Innovative Approaches to the Administration of Social Support and Interagency Cooperation in the Field of Social Services

Métodos inovadores de gestão do apoio social e da cooperação interinstitucional no âmbito dos serviços sociais

iD **Svitlana Cherneta[1]**
iD **Iryna Bychuk[2]**
iD **Viktoriia Stepanenko[3]**
iD **Andrii Kolosok[4]**
iD **Olena Bielkina-Kovalchuk[5]**

Resumo

No contexto das transformações sociais modernas, a administração inovadora do apoio social e a cooperação interinstitucional são fundamentais para aumentar a eficiência dos serviços sociais. Modelos de gestão integrada que utilizam tecnologias digitais, coordenação intersetorial e parcerias organizacionais garantem um apoio sistemático e coerente. Este estudo examina os fundamentos teóricos e metodológicos da cooperação interinstitucional como ferramenta para otimizar recursos, fortalecer a coesão social e aprimorar as políticas sociais ao nível comunitário. Um inquérito a 876 beneficiários de serviços e 188 prestadores revelou uma elevada sensibilização para as abordagens integradas (59,7% dos beneficiários, 75% dos prestadores) e impactos positivos nos grupos vulneráveis (82,5% dos beneficiários, 88,8% dos prestadores). No entanto, a plena implementação de práticas inovadoras continua a ser limitada, com barreiras que incluem lacunas regulamentares, falta de metodologia unificada e formação profissional insuficiente, o que destaca a necessidade de melhorar o apoio humano, regulamentar e digital.

Palavras-chave: serviços sociais, comunidade, aconselhamento, cooperação interinstitucional, apoio social, política social

Abstract

In the context of modern social transformations, innovative administration of social support and interagency cooperation are key to enhancing social service efficiency. Integrated management models using digital technologies, cross-sectoral coordination, and organizational partnerships ensure systematic, coherent support. This study examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of interagency cooperation as a tool for optimizing resources, strengthening social cohesion, and improving community-level social policy. A survey of 876 service recipients and 188 providers revealed high awareness of integrated approaches (59.7% recipients, 75% providers) and positive impacts on vulnerable groups (82.5% recipients, 88.8% providers). However, full implementation of innovative practices remains limited, with barriers including regulatory gaps, a lack of unified methodology, and insufficient professional training, highlighting the need to enhance human, regulatory, and digital support.

Keywords: *social services, community, counseling, interagency cooperation, social support, social policy*

[1] cherneta.svitlana@vnu.edu.ua, Department of Social Work and Higher School Pedagogy, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University [Ukraine]

[2] Bychuk.Irina@vnu.edu.ua, Department of Social Work and Higher School Pedagogy, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University [Ukraine]

[3] stepanenko.viktoriia@vnu.edu.ua, Department of Social Work and Higher School Pedagogy, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University [Ukraine]

[4] Kolosok.Andrew@vnu.edu.ua, Department of Social Pedagogy and Pedagogy of Higher School, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University [Ukraine]

[5] belkina-kovalchuk.olena@vnu.edu.ua, Department of Social Work and Higher School Pedagogy, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University [Ukraine]

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Introduction

In the context of current socio-economic transformations and the challenges of globalization, innovative approaches to the administration of social support and the organization of interagency cooperation in the field of social services are particularly relevant. The continuous complexity of social processes, as well as the growing diversity of needs of target populations, necessitate the development and implementation of effective adaptive strategies that provide comprehensive social protection and targeted support to the most vulnerable in times of crisis and uncertainty (Sanders & Scanlon, 2021; Trubavina et al., 2021; Lebedyk, 2021). Social workers and professionals in the field are called upon not only to have a wide range of methodological tools but also to quickly integrate innovative technologies and communication practices to improve the effectiveness of social support and enhance the quality of interagency coordination (Roberson & Baker, 2021; Yurkiv & Krasnova, 2021).

