

# Bridging Education and Sustainable Development: Assessing Future Psychologists' Perspectives

By Olesia Stoliarchuk<sup>1</sup>, Keyan Liang<sup>2</sup>, Svitlana Khrypko<sup>3</sup>, Olena Ishchuk<sup>4</sup>,  
Oksana Serhieienkova<sup>5</sup>, Svitlana Kalishchuk<sup>6</sup>, Tetiana Divchuk<sup>7</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Education serves as a dynamic interplay between generations, encompassing dialogue and mutual enrichment. It embodies the spiritual essence inherent in individuals, communities, eras, and cultural contexts, shaped by moral and spiritual values specific to cultural circles. Education bridges the gap between the 'values of the environment' and the 'values of life experience', defining the persona of individuals, communities, and societies. It functions as a repository of intellectual potential, dismissing the notion of 'excessive' education and highlighting its indispensability for human growth. Values, pivotal to human intellectual exploration, encapsulate the initiation, propagation, or negation of philosophical paradigms within fluctuating contexts. Education emerges as a distinctive manifestation of self-cultivation and a testament to human accomplishments. This study aimed to assess sustainable social development awareness and implementation readiness among future psychologists. The investigation involved 160 Ukrainian psychology students, employing written surveys and statistical analysis. Findings unveiled a limited comprehension of sustainable societal development among respondents, often narrowed to environmental concerns and overlooking the social facet. Despite this, over half of the participants sought alignment with their interpretation, integrating these ideals into their university environment. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine intensified the urgency of instilling sustainable development values, though a third of the respondents fully embraced these concepts. Implementation challenges included consumeristic attitudes towards natural resources and low environmental consciousness, highlighting the need for value propagation and social responsibility cultivation. Respondents recognized the social dimension's salience in their future professional roles, albeit with a tendency to overlook intergenerational continuity concerns. The study exposed limited and fragmented competence in understanding sustainable societal development among future psychologists, with value cultivation appearing spontaneous and disjointed. The university environment presents an opportunity to nurture sustainable development values, urging educators to augment students' competency and motivational preparedness for their roles in implementing these concepts.

*Keywords: sustainable development, education, values, future psychologists, professional training, awareness, societal progress, professional roles.*

<sup>1</sup>Doctor of Psychology, Associate Professor of Psychology of Personality and Social Practices Department, Faculty of Psychology, Social Work and Special Education, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine ORCID: 0000-0003-4252-2352

<sup>2</sup>Ph.D student of Ukrainian Kyiv National Academy Of Fine Arts And Architecture, faculty of Fine art,decorative and restoration. ORCID: 0009-0009-6735-5432

<sup>3</sup>Doctor of Philosophy, Associate Professor at the Philosophy Department, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine, ORCID: 0000-0001-9426-4549. (Corresponding Author)

<sup>4</sup>Associate Professor at the Department of General Studies, Ukrainian-American Concordia University, Ukraine, ORCID: 0000-0003-4952-2080

<sup>5</sup>Doctor of Psychology, Professor Head of Psychology of Personality and Social Practices Department, Institute of Human Sciences, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine ORCID:0000-0002-1380-7773

<sup>6</sup>Doctor of Psychology, Assistant Professor, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine ORCID: 0000-0002-1749-7856

<sup>7</sup>Candidate of Technical Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Electrical Machines of the National University Zaporozhye Polytechnic ORCID: 0000-0002-9947-8527

## 1. Introduction

The evolution of successive centuries embodies a continuum that not only manifests the preceding era but also encapsulates the enduring values and intangible aspects of the human experience. This phenomenon, characterized by a rich interplay of tangible and intangible elements, including values and pseudo-values, echoes throughout history as a dynamic tapestry of circumstances, spirituality, and human endeavor. Within this intricate fabric, the emergence of noteworthy individuals stands juxtaposed against the backdrop of faceless multitudes, forming a dualism that shapes societies through their contrasting interplay.

This historical phenomenon becomes ingrained within the annals of human recollection, influencing cognitive encounters, literary narratives, and scholarly manuscripts alike. It intertwines the threads of reformative tendencies with the unwavering persistence of tradition, creating a dynamic interplay that weaves through individual destinies. Each individual, representing a specific community or epoch, becomes an embodiment of pedagogical values rooted in ethnopedagogy, national educational frameworks, and the priorities of their time. (Ogneviuk et al., 2021).

