further development of the study involves expanding the sample, conducting a more detailed analysis of the dynamics of individual soft skill components, and implementing additional pedagogical technologies aimed at increasing the effectiveness of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the development of soft skills among university students.

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ЖОО БІЛІМ АЛУШЫЛАРЫНЫҢ SOFT SKILLS-ЫН ДАМУЫ: ПСИХОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ-ПЕДАГОГИКАЛЫҚ СҮЙЕМЕЛДЕУ МОДЕЛІН SWOT-ТАЛДАУ

Мақала қазіргі білім беру үдерісі жағдайында ЖОО білім алушыларының soft skills дамуын психологиялық-педагогикалық сүйемелдеу моделінің тиімділігін бағалауға арналған. Зерттеу объектісі сыни ойлауды, күрделі проблемаларды шешуге қабілеттілікті, креативтілікті, эмоциялық интеллект пен

командалық жұмыс дағдыларын қамтитын білім алушылардың икемді дағдыларын дамыту процесі болып табылады.

Зерттеудің мақсаты көрсетілген дағдылардың қалыптасу серпінін талдау және SWOT-талдау жүргізу негізінде әзірленген модельдің нәтижелілігін анықтау болып табылады. Зерттеуде теориялық талдауды, эмпирикалық зерттеуді және математикалық статистика әдістерін қамтитын кешенді әдіснамалық тәсіл пайдаланылды.

Зерттеу теориялық талдауды, эмпирикалық зерттеуді және математикалық статистика әдістерін қамтитын кешенді әдістемелік тәсілді қолданды. Зерттеудің эмпирикалық бөлігі «Торайғыров университеті» КЕАҚ бакалавриатының 114 білім алушысының қатысуымен тестілеуге дейінгі және кейінгі форматта жүзеге асырылды. Диагностика *soft skills* әр компонентінің қалыптасу деңгейін бағалауға мүмкіндік беретін психодиагностикалық әдістер кешенін қолдану арқылы жүзеге асырылды. Нәтижелерді оңдеу сипаттамалық статистика әдістерін және Пирсонның корреляция коэффициентін қолдану арқылы жүргізілді.

Эмпирикалық деректерге жүргізілген талдау ЖОО білім алушыларының *soft skills* дамуының оң динамикасын айғақтайды. Ең үлкен өзгерістер эмоционалды интеллект пен топтық жұмыс дағдылары деңгейінде байқалады. Сондай-ақ, сыни ойлаудың дамуында және білім алушылардың күрделі мәселелерді шешу қабілетінде айтарлықтай өзгерістер тіркелді, ал креативтілік көрсеткіші бойынша айқын оң динамика анықталған жоқ. Осы мақалада келтірілген SWOT талдауы модельдің күшті және әлсіз жақтарын анықтауға, сондай-ақ оны жүзеге асырудың мүмкіндіктері мен қауіптерін бағалауға мүмкіндік берді.

Психологиялық-педагогикалық сүйемелдеудің әзірленген моделінің тиімділігі жүргізілген зерттеу нәтижелерімен расталады және ЖОО білім алушыларының *soft skills* дамуының оң динамикасында көрінеді. Алынған қорытындылар практикалық маңыздылыққа ие және икемді дағдыларды дамытуға бағытталған білім беру бағдарламаларын жобалау мен жетілдіруде, сондай-ақ жоғары білім беру жағдайында психологиялық-педагогикалық сүйемелдеу жүйесін құруда қолданыла алады.

Кілтті сөздер: *soft skills*, психологиялық-педагогикалық сүйемелдеу, жоғары білім, модель, SWOT-талдау, білім алушылар

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РАЗВИТИЕ SOFT SKILLS ОБУЧАЮЩИХСЯ ВУЗА: SWOT-АНАЛИЗ МОДЕЛИ ПСИХОЛОГО-ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКОГО СОПРОВОЖДЕНИЯ

Статья посвящена оценке эффективности модели психолого-педагогического сопровождения развития soft skills обучающихся вуза в условиях современного образовательного процесса. Объектом исследования выступает процесс развития гибких навыков обучающихся, включающих критическое мышление, способность к решению сложных проблем, креативность, эмоциональный интеллект и навыки командной работы.

Цель исследования заключается в выявлении результативности разработанной модели на основе анализа динамики сформированности указанных навыков и проведения SWOT-анализа. В исследовании использован комплексный методологический подход, включающий теоретический анализ, эмпирическое исследование и методы математической статистики.

Эмпирическая часть исследования реализована в формате пре- и пост-тестирования с участием 114 обучающихся бакалавриата НАО «Торайгыров университет». Диагностика осуществлялась с применением комплекса психодиагностических методик, позволяющих оценить уровень сформированности каждого компонента soft skills. Обработка результатов проводилась с использованием методов описательной статистики и коэффициента корреляции Пирсона.

Проведенный анализ эмпирических данных свидетельствует о положительной динамике развития soft skills обучающихся вуза. Наибольшие изменения заметны в уровне эмоционального интеллекта

и навыков командной работы. Также зафиксированы значимые изменения в развитии критического мышления и способности обучающихся к решению сложных задач, тогда как по показателю креативности отчетливой положительной динамики выявлено не было. SWOT-анализ, представленный в данной статье, позволил выявить сильные и слабые стороны модели, а также оценить возможности и угрозы ее реализации.

Эффективность разработанной модели психолого-педагогического сопровождения подтверждается результатами проведенного исследования и проявляется в положительной динамике развития soft skills обучающихся вуза. Полученные выводы обладают практической значимостью и могут быть применены при проектировании и совершенствовании образовательных программ, ориентированных на развитие гибких навыков, а также при выстраивании системы психолого-педагогического сопровождения в условиях высшего образования.

Ключевые слова: soft skills, психолого-педагогическое сопровождение, высшее образование, модель, SWOT-анализ, обучающиеся.

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