The social services sector is a backbone segment of the national social security model, designed to reduce socioeconomic inequality, promote the integration of socially vulnerable groups, and improve the overall quality of life (Benjamin et al., 2020; Bode, 2017; Mosley, 2020). At the same time, established models of organizing and administering social support are increasingly facing significant challenges, including limited resources, rising numbers of service recipients, transformations in social structures, and dynamic shifts in community needs (Bode, 2017; Čižikienė, 2020).

In the face of these challenges, the concept of social innovation is of particular importance, as it is seen as a multidimensional tool for modernizing the social service delivery system, optimizing resource allocation, and increasing the institutional sustainability of the sector (Acar et al., 2018; Anheier et al., 2019; Borzaga & Bodini, 2014; Eurich & Langer, 2016; Rønning & Knutagard, 2015). Social innovation encompasses not only technological solutions, but also organizational models, management methods, social entrepreneurial initiatives, and integration practices aimed at long-term solutions to complex social problems (Acar et al., 2018; Mulgan, 2006, 2012; Mialkovska et al., 2023a, 2023b).

Particular emphasis should be placed on a differentiated approach to social groups, as socio-cultural, economic, and psychological determinants significantly vary the needs and challenges faced by the social services system (Cherneta et al., 2024). Innovative administrative models and digital tools, in particular, are key factors in optimizing care delivery processes, overcoming barriers to social exclusion, and increasing inclusion (Stoliaryk & Semigina, 2022). A significant role is played in bridging the digital divide, which is increasingly seen as a fundamental human rights issue. Sanders and Scanlon (2021) emphasize that ensuring access to the Internet and digital technologies is a basic condition for personal development and social inclusion, and social workers should act as active agents of transformation, helping to narrow technological inequalities and support digital literacy.

To summarize, innovative approaches to the administration of social support and the organization of interagency cooperation are key components of modern social policy that ensure the effective functioning of the social services system in difficult

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socio-political and economic conditions. Relevant research and practical implementation of such approaches are of strategic importance for strengthening social cohesion, increasing inclusion, and sustainable development of communities (Lebedyk, 2021). In this regard, the authors believe it is necessary to explore innovative approaches to the administration of social support and interagency cooperation in social services, which are highly relevant to the current scientific and practical discourse.

Literature review

Current research shows that the successful implementation of innovations in the social services sector is determined not so much by the pace of technological progress as by the depth of organizational change and the level of effectiveness of intersectoral cooperation between government agencies, private business, and the public sector (Kolk & Lenfant, 2015; Rakšnys et al., 2020; Rønning & Knutagard, 2015). However, despite the high potential, the spread of innovative practices is often hampered by some systemic constraints: financial instability, bureaucratic procedures, institutional inertia, insufficient digital readiness, human resource shortages, and lack of necessary competencies among social service providers (Čižikienė, 2020; Sawyer & Henriksen, 2024; Unceta et al., 2017). Additional barriers include territorial disparities in infrastructure development and differences in regional socioeconomic conditions, which hinder the uniform implementation of innovations and the objective assessment of their effectiveness (Zanello et al., 2016). In summary, most studies focus on barriers, but there is a lack of a comprehensive vision for how these barriers can be overcome within specific social support systems.

Innovations in the social sphere are seen as the emergence of new forms of social services, as well as improvements in their delivery methods and organizational approaches aimed at more effectively meeting social needs and increasing the social value of such services (Traube et al., 2016; Flynn, 2017; Antonio et al., 2018a; Halvorsen, 2017). The concept of social innovation encompasses a wide range of strategies, technological solutions, and organizational and managerial models designed not only to respond to existing problems but also to create conditions for long-term social value (Acar et al., 2018; Mulgan, 2006, 2012). The analysis of scientific sources shows that in academic discourse, social innovations are seen as innovative solutions to socially significant problems that can cause profound transformations and increase the effectiveness of solving problems in the field of well-being (Acar et al., 2018; Anheier et al., 2019; Avelino et al., 2019; Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). At the same time, research mainly focuses on defining and classifying innovations, while the issue of their institutionalization and integration into social support systems is not sufficiently addressed.

