Influence of competitive activity on the development of self-realization among adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the problems of social self-realization of modern adolescents in competitive activity. Based on the conducted scientific studies, the authors determine the important role of competitions in the process of school students' socialization. The article presents the most important criteria of adolescents' level of self-realization in competition activity such as self-esteem adequacy, creativity, self-organization, teamwork, and stress resistance, as well as the results of studying the level of development of such paired personality traits as sociability/insularity and friendliness/aggressiveness developing in adolescents in competitive activities. The authors emphasize the high degree of risk of any contests as the participants experience worry, fear, and stress. The article presents a comparative analysis of studies of the level of socialization in school students conducted in the years 1999, 2013, 2019, and 2020. Authors prove that competition is a relevant form of developing social personality traits in school students in modern society. It is necessary to create certain pedagogical conditions when preparing and holding a competition and ensure pedagogical assistance and support to minimize the possible risks. It is important for modern pedagogics to study and account for childhood and adolescent fear, as well as psychological and pedagogical risks of carrying out competitions for school students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The modern world differs greatly from previous eras. Globalization has evened out cultural differences, the internet allows one to quickly obtain information, open borders allow one to visit distant corners of the planet and communicate with people thousands of kilometers away. However, teenage crises and problems described by the classics of psychology are not only not going away but are intensified by the increasing number of stressful life situations.

Any stressful situations, if they are not prevented, lead to fears, which do not allow the pupil to develop further in the chosen activity. Therefore, fears transfer from natural to social fears in the process of teenagers' personality formation, and social fears have their peak at 15 years of age [1]–[3]. There is a pedagogical necessity to find ways to overcome these fears by adolescents. One of the ways to solve the problem may be competitive activities.

The system of professional and pre-professional festivals and competitions is well developed in Russia and the world in general. Today, competitions for teenagers are well represented: i) Competitions at

various levels, from school to international. For example, the National League of Performing Arts (New Jersey), in addition to monthly national competitions, holds international performing arts competitions online on its YouTube channel; ii) Creative competitions, in which children can display their talents in the different arts (on an amateur level). Since 2000, for example, the German section of the European Guitar Teachers' Association EGTA-D has held the "Andrés Segovia" youth competition with unprecedented success. Every two years up to 90 children and young people who are dedicated to the guitar come together from about 30 countries. The competition is divided into three age groups: up to 15 years old; 15 to 17 years old; 18 to 20 years old; iii) Professional competitions, which include subject olympiads, information technology (IT) skills competitions, and competitions in any kind of art (involving further vocational training).

Each type of competition implies its own peculiarities and it is difficult to compare these events. However, despite the differences, all competitions have common features related to the development of certain personal qualities that contribute to social self-realization as shown in Table 1. Despite the relevance of competition development, there is a lack of pedagogical research in this regard today. The author hypothesized that competition activity is an actual form of development of social qualities of a student's personality in modern society. When preparing and holding a competition, it is necessary to create certain pedagogical conditions, as well as to provide pedagogical assistance and support to reduce possible risks.

Table 1. The process of social self-realization of adolescents in competitive activity

| The processes of overcoming fears | Social self-realization | | Risks |
	Personal self-realization	Professional self-realization	
Search for individuality	Search for originality, uniqueness	Search for a career; Development of professional skills	Frustration refusal to fight further
Search for a relationship with others	Development of abilities and talents	Search for ways to communicate in the profession; Development of speaking up for oneself	Uncontrolled aggression; Contempt of others shutting themselves down
Acceptance of one's appearance	Search for ways to communicate in person	Understanding of the importance of professional knowledge and skills, rather than looks	Appearance experimentation; Disengagement from society; Insecurity
Fear of loneliness	Search for one's individuality in dress and behavior	Development of skills in making compromises; Development of skills of persuasion	Self-obsession, envy, contempt of others or oneself
Inability to self-identify later in life	Development of the ability to relate individuality to social requirements	Development of skills in weighing arguments; Development of decision-making skills	Apathy and infantilization about their lives; Fear of doing the wrong thing