Education emerges as the pivotal axis around which life revolves, influencing both subjective comprehension and objective contemplation. Serving as the conduit through which human perception extends into the world, education shapes the trajectory of comprehension, interpretation, sentiment, and vision. Its dual nature manifests as both a distinct form of self-cultivation, with intrinsic value as an outcome, and an authentic representation of the collective human experience, reflecting its spatial accomplishments and intricacies. The advent of information technologies reshapes education's value hierarchy, exemplified by the flexibility of remote learning driven by computer technologies.

The intrinsic connection between education and values lies at the core of human existence, spanning a spectrum that encompasses propagated and dwindled values. Education becomes the cornerstone of societal progression, safeguarding the existence of future generations. In the pursuit of evaluating matters, the human mind grapples with the known, unknown, concealed, and inscrutable, shaping the continuum of values that guide society (Khrypko, 2009, p. 19).

Within the philosophical and educational legacy of human civilization, values emerge as bedrocks that underpin societies and individual existence. Society's vested interest in cultivating individuals aligned with established norms and priorities reflects the symbiotic relationship between education and prevailing value systems. The transformative landscape of recent decades intensifies the quest for fresh, indispensable values resonating with younger generations, shaping educational culture and practice.

Education's role in sustainable societal progress is intimately linked with the concept of vocation, guiding individuals toward self-realization and psychological well-being. Exploring students' attitudes toward vocation offers insights into their professional evolution, with a conscious sense of vocation influencing subsequent development (Khrypko et al., 2023b). This sense of vocation aligns with the overarching concept of sustainable development, anchoring the bedrock of value-laden existence.

In the realm of education, the journey to self-discovery and personal realization finds synergy with solitude, a wellspring for spiritual self-growth. Education itself serves as a continuous, introspective dialogue with oneself and the world, nurturing experience and remembrance. (Aleksandrova *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, educational and pedagogical endeavors ignite scientific innovation and a holistic perspective, extending the boundaries of knowledge.

The domain of values education, explored by Rakic and Vukusic (2010), navigates pedagogical methodologies, educators' roles, and divergent approaches. This study's insights contribute to bridging paradigms and recognizing the role of values within the UN decade of education for sustainable development. Similarly, Ebru Oğuz's investigation (2012) into pre-service teachers' perceptions sheds light on the prevalence of values like universalism, benevolence, and security.

The realm of inculcating societal values through distance learning systems, as explored by Deveci (2015), emphasizes the pivotal role of value education in shaping social life and effective citizenship. Wang's research (2016) underscores the central role of values in personal socialization and highlights the need for defined concepts and methodologies for values education.

Exposito *et al.*'s study (2018) delves into the symbiotic relationship between education and values, reconceptualizing the essence of education itself. Amidst this discourse, scholars including Loia *et al.* (2016) recognize the shift toward cooperation and participation in value creation, underscoring the need for novel analytical perspectives in education. The convergence of concepts like Value Co-creation and Smart Education opens new avenues for enriching educational experiences and understanding the impact of emerging technologies.

In essence, this intricate interplay between education and values resonates as the driving force behind societal progress and individual growth. The journey ahead holds the promise of uncovering new dimensions within this relationship, shaping the trajectory of education and its transformative potential. Values, acting as the foundation of human intellectual exploration, encompass the initiation, propagation, or negation of philosophical paradigms (Adamenko *et al.*, 2021). They epitomize the qualitative, inherent choice within contexts characterized by fluctuating circumstances, oscillating between extremes and the nadir. The dynamics of values always remain contingent upon the act of choice. Education emerges as a distinctive manifestation of self-cultivation, an exceptional embodiment of mature solitude. It also stands as an original testament to the accomplishments etched into the human fabric of existence.

## 2. Materials and methods

The objective of our empirical study was to investigate the awareness of future psychologists regarding the concept of sustainable social development and the guidelines for its implementation in their forthcoming professional endeavors. We consciously and purposefully surveyed students specializing in this particular field. In our perspective, psychologists constitute a professional community actively engaged in the implementation of the social component of sustainable development within society. They also significantly influence other aspects, such as the economic and environmental dimensions. The success

of this implementation at the outset of a psychologist's professional career hinges on their competence in the field of sustainable societal development. It also relies on their understanding of the critical importance of balancing meeting society's immediate needs and safeguarding future generations' interests. Furthermore, it depends on their willingness to contribute proactively to the realization of the ideals of sustainable social development. Hence, it is appropriate to advocate for the systematic monitoring of future psychologists' awareness of the concepts underlying sustainable social development. This awareness should encompass the guidelines for incorporating these principles into their future professional activities during their training.