Theoretical studies note that social innovations in social services cover several dimensions: relational – interaction between service recipient and specialist; procedural - dynamics and continuity of changes; interactive – interaction between different actors and systems in the field of social security (Crepaldi et al., 2012). These dimensions define the specifics of implementing innovative approaches to social

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support that require interagency coordination and involvement of different parties – from communities to specialized organizations (Tanggaard & Author, 2016).

The theoretical basis of many studies on innovation in social work is based on Rogers′ (2010) theory of diffusion of innovations (further – DOI), which identifies five key characteristics that determine the degree of adoption and diffusion of innovations: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, testability, and observability (Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Knudsen & Roman, 2015; Dingfelder & Mandell, 2011). In the context of social services, these attributes help systematize understanding of the introduction of innovations, including digital technologies, which form the foundation for the modernization of social support.

The relative advantages of innovation are seen as potential benefits for social workers and clients compared to traditional methods (Rogers, 2010; Greenhalgh et al., 2004). The use of information and communication technologies (further – ICTs) increases access to professionals, improves communication, and facilitates the integration of different stakeholders into the service delivery process (Hill & Shaw, 2011; Baker et al., 2014; Chan & Holosko, 2016; Halvorsen, 2017). Web-based data management systems facilitate the storage, analysis, and exchange of information, which improves the quality of decision-making and transparency of processes (Ryan & Garrett, 2018; Gillingham, 2015, 2016; Antonio et al., 2018b; Berzin & Coulton, 2018; Bradt et al., 2017; Andreassen, 2018). Scientific discourse identifies another significant gap: the lack of comprehensive research integrating the issues of digital innovation with the transformation of management processes and the training system. Digital technologies and personalized services are gaining particular importance, as they significantly expand the availability and effectiveness of social support, particularly in emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic and war (Andriyiv et al., 2022; Melnyk et al., 2022; Andriyiv et al., 2021).

An important aspect is the role of interagency cooperation as a foundation for the sustainable functioning of innovative approaches. Partnerships between different sectors ensure more effective coordination of resources, avoid duplication of efforts, and contribute to the sustainability of innovative practices in social support (Rønning & Knutagard, 2015). Community involvement, in particular through participatory tools (e.g., community budgeting), increases social capital, builds trust in institutions, and contributes to a more accurate consideration of local needs in the planning and implementation of social services. Such mechanisms ensure not only qualitative changes but also enhance social inclusion and reduce social exclusion (Benjamin et al., 2020).

Innovative approaches to the administration of social support and interagency cooperation in social services are the subject of interdisciplinary research that focuses on introducing new ideas, practices, and technologies with significant impact on the effectiveness of social work (Rogers, 2010). The scientific gap lies in the absence of comprehensive studies that simultaneously account for the technological, organizational, managerial, and interdepartmental dimensions of innovation and reveal the mechanisms for integrating them into the social support system. In general, the analysis of scientific sources reveals a scientific gap in the comprehensive study of innovative approaches to the administration of social support and interagency

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cooperation in the field of social services, necessitating further interdisciplinary research in this area.

Materials and methods

To achieve the research objectives, a set of complementary methods was used, with the selection based on both the work's tasks and the need to integrate theoretical and empirical analysis.

Systematization was used to organize and classify data, providing a structured foundation for further analysis. This approach is logically connected to the subsequent application of systematic analysis, which uncovered the theoretical bases of innovative practices in the social sphere and offered a methodological framework for interpreting empirical results.

The generalization method enhanced the analytical component by combining theoretical positions and empirical survey results, thereby ensuring the development of comprehensive conclusions.

A comparative analysis was conducted to identify differences in how various groups of respondents—service recipients and providers—perceive and evaluate integrated approaches to social support. This approach enabled a comparison of stakeholders' perspectives.