Compiled on the basis of [4]–[7]

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research was carried out based on an activity approach using the following research methods: i) Theoretical methods consisted of analysis, synthesis, systematization, synthesis of scientific research materials. It clarified the role of competitive activity in the process of social self-realization of adolescents; ii) Empirical methods applied a focus group survey at the Department of Culturology, Federal State Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education, Moscow State Pedagogical University (103 respondent). It conducted online in accordance with the restrictions associated with the spread of the new coronavirus COVID-19 to identify the impact of competitive activity in school on their further social self-actualization. The method of pedagogical observation based on school No. 46 in Moscow (56 respondent) to measure the indicators of the criteria of self-determination and self-realization.

The data was processed using SPSS software. The study was carried out within the following framework: i) Chronological scope of the study was held in January to December 2020; ii) The territorial scope of the study consisted of Moscow (Department of Cultural Studies of the Moscow Pedagogical State University, School No. 46).

3. RESULTS

The modern world significantly differs from the previous eras. Globalization is eliminating cultural differences, the internet allows obtaining information in an instant, open borders allow visiting the distant corners of the planet and communicate with people thousands of kilometers away. However, adolescent crises and problems described by the classics of psychology not only do not disappear but are intensified by the increasing number of stressful life situations.

Thus, as noted by Zakharov [1] and other researchers [8], [9], in the process of development of adolescents' personalities, fears change from the natural to social ones and the peak of social fears falls at the age of 15. The researchers can identify the following types of adolescent fears: i) The fear of not finding one's individuality; ii) The fear of being misunderstood and judged by others; iii) The fear of physical unattractiveness; iv) The fear of loneliness (based on the three previous fears); v) The fear of impossibility of self-realization in social life [10].

There is a pedagogical need for the search for ways in which adolescents can overcome these fears. One of the ways of solving this problem can be competitive activity. Although a contest is a competition aimed at determining the best contestants and the best works, for school students it is, first of all, a long process of preparation, searching for original ideas, character development, persistence in achieving the goal, and only after that the joy of victory (or the bitterness of defeat). Contest as a pedagogical technique is controversial since aside from positive outcomes it can negatively influence the process of development of a school students' personality through high nervous tension, misfortunes, failures, and the destruction of hopes leading to an increase in adolescent fears [11]. For this reason, pedagogical support for young contestants has special importance in competitive activity.

The competitive activity contributes to overcoming the fears associated in adolescents with doubts in determining their individuality by allowing them to reveal the best personal qualities and sometimes discover new abilities. The very process of competition becomes important for professional self-realization as it can either support a student's choice and provide an impetus for further development in this direction or demonstrate a person's unsuccessfulness in a certain type of activity [9]. In this case, there are risks of a student experiencing serious disappointment and refusing to fight further when not getting the desired victory. Participation in a contest is an opportunity for the development of personal and professional communication skills and the ability to carry out constructive dialogue and develop and defend one's viewpoint. A contest introduces the intensity of adolescent relationships to the process of constructing communication and contributes to the development of respect for another person, tolerance of different points of view, and the ability to remain oneself in the situation of competition and fight against one's competitors. In this case, the risks reside in the manifestation of uncontrolled aggression, contempt for other participants in the event, isolation, and even depressive conditions requiring medical attention.

Contests for adolescents are currently highly widespread: there are contests at different levels from school to international; there are creative contests where children can show their talents in different areas of art (at the amateur level); there are professional contests including subject olympiads, skill contests (for example, in IT), contests in a particular sphere of art (involving further professional training). Each type of contest involves its specific characteristics making it difficult to compare these activities [12]. However, despite the differences, all contests have some common features related to the development of certain personality traits contributing to social self-realization as show in Table 2.