The study, conducted during the spring of 2023, engaged students majoring in psychology at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Ukraine). The study cohort encompassed a total of 160 participants, ranging from first- to fifth-year students. Applicants seeking admission to the psychological education programs offered at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University represent a diverse group, consisting of young individuals hailing from various regions across Ukraine. Notably, during the academic year 2022-2023, the applicant pool experienced an expansion in its geographic composition due to a significant influx of internally displaced persons, a consequence of the ongoing conflict with the Russian Federation.

The study's scope encompassed students enrolled in four distinct educational programs: Counseling Psychology, Practical Psychology, Business and Management Psychology, and Extreme and Crisis Psychology. The inclusion of students from these programs determined the size of the sample under investigation. Furthermore, it facilitated the delineation of a comprehensive overview regarding the extent of future psychologists' proficiency in grasping the concepts underpinning the sustainable development of society. This comprehensive understanding serves as a foundational component for informing subsequent educational initiatives undertaken by the university's faculty.

The respondents had an average age of 21 years, with the youngest participant being 18 years old and the oldest, 27 years. A comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose, the principle of maintaining confidentiality to ensure the anonymity of responses, and the voluntary nature of participation were provided to all participants. Their voluntary consent to take part in the survey was obtained.

During the diagnostic phase of the study, a written survey was employed, administered through a Google form developed by the authors. The subsequent data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, encompassing calculations of averages, percentages, ranking, and correlation analysis. For data processing, the IBM SPSS Statistics statistical program (version 26) served as the platform. The culmination of the study involved interpreting and summarizing the acquired diagnostic data.

### **3. Results**

The initial question of the questionnaire aimed to elucidate students' comprehension of the concept of sustainable development. Participants were tasked with selecting the interpretation they believed to be most accurate. The results of the responses are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Respondents' selection of the correct interpretation of the concept of sustainable development

Answer options	Quantity of selection (%)
Balancing the need to meet the current needs of humanity and protect the interests of future generations	45
Stable economic development of society with the preservation of its natural resources	16,3
Coherence of economic, social, and environmental development of modern society	23,7
The relationship between meeting human needs and the planet's resources	15

The survey results revealed that only 45% of students possess a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the fundamental essence of sustainable development. Conversely, a notable portion (55%) of respondents exhibited a limited understanding of the concept, failing to associate humanity's sustainable development with the interests of future generations. Furthermore, 16.3% of aspiring psychologists overlooked the social and environmental aspects of sustainable development, narrowing their perspective to the economic facet exclusively.

Moving forward, the subsequent survey question explored the prevalence of sustainable development ideas within the surveyed students' environment (see Figure 1). The findings indicated that a mere 10% of respondents viewed these ideas as unpopular. Instead, prevailing trends such as consumerism, a focus on financial security, and a relatively low environmental consciousness dominated. Conversely, a significant majority (61.3%) of the surveyed psychology students acknowledged the partial popularity of sustainable development ideas within their milieu. This popularity was notably more evident among those who exhibited familiarity with these ideas and cultivated ethical and environmental values.

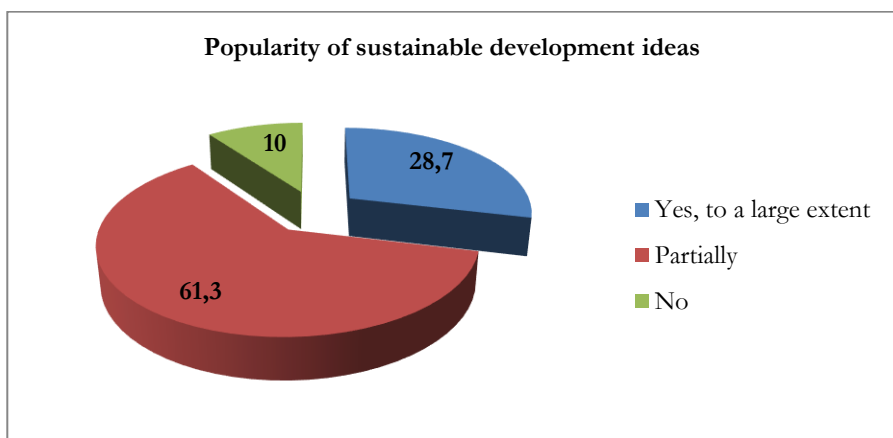


Figure 1. The popularity of sustainable development ideas among respondents (in % of selection)

Merely a tenth of the surveyed participants acknowledged their environment's substantial alignment with the principles of sustainable development of society. This alignment manifests through responsible treatment of nature, recognition, and support of individual value, and an ethos of tolerance.