The survey was the main tool for collecting empirical data, as it offered a comprehensive view of practices for implementing innovative models of social support and interagency cooperation. The method was selected because it can reach a large number of respondents while also identifying behavioral and organizational factors.

Descriptive and analytical statistics were used to analyze the results, allowing the identification of key trends and relationships among factors affecting the effectiveness of innovative approaches.

Thus, the methods used not only carry out individual research tasks but also create a unified methodological system, from understanding the theory of the issue to analyzing empirical data both quantitatively and qualitatively, thereby ensuring the comprehensiveness and validity of the results.

To examine the key characteristics, practices, and strategies involved in social support administration and interagency cooperation within social services, an empirical study was conducted using descriptive statistics. Data for the analysis were gathered through an online survey, which allowed for quick collection of reliable, structured information. The survey included 1064 respondents from two main groups: 876 recipients of social services and 188 providers, such as heads of institutions, social workers, and specialists at various levels. Data collection took place via the MS Forms platform between March 22, 2024, and June 22, 2025. The questionnaire featured closed questions with multiple-choice answers, enabling a quantitative analysis of respondents' opinions and assessments concerning innovative approaches to social support, legal and regulatory frameworks, human resources, resource allocation, as well as current challenges and future prospects for interagency cooperation. Some questions also had open fields for additional comments, allowing us to gather

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qualitative data on behavioral and organizational factors influencing the effectiveness of these innovative methods. During the survey, respondents answered questions such as: To what extent do you understand the conceptual framework of an integrated approach to social support in the context of ensuring interagency coordination? How do you evaluate the impact of implementing integrated social support models on the social well-being of vulnerable groups like children and families? In your opinion, how well are innovative practices (such as social services commissioning and case management) integrated into the local social support system? Is there a formal regulation of interagency cooperation in the provision of social services within your administrative-territorial unit? How would you describe the level of interagency coordination among educational, medical, social, and law enforcement agencies? The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which helped us identify patterns and key issues in social support management and interagency collaboration.

Results

The study's results show varying levels of awareness and evaluation of integrated social support approaches across key respondent groups—recipients and providers of social services. Analysis of Figure 1 indicates a strong understanding of the integrated approach to social support, particularly among service providers, where 75% (141 out of 188) of respondents stated they were "absolutely aware" of the concept of interagency coordination. Likewise, among social service recipients, 59.7% (523 out of 876) of respondents reported being fully aware of these principles, reflecting a general awareness in this area, though with some differences between groups.

When evaluating the impact of implementing integrated social support models on the social well-being of vulnerable groups, the evidence is mainly positive. Specifically, among social service recipients, 82.5% (712 out of 876) rate this impact as either clearly or mostly positive, while among providers, the positive assessment is 88.8% (166 out of 188). At the same time, the existence of neutral and negative evaluations, though in the minority, points to specific problems and challenges in the practical application of integrated models, which call for further systematic research.

Regarding the level of integration of innovative practices, such as social services commissioning and case management, into local social support systems, the data show that only 23.6% of recipients (207 out of 876) and 48.4% of providers (91 out of 188) consider these practices fully integrated. The vast majority of respondents indicated partial integration (55.8% of recipients, 35.1% of providers), suggesting an active but incomplete process of implementing innovative models. Some respondents report minimal or no integration, pointing to a need to improve policies and mechanisms to adopt the latest social support practices more effectively.

Therefore, the analysis confirms that both groups of respondents are highly aware of the importance of integrated models and innovative approaches to social support. At the same time, the differences in their perceived level of implementation indicate the presence of organizational and functional barriers that require targeted management decisions and interagency coordination to enhance the effectiveness of social services.