Table 2. The process of adolescents' social self-realization in competitive activity

The processes of overcoming fears	Social self-realization		Risks
	Personal self-realization	Professional self-realization	
The search for individuality	The search for originality, uniqueness The development of abilities and talents	Professional search The development of professional skills	Disappointment Refusal to fight any further
The search for relationships with other people	The search for the ways of personal communication	The search for the ways of professional communication The development of the ability to defend one's viewpoint	Uncontrolled aggression Contempt for other participants Alienation
Accepting one's appearance	The search for one's individuality in clothing and behavior The development of the ability to balance individuality with the social requirements	Understanding of the importance of professional knowledge and skills rather than appearance	Experiments with one's appearance Alienation from communication Self-consciousness
The fear of loneliness	Self-affirmation The development of self-sufficiency	The development of the ability to compromise The development of the ability to convince others	Arrogance Envy Contempt of others or oneself
The impossibility of future self-identification	The development of the ability to take responsibility for one's actions	The development of the ability to weigh arguments The development of the decision-making ability	Apathy and infantilism concerning one's life The fear of doing the wrong thing

When not prevented, all risks can lead to the emergence of fears hindering a student's further development in the chosen activity. One of the fears significant for adolescents is the fear of loneliness, rejection by peers, not being needed. This fear can be easily overcome by participation in collective competitions (for example, theatrical or choral), however, in individual championships, the problem can be exacerbated even further. Participation in the preparation for a team contest becomes an important stage in overcoming the fear of loneliness as this process involves communicating a lot with different people and performances require a sense of communion and mutual support [3]–[5]. Individual competitions are more difficult in terms of the fear of loneliness, therefore, a teacher necessarily had to work with such adolescents paying attention both to the negative impact of failures on students' further self-identification and the difficulties in accepting victory. The main risks of this situation include arrogance, envy, and contempt for others or oneself.

Adolescent fears can eventually lead to a student's fear of not being able to find one's place in society and profession. Participation in contests develops such skills as the ability to take responsibility for one's actions, weigh one's actions, words, and arguments, and the ability to make decisions. The fear of responsibility for one's actions can develop into complete apathy and infantilism regarding one's life or into the fear of doing the wrong thing [4].

To determine the effect of competitive activity in school on further social socialization, we conducted focus groups among the students of a pedagogical university. The participants were recruited from among the undergraduate students from the Department of Cultural Studies at the Institute of Socio-Humanitarian Education at the Moscow State Pedagogical University [2], [10], [11]. When evaluating their participation or non-participation in contests during their school years and its effect on further self-realization, the students reported the following: "Thanks to the reading contest I overcame my stiffness and fear of public speaking", "Only after participating I realized that I knew quite a lot", "While preparing for a cultural history contest I realized that I wanted to do cultural studies", "During a dancing contest I found a friend who helped me overcome my worry. We are still friends". It was found that 93% of students participated in contests during their school years; 68% of students believe they developed their personal qualities such as communicability, the ability to work in a team, control their emotions, face defeat and disappointment with dignity; 14% of them answered that they did get an impetus for professional activity. One of the important qualities highlighted by young people was the ability to accept criticism, independently analyze one's failures, and continue developing in the chosen direction (20%).

Nevertheless, 32% of the respondents reported negative experiences of competitive activity (uncontrollable fear, despair, fear of failure) the consequence of which they cannot overcome to this day. Since the survey respondents were recruited from among future culturologists and teachers, they were asked what they could do for students participating in contests once they started working in educational organizations. Having evaluated their experience of competitive activity, the students provided the following answers: "Students need an example to follow", "It is necessary to show them how to behave. Maybe do some training or games", "It is necessary to teach them to hear others, not be offended but make the right conclusions", "Children can be shown that they do not have to listen to name-calling, it is only objective criticism that matters", "It is necessary to show students that irritation and dissatisfaction with oneself are qualities that help to improve".