Our study was fundamentally centered on identifying the prevailing obstacles within Ukrainian society that impede the realization of sustainable development values. The ranking results of the answers provided by future psychologists are presented in Table 2. Notably, respondents placed the internal obstacle at the top of the ranking. This reflects the historical policy imposed by the leadership of the former Soviet Union, which encouraged the exploitation of nature's resources without regard for the future. In essence, the second-ranking obstacle mirrors the first, emphasizing low environmental awareness and culture as significant internal barriers to implementing sustainable development ideas within modern Ukrainian society. Concurrently, a little over half of the respondents recognized an external obstacle as pertinent – the imperfect and ineffective nature of domestic legal mechanisms for monitoring compliance with sustainable development values (ranking third).

**Table 2.** Obstacles to the implementation of sustainable development values

Answer options	Quantity of respondents' selections* (%)	Rating position
Consumer attitude to natural resources	76,3	1
Low environmental awareness and culture	68,8	2
Imperfect and ineffective legal mechanisms for monitoring compliance with sustainable development values	52,5	3
An imbalance between the desire for financial security and ethical values	46,3	4
Uncertainty of the future, focus on the 'here and now' moment	45	5
Fatigue from economic and social inequality in society	33,8	6
Feelings of inferiority, difficulties in expressing one's own national identity	30	7
Immorality, selfishness in interpersonal interaction	23,8	8

\* The question allowed for the selection of multiple answers

The analysis of other ranking positions underscores the interplay between social and personal aspects in determining the obstacles to societal sustainable development. The fourth position is occupied by an axiological obstacle – the conflict between the desire for financial security and ethical values. The socio-economic challenges of Ukrainian society find representation in the 5th and 6th positions. Remarkably, nearly a third of respondents identified feelings of inferiority and struggles in expressing their national identity, caused by the ongoing ideological and cultural expansion of Russia, as an impediment to

implementing sustainable development values. Less than a quarter of respondents highlighted unfavorable personal traits among Ukrainians, such as promiscuity and selfishness in interpersonal interactions.

The war between Ukraine and the Russian Federation has deeply impacted all spheres of Ukrainian life, including the physical and mental dimensions. Continuous threats to life and health caused personal crisis experiences that prompted a reconsideration of established values for many Ukrainians. During the study, it was essential to ascertain whether the war had elevated the significance and priority of sustainable development ideas within Ukrainian society, particularly from the perspective of future psychologists. Almost 40% of respondents affirmed this correlation, associating sustainable development with a patriotic worldview and validating their viewpoint through Ukrainians' aspiration to preserve the independence of their nation (see Figure 2). Conversely, a tenth of respondents held a skeptical view, believing that current Ukrainian concerns prioritize survival security and basic needs over sustainable social development.