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Figure 1

Comparative analysis of the number of responses from social sector participants regarding awareness and evaluation of integrated approaches to social support and interagency cooperation
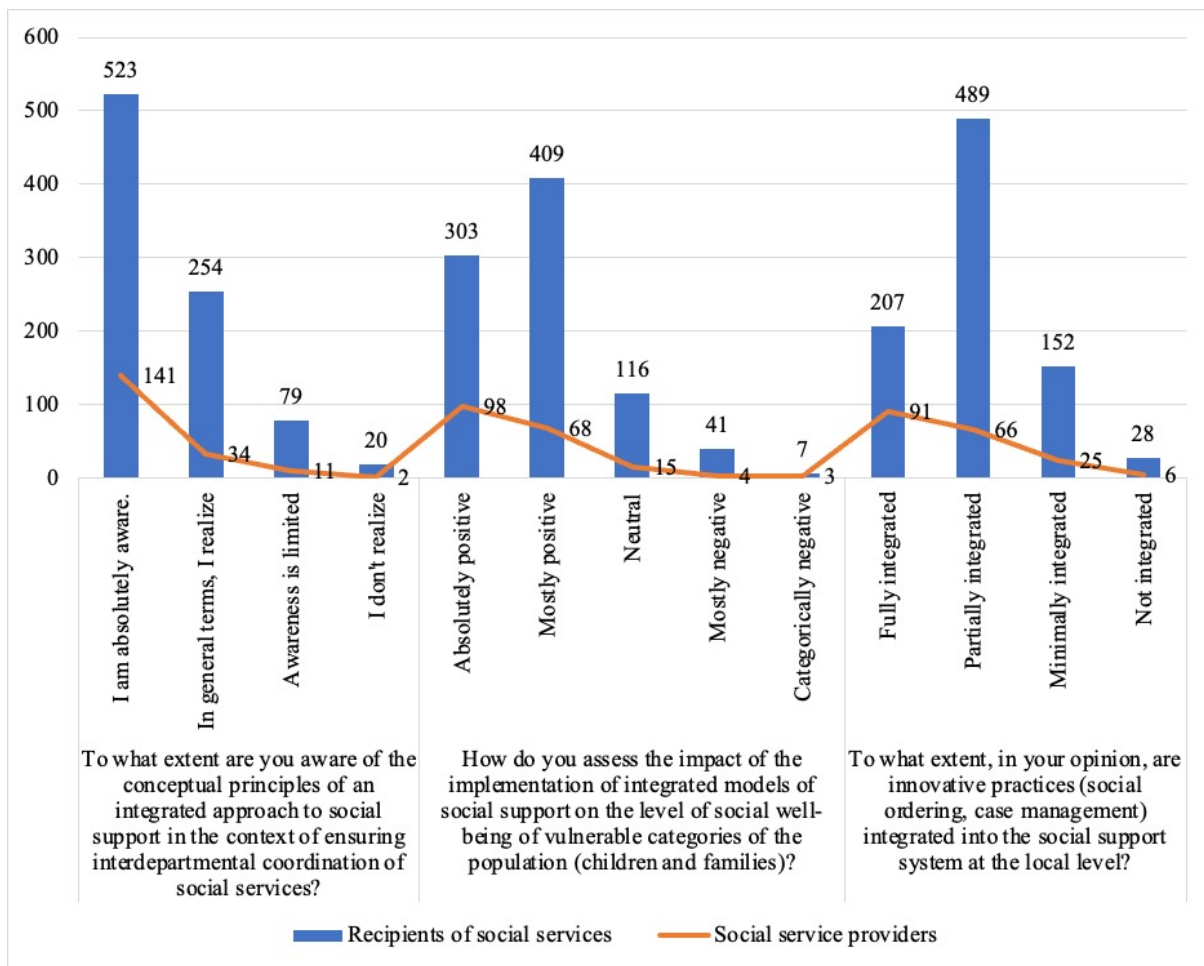
Source: author's own calculations

The analysis demonstrates a high level of awareness of the concept of an integrated approach to social support among both groups, especially among service providers (75%). At the same time, the difference between the groups (59.7% among recipients) indicates a need for additional information and public awareness raising. Overall readiness to implement integrated models is high, but there is room for improvement in mutual understanding between stakeholders.