Interestingly, the students' suggestions on preparing a contest and overcoming adolescents' fears can be correlated with the studies by Antonova and Belousova in identity as a result of self-identification [12]. The researchers propose a model of identity as a dynamic self-actualization process including the following components: i) Identification with significant people in the process of which a person accepts the values of others which helps them overcome difficulties; ii) The interiorization of various opinions in the course of which different viewpoints are accepted and reflected on one's self; iii) The crisis of identity generating the process of self-identification and self-realization, changes in one's views, or the substantiation of one's position.

The study demonstrates the importance of school students' participation in contests for their social self-realization. However, it should be borne in mind that competitive activity can cause psychological trauma to an adolescent, therefore, it is necessary to provide pedagogical assistance for students in the process of preparing for a contest and participating in it, as well as during the period of post-competition emotional recession. The forms of pedagogical assistance can be divided into three types: i) The positive example of significant adults or peers (identification); ii) Teaching the correct perception of different opinions (interiorization); iii) Encouragement of productive analysis of one's activities generating personal change (identity crisis). Effective pedagogical assistance can reduce the negative effects and then competition will become a meaningful form of adolescents' self-identification. In this study, researchers identified the main criteria of adolescents' self-realization level in competitive activity (self-esteem adequacy, creativity, self-organization, teamwork, and stress resistance).

Self-esteem is understood in psychology as a personal formation directly participating in the regulation of a person's behavior. As an independent evaluation of a personality, its main element is forming under the direct influence of the personality itself and reflecting the peculiarities of its inner world [13]. The parameters used as the standard for self-esteem are such as value orientations, personal ideals, the level of pretensions. The requirements imposed by the team [14]. Based on certain indicators, psychologists distinguish normal, high, and low self-esteem [15]. Creativity to which we also attribute the sense of humor and resourcefulness is considered in psychology. It is as a relatively independent factor of giftedness manifesting in the general ability. It is important to create and characterizing the personality as a whole and showing itself in different spheres of activity [13].

Self-organization is an integrative criterion combining a range of personality traits: responsibility, focus, commitment, motivation, confidence, self-organization. The self-regulation ability in all its manifestations: punctuality, concentration, clarity of expression, and, to some extent, the structure of thought. Teamwork is also a combined criterion including such personal characteristics as empathy, patience, tolerance, acceptance, and collectivity, the ability to work in a team. Overall, this criterion largely signifies the ability to work with others. Stress resistance is a combined criterion referring to the ability to "take a hit" and overcome difficulties [10].

Teachers were providing psychological assistance to adolescents participating in contests through managing risks and helping the adolescents overcome their fears. The objectives of the organization of pedagogical assistance lied in ensuring development through specially developed trainings for the following components of personality: i) The development of students' intellectual abilities, creative thinking, and creative activity skills necessary for participation in festival and competition events; ii) Teaching students how to work in a team, the development of communicative abilities, positive attitude, and kindness in relationships; iii) Providing the opportunity to gain experience in participating in various artistic and intellectual contests and festivals of different levels; iv) The formation of self-presentation and self-actualization skills; v) The ability to protect oneself from the effects of negative factors, to regulate one's irritation, aggressiveness.

The main method used to measure the indicators of the self-identification and self-realization level criteria was the pedagogical observation. Throughout 2020, teachers were not only working with students but also measuring the personal changes taking place during the competitive activities and affecting the self-realization of each adolescent. In generalized form, the dynamics of the level of adolescents' self-identification and self-realization shows an increase in positive qualities after participation in several competitions, moreover, the personal qualities contributing to effective socialization also developed in students with low competition results as shown in Figure 1. The figure shows that the indicators of adequacy, self-organization, and stress resistance increased significantly in the course of participation in contests which supports the need for pedagogical assistance for adolescents in contests. Students noted that the support of teachers helped them cope with the disappointment of defeat, overcome worry, cope with fear, and even rejoice in the success of the opponent.
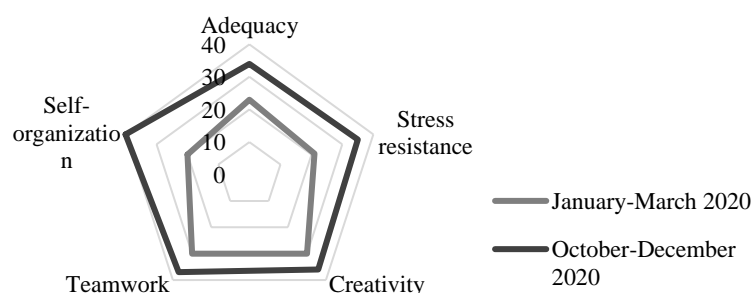