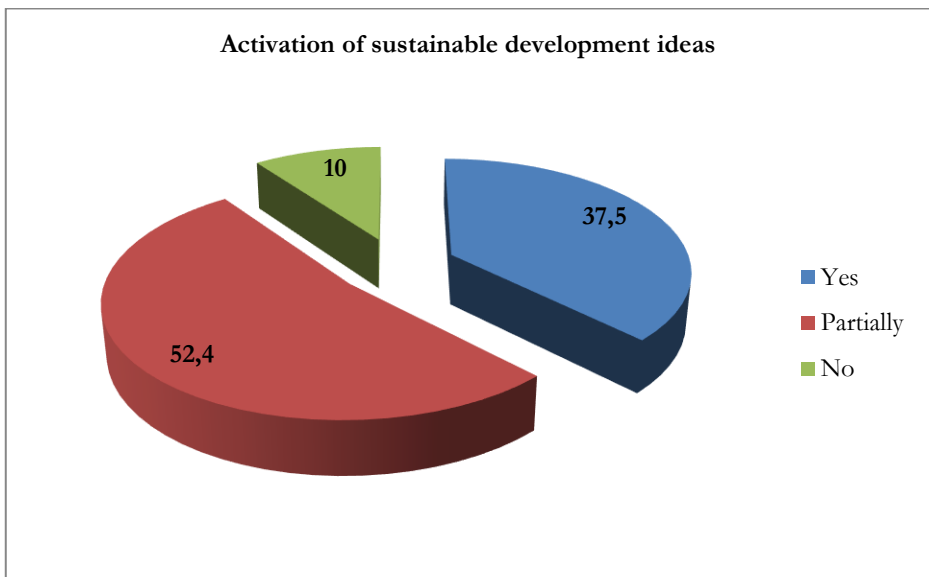


Figure 2. Activation of sustainable development ideas as a result of the war (in % of selections)

Slightly more than half of respondents (52.4%) conveyed that the war has led to only partial activation of sustainable development ideas due to adverse external conditions and limited freedom of action that hinder their alignment with these principles.

Subsequently, our research team aimed to gauge the respondents' self-perceived role in implementing the ideals of societal sustainable development. As part of our study, understanding the extent to which the university educational environment contributes to reinforcing values of sustainable societal development among students was pivotal. Slightly more than half (51.2%) of the respondents confirmed that the educational values endorsed within the university environment are fully consistent with the principles of sustainable development (see Figure 3). A slightly higher fraction (36.3%) of respondents perceived

that the university's educational sphere primarily promotes the values of sustainable societal development in the social context.

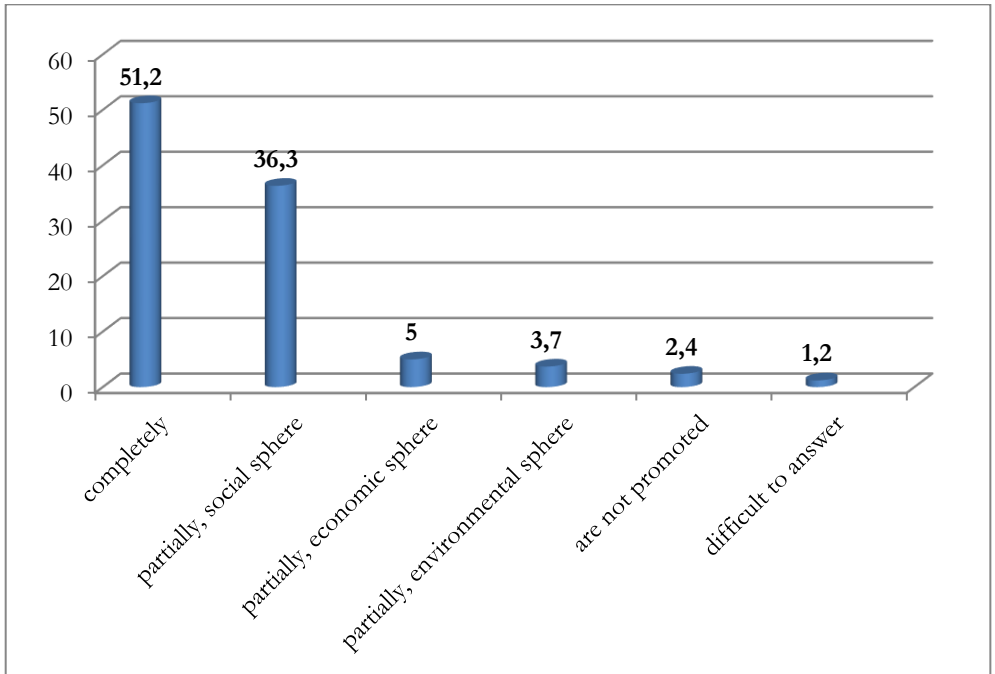


Figure 3. Alignment of university educational values with the sustainable development values

A minor portion, around 5% of future psychologists, perceived only the economic aspects of sustainable societal development being emphasized in the university environment. A modest number of respondents, 3.7%, associated university educational values solely with the environmental dimension of sustainable development. Four participants held the perspective that the university does not foster any values of sustainable societal development. Two respondents abstained from providing a definitive answer.

The ensuing questionnaire query prompted future psychologists to reflect on their role in actualizing sustainable development ideas in their personal lives. Close to half (46.6%) of respondents asserted that they substantially integrate societal sustainable development ideas into their lives. This alignment stems from their concern for the environment, interpersonal interactions, and personal present and future self-fulfillment (see Figure 4).