The results of the analysis show that the formalization of interagency cooperation is perceived significantly differently by the two groups. Accordingly, 68.6% of social service providers state that there are clearly defined regulatory documents, while among recipients this figure is much lower – 46.2%. At the same time, 38.2% of recipients assess the regulations as partially formalized at the level of recommendations, indicating the imperfection of the regulatory framework, which, in practice, is often declarative.

The analysis of the degree of interagency coordination shows similar trends: among social service providers, 64.9% report a high level of coordination with systemic

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interaction, while among recipients, only 35.5% share this assessment; the majority of recipients (50.3%) characterize coordination as moderate, with local initiatives. This disproportion indicates a potential problem in communication and coordination between the structural units of social support, which may negatively affect the quality of service provision.

Identification of the main obstacles to interagency cooperation has revealed that the key barrier is the lack of a legal and regulatory framework (39.4% of recipients, 48.4% of providers). The lack of a unified methodology and standards (35.5% and 30.3%) and the low level of professional training (28.3% and 27.1%) also significantly hinder integration processes. Competition for limited resources (23.1% and 22.3%) and lack of motivation to cooperate (17.8% and 15.4%) further complicate systemic interaction.

Table 1

Systemic analysis of differences in perceptions of interagency cooperation among recipients and providers of social services

Question	Answer	Recipients of social services		Providers of social services	
		Number	%	Number of people receiving social services	%
Is there a formalized regulation of interagency cooperation in the provision of social services within your administrative-territorial unit?	Yes, there is a clearly defined regulatory document	405	46,2	129	68,6
	Partially, at the level of recommendations	335	38,2	41	21,8
	Not available	136	15,5	18	9,6
How would you characterize the degree of interagency coordination (between educational, medical, social and law enforcement structures) in providing social support?	High degree of coordination, with systemic interaction	311	35,5	122	64,9
	Moderate degree, with local initiatives	441	50,3	48	25,5
	Low, with sporadic or no coordination	124	14,2	18	9,6
What are the structural or functional factors that most impede effective interagency cooperation in the social sphere? (Please, tick the most important ones)	Insufficient legal and regulatory framework	345	39,4	91	48,4
	Lack of common methodology and standards	311	35,5	57	30,3
	Low level of professional training of specialists	248	28,3	51	27,1
	Competition for resources between institutions	202	23,1	42	22,3
	Insufficient motivation to cooperate	156	17,8	29	15,4
	Other (lack of funding, technical problems, staff shortages, organizational barriers, bureaucratic obstacles, etc.)	33	3,8	11	5,9

Source: author's own calculations

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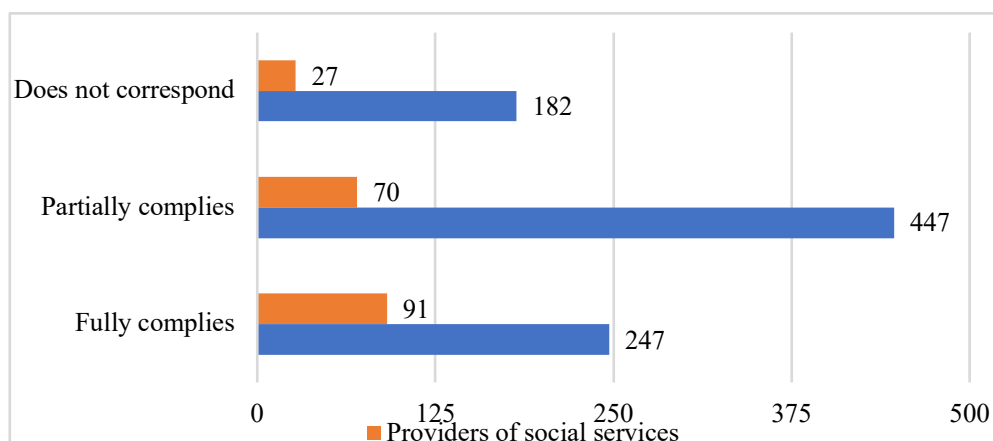in the Field of Social Services.
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The data presented in Table 1 highlight significant differences in the perception of interagency cooperation between service recipients and providers. While service providers rate formalization and coordination highly, recipients report only partial formalization and a moderate level of coordination, indicating the presence of organizational and functional barriers that require improvement to the regulatory framework and communication mechanisms. The data obtained emphasize the need to improve the regulatory framework, unify procedures, and raise the professional level of staff as key factors for increasing the effectiveness of interagency cooperation. At the same time, differences in recipients' and providers' perceptions of the degree of coordination indicate the need to develop transparent mechanisms of communication and partnership among all participants in social support.