Figure 1. The dynamics of self-identification and self-realization in adolescents

4. DISCUSSION

As the results of the study have shown, the role of various competitions as agents of socialization is being actualized today. These events contribute to the effective development of self-realization and self-presentation skills. The results of comparative research have also shown that self-realization is becoming most important in the attitudes of the younger generation. Thus, based on the comparative analysis of the monitoring conducted in 2020 (1,246 respondent), 2019 (38,403 respondent), and 2013 (625 respondent), the increase in the need for students to communicate with their peers in the real world was revealed. It was

determined that modern teenagers prefer live communication with friends and relatives, this result increases relatively to previous years and contradicts the prevailing perception of virtual addiction of the younger generation, showing, if not the actual state, then the potential desire of teenagers to communicate with the significant representatives of society. In response to the question "What would you like in life?" the largest number of responses was "To fulfill myself". It should be noted that this indicator rises smoothly from 12 to 20 years of age and has grown strongly compared to 2013 when 33% of respondents expressed a desire to become rich, while only 9% wanted to fulfill themselves as shown in Figure 2.
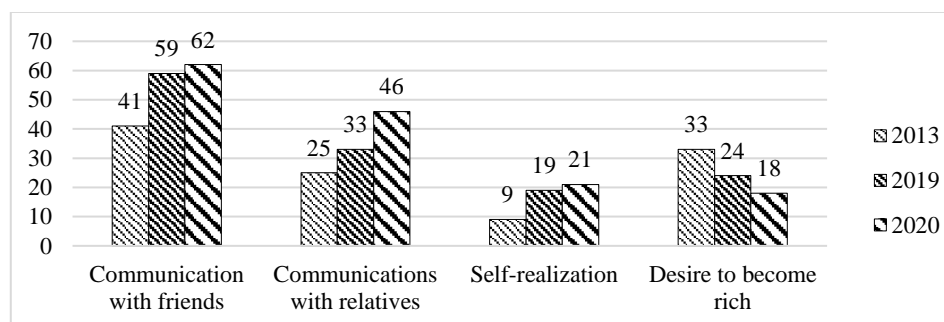
Figure 2. Socio-cultural choices of modern adolescents (%)

Accepting the error of the survey (5-10%), we can conclude that adolescents have a potential desire to communicate normally in the company of friends or like-minded people, to self-identify and self-actualize in life. However, this desire is often not realized due to internal communication clamp characteristic of the whole generation of modern school students. Intergenerational theory shows that the value of any one age group is always something that is in short supply [16]. Modern adolescents have an acute deficit in communication, so simple communication becomes an almost unattainable value today, which school students lack the knowledge and skills to realize. Adolescents believe that effective communication helps in social self-realization (83%), but this particular quality of personality is underdeveloped in them. Table 3 shows the changes in the students' understanding of self-realization in society over the last 20 years (1999 and 2020).