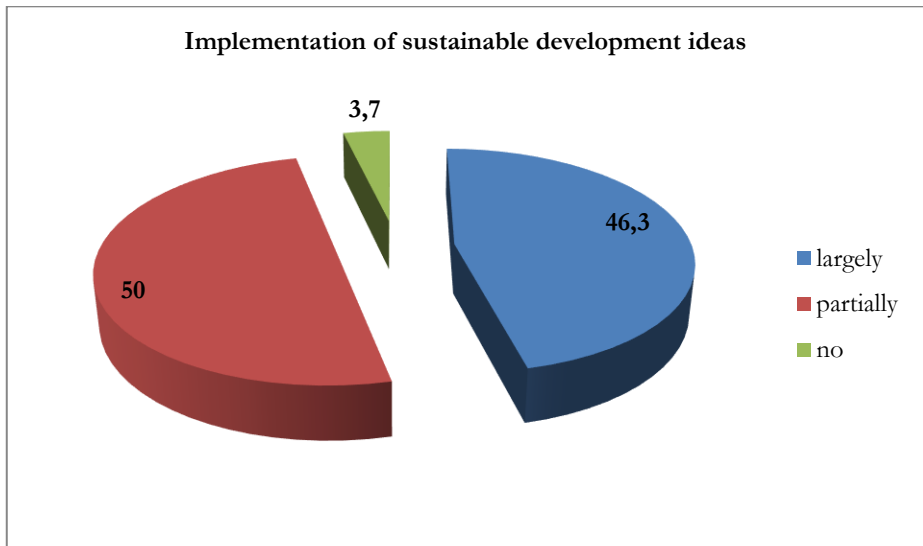


Figure 4. Implementation of sustainable development ideas in personal lives (in % of selections)

Approximately half of the surveyed future psychologists disclosed that they only partially integrate sustainable development ideas into their lives. This partial integration primarily pertains to environmentally conscious attitudes toward nature and people. Six respondents (3.7%) openly indicated that they are currently not focused on implementing sustainable development ideas into their lives, either due to considering themselves insignificant contributors or being occupied by other life tasks.

Considering the participants' status as future psychologists, it was essential to explore whether their anticipated professional values align with the ideals of societal sustainable development. Analysis of the students' responses revealed a positive trend in this regard, with 70% of respondents affirming such alignment (see Figure 5). This alignment is expressed through a commitment to serve society and provide quality psychological care. A smaller segment, around a quarter (23.7%), indicated a partial alignment, characterized by a focus on self-development and self-realization. Meanwhile, 6.3% of respondents acknowledged a disconnect between their anticipated professional values and the ideals of sustainable development, driven by the prioritization of financial security and career advancement.

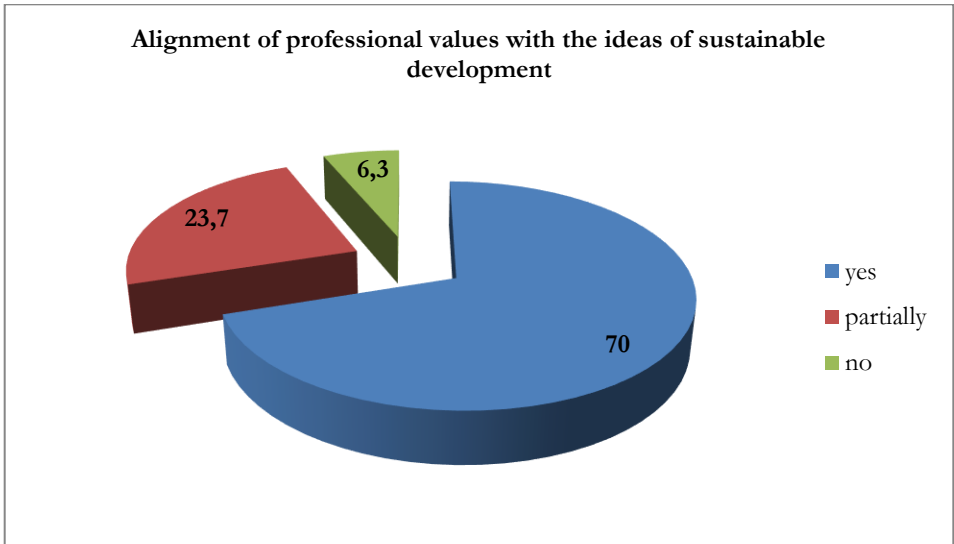


Figure 5. Alignment of professional values with sustainable development ideas (in % of selections)