In the context of the study of the human resources potential of the social sector, which is a critical factor in implementing innovative approaches to social support, the analysis of empirical data shows heterogeneity in perceptions of human resources readiness across respondent categories (Figure 2). In particular, among recipients of social services, 28.2% (247 people) assessed the human resource potential of their region as "fully compliant" with the requirements for the effective implementation of innovations, indicating a certain level of trust in the existing human resources. At the same time, the majority of respondents (50.9%, 447 people) believe that the human resource potential "partially meets" these requirements, indicating significant reserves for advanced training and the modernization of competencies among social sector employees. The level of dissatisfaction with human resources was 20.7% (182 people), indicating systemic challenges and the need for targeted human resources development measures.

In turn, among social service providers, the share of positive assessments of human resources ("fully meets") is higher, at 48.4% (91 people), which may reflect a better understanding of the system's real capacities and internal resources. However, more than 37.2% (70 people) say that the human resource potential is "partially adequate", while 14.4% (27 people) are critical. Such dynamics indicate bottlenecks in staff training and motivation that impede the full implementation of innovative approaches to social support.

Figure 2

Results of empirical data obtained on the question "Do you think that the human resources potential of the social sector in your region meets the requirements for the effective implementation of innovative approaches?"

Source: author's own calculations.

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The assessment of human potential reveals a diversity of perceptions, with only a minority of respondents expressing complete readiness. This highlights the need for targeted professional development, motivational mechanisms, and staff competence-building to implement innovative social support approaches effectively.

Therefore, the data analysis indicates that the human resource potential of the social sector remains an unclear factor that requires a comprehensive approach to professional development, the creation of incentive mechanisms, and the adoption of modern human resource management methods. This should consider the specifics of innovative social support administration and interagency cooperation.

The study evaluated the frequency and quality of social workers' professional development, an essential part of personnel policy and a crucial factor in successfully implementing innovative social support methods. The data show that 58% of respondents reported engaging in regular and systematic professional development at their institutions (109 people), demonstrating that many social institutions have well-established programs aimed at updating skills and addressing new challenges in social services.

However, 27.1% of respondents (51 people) noted the episodic nature of professional development, which indicates instability in access to systematic education and training, possibly due to organizational, financial, or staffing constraints. The third group—14.9% (28 people)—reported a lack of professional development, which is concerning, as failing to update social workers' knowledge and skills directly affects the quality of social services and the implementation of innovations (Figure 3).

Regarding the use of modern social work methods, especially case management and multidisciplinary teams, 69.7% (131 respondents) confirmed their systematic use, indicating the gradual adoption of progressive practices aimed at individualizing social support and enhancing its effectiveness. Meanwhile, 20.2% (38 people) use these methods partially, which may result from insufficient staff training or organizational barriers. The group that does not use modern approaches consists of 10.1% (19 people), highlighting the need for additional professional support and motivation to promote innovative technologies in the social sphere.

The results shown in Figure 3 confirm the variety of approaches to professional development and the use of modern social work techniques. Although most respondents consistently implement advanced practices, a significant portion do so only partly, highlighting the need for more structured and integrated human resources policies and training programs.