Table 3. Changes in the understanding of self-realization as an aspect of socialization

Self-realization	
1999	2020
Professionalism to achieve economic prosperity	Self-determination and self-presentation to realize one's own ideas
Communication to achieve mutual understanding in a team	Communication to achieve personal goals in the profession
Strong-willed decision-making skills in relation to oneself and others	Forecasting and projecting professional activities based on goal-setting
Ability to adapt to new situations	Professionalism to achieve personal goals and satisfy personal interests
Personal interests as a hobby	Development of personal skills for successful self-realization

Based on an analysis of the pedagogical and psychological literature, the main criteria for the successful socialization of schoolchildren can be identified [9], [11], [14]. The first is social adaptability (adaptation of an individual to environmental conditions). Several signs indicate the extent of a person's adaptation to society. It is the extent to which they have mastered social norms and roles typical of a society in various spheres of life (family, professional, and leisure). Another sign is the presence of life goals and ideas about socially acceptable ways to achieve them. Lastly, it is the necessary level of education at a given age stage [15]. The second is social autonomy (social autonomy, the formation of an independent position). The following can be considered as signs of social autonomy: i) Value autonomy (availability of own views, ability to develop new and change existing views); ii) Psychological autonomy (availability of positive self-concept, high level of self-esteem, self-acceptance, sense of self-worth); iii) Emotional autonomy (selectivity of emotions, their preservation and changeability); iv) Behavioral autonomy (degree of readiness and ability to solve own problems, ability to solve life problems creatively) [16], [17]. The third is social activity (self-

realization). It is a person's ability and readiness to carry out socially significant transformations in the world around them and themselves. An integral characteristic of an active personality is an active life position. This is expressed in a person's ideological integrity, consistency in defending their views, and responsibility for the decisions taken [18].

However, there are several risks and adolescent fears that educators need to consider in their work with students to make the socialization process effective and, indeed, lead to the self-realization of each individual. Previous researchers have proved that modern society, subject to the growth of uncontrolled technology, is characterized by high riskiness [19]–[23]. Douglas writes that the concept of risk today has become a cultural construct located between "personal, subjective opinion and public material science" [24]. Scholars today do not talk about the possibility of risk but about developing mechanisms for dealing with risk in all areas of human activity, including pedagogy. Pedagogical riskology has become a natural component of the modern educational process. In this context, it should be noted that any competitions are very risky: i) Participants experience excitement; ii) Fear; and iii) Stress that can lead to serious consequences for the individual up to rejection of mass events, decreased competitiveness in studies and future professions and underdeveloped forms of communication.

Although competition is a contest aimed at singling out the best participants or the best work, for students, it is first of all a long process of preparation, searching for original ideas, character building, persistence in achieving the goal, and only then the joy of victory (or the bitterness of defeat). Competition as a pedagogical technique is quite contradictory. In addition to positive results, it can have a negative impact on the process of personal formation of a student such as high nervous tension, failures and setbacks, destruction of hopes, which lead to an increase in adolescent fears [12]. For this reason, the pedagogical support of young participants is of particular importance in competition activity.

Competitive activity helps to overcome the fear associated with the teenager's doubts about defining their individuality, allowing them to reveal the best qualities of their personality, and sometimes to identify new possibilities and abilities in themselves. For professional self-realization, the competition process itself becomes important; it can confirm a student's choice and give impetus for further development in this direction, or it can show the failure of a person in a particular area of activity. In this case, there are risks when a school student, not getting the desired victory, experiences serious disappointment and withdraws from further competition.

Participation in the competition is an opportunity to develop personal and professional communication skills, to build a constructive dialogue, and to develop and defend one's own point of view. The competition brings to the process of building communication a sharpness of adolescents' relationships and promotes respect for the other person, tolerance and acceptance of a different point of view, the ability to remain oneself in a situation of competition and struggle with rivals. The risks, in this case, are uncontrollable aggression, disdain for other participants in the event, shutting oneself down, up to depressive states requiring medical intervention.