To better gauge the students’ competence in terms of their ability to integrate societal sustainable development ideas into their future professional activities, a corresponding question was formulated in the questionnaire. Analyzing the respondents’ answers led us to compile a ranking of their perception of the areas within a psychologist’s professional scope where the implementation of sustainable development ideas is most effective (see Table 3). According to the respondents’ viewpoint, psychologists are well-positioned to promote the social and environmental aspects of societal sustainable development. The top-ranking areas include the popularization of ideas related to interpersonal tolerance and environmental awareness. This is closely followed by activating moral values and fostering social responsibility among clients. Moreover, enhancing clients’ personal well-being and life satisfaction, ranked third, underscores the social dimension inherent to the concept of sustainable societal development.

**Table 3.** Key areas of implementing sustainable development ideas by psychologists

Answer options	Number of respondents’ choices* (%)	Rating position
Popularization of ideas of interpersonal tolerance and development of environmental awareness	72,5	1
Activation of moral values and social responsibility of clients	68,8	2
Increasing the level of personal well-being and life satisfaction	61,3	3
Prevention and constructive resolution of conflicts	42,5	4

Search and development of abilities and personal potential	42,5	4
Relief of traumatic experiences of the client, crisis intervention	36,3	5
Strengthening the continuity of social development through intergenerational interaction	30,0	6
Development of prognostic skills and correction of clients' life strategy	30,0	6

\* The question allowed for the selection of multiple answers

Finally, participants were queried about the sources from which they learned about the concept of sustainable human development (Figure 6). It emerged that the primary sources were Internet information resources (62.5% of respondents) and social networks (58.8% of respondents). Roughly a third (36.3%) acquired knowledge about sustainable development ideas from their educators. It is noteworthy that the same percentage of respondents learned about the concept through our questionnaire survey. Some participants gained information from their school teachers. Television, radio, and parental narratives were not commonly cited as sources of information about the concept of sustainable development.

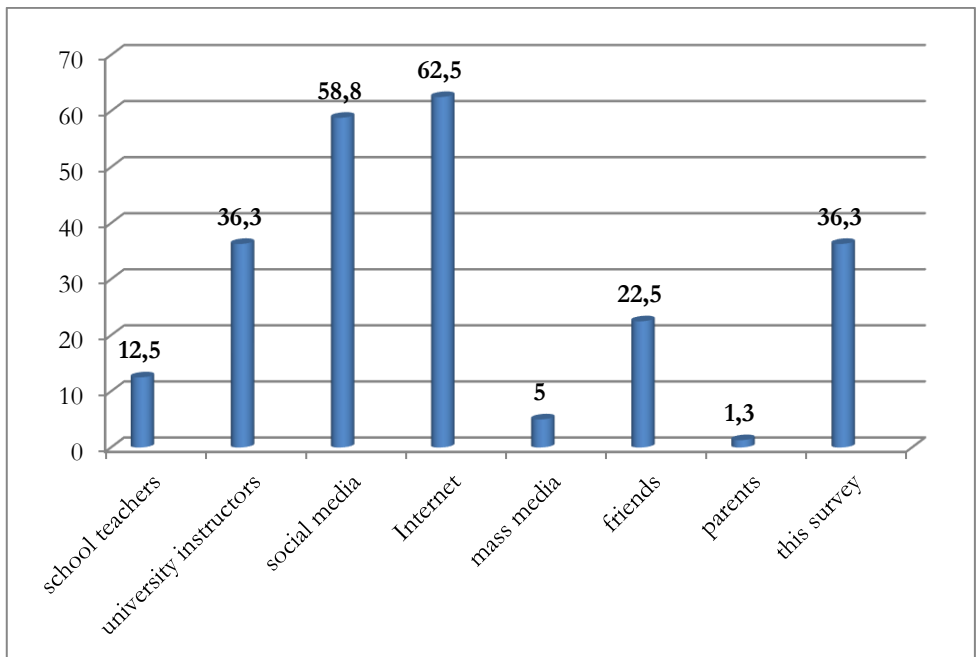


Figure 6. Sources of information about the concept of sustainable development of society (in % of selections)

#### 4. Discussion

The pivotal role of psychologists as specialists in facilitating the implementation of societal sustainable development ideas is paramount. Concurrently, the profound shifts in the social consciousness of Ukrainians, catalyzed by the war and persistent threats to personal well-being, underscore the potential for crisis conditions to serve as a fertile ground for reevaluating and crystallizing existential values among Ukrainians, thereby integrating them further into the democratic European framework. These observations align with existing research highlighting the transformative potential of crises in reshaping societal values and priorities (Leach et al., 2012; Voicu & Dülmer, 2016; Battu, 2023).

In the context of the study presented herein, our primary aim was to gauge the awareness among future psychologists regarding the content of sustainable social development concepts and their motivational and value-driven readiness to integrate these ideas during their professional training. The survey's outcomes spotlight a noteworthy portion of surveyed psychology students who exhibit a restricted comprehension of sustainable social development ideas, largely acquired from internet resources and social media networks (due to the survey results). Further in-field assessment can be carried out in future studies.

Simultaneously, over half of the respondents endeavor to uphold their interpretation of sustainable development ideas, including their promotion within the university's educational milieu. Future psychologists aptly recognize that the war in Ukraine has accentuated the imperative of infusing the values of sustainable development into the national fabric. Nevertheless, only about a third of respondents indicated a strong adherence to these ideas within their immediate surroundings. Our findings underscore that prominent hindrances to the implementation of sustainable development ideas encompass consumerist attitudes toward natural resources, coupled with a dearth of environmental consciousness and culture among Ukrainian citizens.

Consequently, the principal professional endeavors revolve around championing the propagation of ideas centered on interpersonal tolerance, nurturing environmental awareness, and activating moral values alongside the inculcation of social responsibility among clients. In accordance, the surveyed psychology students reasonably posit the social facet as the most apparent aspect for integrating sustainable development ideas within their future professional engagements. Nevertheless, there appears to be a relatively lesser emphasis on addressing the challenge of intergenerational continuity.

Acknowledging the scope of this study, there exists an opportunity to delve deeper by employing standardized diagnostic questionnaires that can effectively amass invaluable empirical data on students' value orientations and their degree of social responsibility. However, the insights garnered from the analyzed data of our current study underscore a significant concern: the concept of societal sustainable development has yet to receive dedicated attention and discourse within the educational domain of psychologists' professional training.

## 5. Conclusions

The exploration into the understanding and readiness of future psychologists regarding sustainable social development has unveiled a landscape characterized by limited and fragmentary competence in the subject matter. The inculcation of sustainable development values within students emerges as an organic yet disjointed process. Consequently, an imperative unfolds for enhancing the quality of psychologists' professional training. The exigency becomes even more pronounced in the aftermath of the war, as the transformation of public opinion on the principles of continuity and sustainability takes center stage. In this context, educators face the pivotal task of approaching the concept of sustainable development in an interdisciplinary light, thereby fostering comprehensive comprehension and cultivating a proactive readiness for its integration into future professional endeavors.

To encapsulate, the pursuit of a profession within the intricate and sacred realm of education mandates a profound educational foundation, intellectual maturity, and a symbiotic alignment with the scientific worldview. Whether as researchers, practitioners, or critics, the role of educators encompasses a multifaceted vantage point. This standpoint extends to the recognition of education as a dynamic arena that thrives on respect for thought, the sanctity of words, and an ethos of wisdom – a philosophy-driven ecosystem (Khrypko *et al.*, 2023a). As we peer through the lens of futurism, it becomes evident that every era stands as a crossroads, and each generation perceives itself as a participant in historical transitions. The tremors of transformation, often couched within the notion of a 'lost generation', are an intrinsic part of human history. Throughout the ages, societies have grappled with the ebb and flow between 'before' and 'after', while navigating the undercurrents of new world orders.

Education, ever a path to self-discovery, unfolds in solitude – an arena where ideas and reflections inscribed by the inner voice manifest on memory's tablets. Just as every scar and handwriting is unique, education and the values one embraces are exceptional and unparalleled. (Aleksandrova, 2020). Education unfurls as the embodiment of one's spiritual identity, while literacy becomes a defining hallmark. The trajectories of sustainable development and the destiny of future generations pivot on education, its methodologies, and the value systems underpinning it.

In this perpetual voyage, the intricate dance between education and values echoes as a guiding rhythm for societal evolution and individual growth. As we move forward, our path holds the promise of unraveling novel dimensions within this symbiotic relationship, further shaping the trajectory of education and amplifying its transformative potential.

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