One significant fear for adolescents is the fear of loneliness, rejection by peers, of being unwanted. This fear can be easily overcome by participating in a group competition (e.g., theatre, choir), but in a personal competition, the problem can be exacerbated. Participating in preparations for a group competition is an important step in overcoming the fear of loneliness because in this process one has to communicate a lot with different people, and during the performances, a sense of community and mutual support is necessary. Individual competition is more difficult in terms of overcoming the fear of loneliness, so the educator should work with such teenagers, drawing attention both to the negative impact of failures on the further self-determination of schoolchildren and to the difficulties in accepting victory. The main risks in this situation are arrogance, envy, and feelings of disdain for others or themselves.

Adolescent fears can result in a fear of not being able to determine one's place in society and the profession. Fear of responsibility for one's own actions can develop into complete apathy and infantilism towards one's life, and fear of doing the wrong thing. Participation in competitions develops skills such as the ability to take responsibility for one's actions, the ability to weigh one's actions, words, arguments, and the ability to make decisions.

It also should be noted that pedagogical science and the public are currently primarily concerned with the development of not hard skills, meaning professional skills but soft skills including personality components such as creativity, communicability, self-management, self-development, self-control, self-presentation, the ability to find ways out of difficult situations, the ability to analyze one's successes and failures, make conclusions, and change the trajectory of action when needed. In 2011, Harvard University, Stanford Research Institute, and Carnegie Melon Foundation conducted studies in large companies and found that soft skills make up from 75% to 85% of an employee's success [2]. Thus, only a person having soft skills, personal characteristics allowing to successfully interact with the outside world, different people, and one's interests will be successful and demanded as a specialist in the modern world [3].

In the present, art festivals and contests for all interested have become an effective form of soft skills development. Such contests accept works from children and young people wanting to express themselves in some type of creative activity but not having a goal of becoming a professional in this type of art. School students are very interested in such type of activity [25]–[27]. Festivals and contests help the younger generation develop the very skills that are difficult for modern students such as public speaking, presenting oneself or a group of participants, cooperation, creative development, and acceptance of the cultural diversity of society. It is no coincidence that today we are emphasizing the importance of emotional intelligence that allows a person to be flexible and be able to find their place in society [28]–[30].

The modern world provides children and youth with extensive opportunities for self-expression in various types of activities including creative work. Young people tend to have the desire to express their thoughts and feelings in their artwork, as well as to compare their successes with the achievements of other children and adolescents. Studying the problem of the influence of competition on the manifestation of students' creative activity and general cultural development, Melik-Pashaev [20] revealed that this type of activity contributes to the formation of strong will, artistry, and experience in performing skills. The natural need for creative self-realization is met today by a wide range of events any student can take part in.

Thus, the conducted study demonstrates the effectiveness of festivals and competitions as a form of self-realization of adolescents in the modern world. The participation in such activities contributes to the development of tolerance, acceptance of cultural diversity, rejection of xenophobia and chauvinism. It gains the ability to cooperate and solve tasks together with others, and readiness for constructive intercultural and interpersonal communication.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of the study have confirmed the hypothesis that competition activity is a relevant form of development of social qualities of a student's personality in modern society. When preparing and conducting the competition, it is necessary to create certain pedagogical conditions, as well as to provide pedagogical assistance and support to reduce possible risks. The prospects for further research could be to study and take into account children's and adolescents' fears, as well as psychological and pedagogical risks when conducting various competitions for school students.

The practical significance of the study is found in the fact that its results can be used in organizing and holding various art contests. The use of the methodological recommendations outlined in the chapter help to avoid negative phenomena. It also beneficial to achieve a high level of the educational and developmental impact of the process of preparation and participation in the festival and competition movement on children and young people.

The novelty of the study results lies in determining the main criterion indicators of the level of self-realization among adolescents in competitive activities. It also determines the dynamics of self-determination level and self-realization among adolescents in the process of these activities. The pedagogical conditions and directions of pedagogical support and support to reduce possible risks of participation in competitive activities, as well as the role of competitive activities in the formation of soft skills as the main direction of personality development were also determined. Further study is necessary to identify children's and adolescents' fears, as well as psychological and pedagogical risks when holding various competitions for schoolchildren.

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