Overall, the analysis confirms the diversity of approaches to professional development and the adoption of modern social work methods. It highlights the main challenges of creating a more systematic and integrated personnel policy focused on sustainable skills development and the spread of innovative practices in social support.

The survey results reveal mixed levels of development in the social infrastructure that provides social services in various regions. Among those who receive services, 39.5% (346 people) rate it as highly developed and accessible, 45.7% (400 people) as moderately developed, and 14.8% (130 people) note significant gaps.

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Meanwhile, social service providers tend to view the infrastructure more positively: 60.1% (113 people) describe it as highly developed, 26.1% (49 people) as moderately developed, and 13.8% (26 people) as minimally developed.

Regarding the organization of collecting, processing, and analyzing statistical data on the needs of the population, 35.1% of recipients report a high level of efficiency, 44.8% a partial level, and 20% a low level. Social service providers are more optimistic: 62.8% (118 people) consider this process effective, 25% (50 people) partially effective, and 12.2% (24 people) ineffective.

Figure 3

Assessment of the system of professional development and implementation of innovative methods in social work
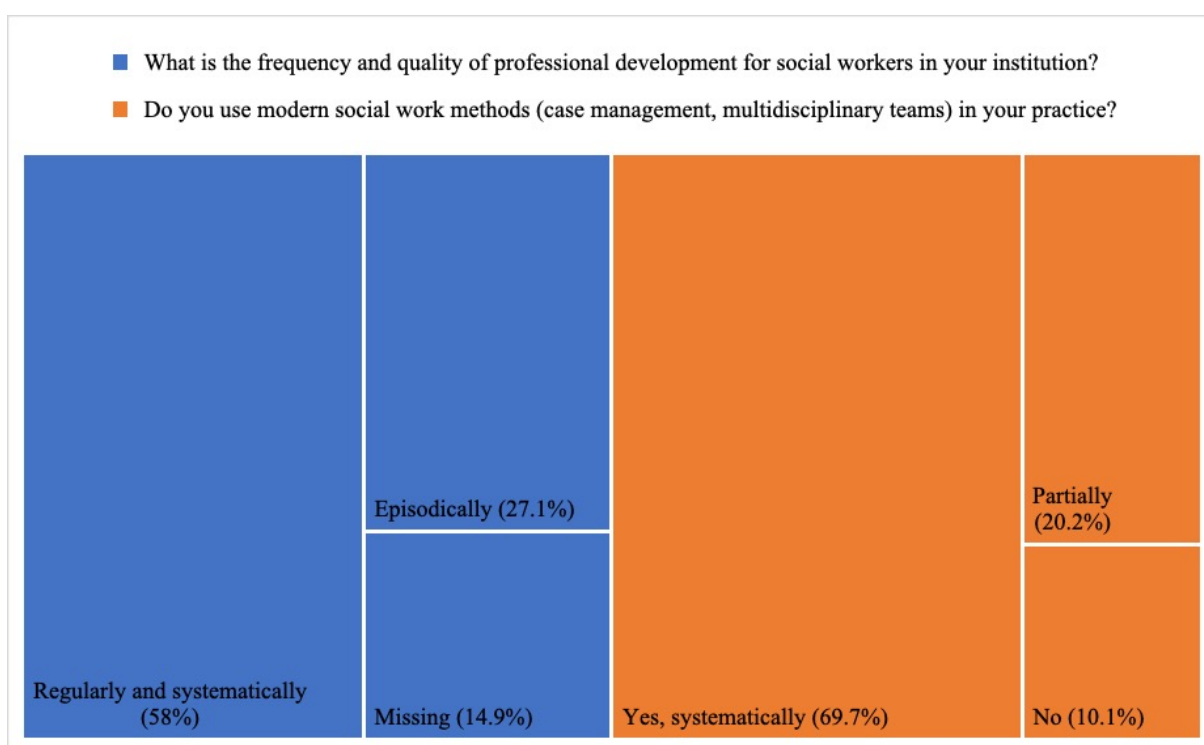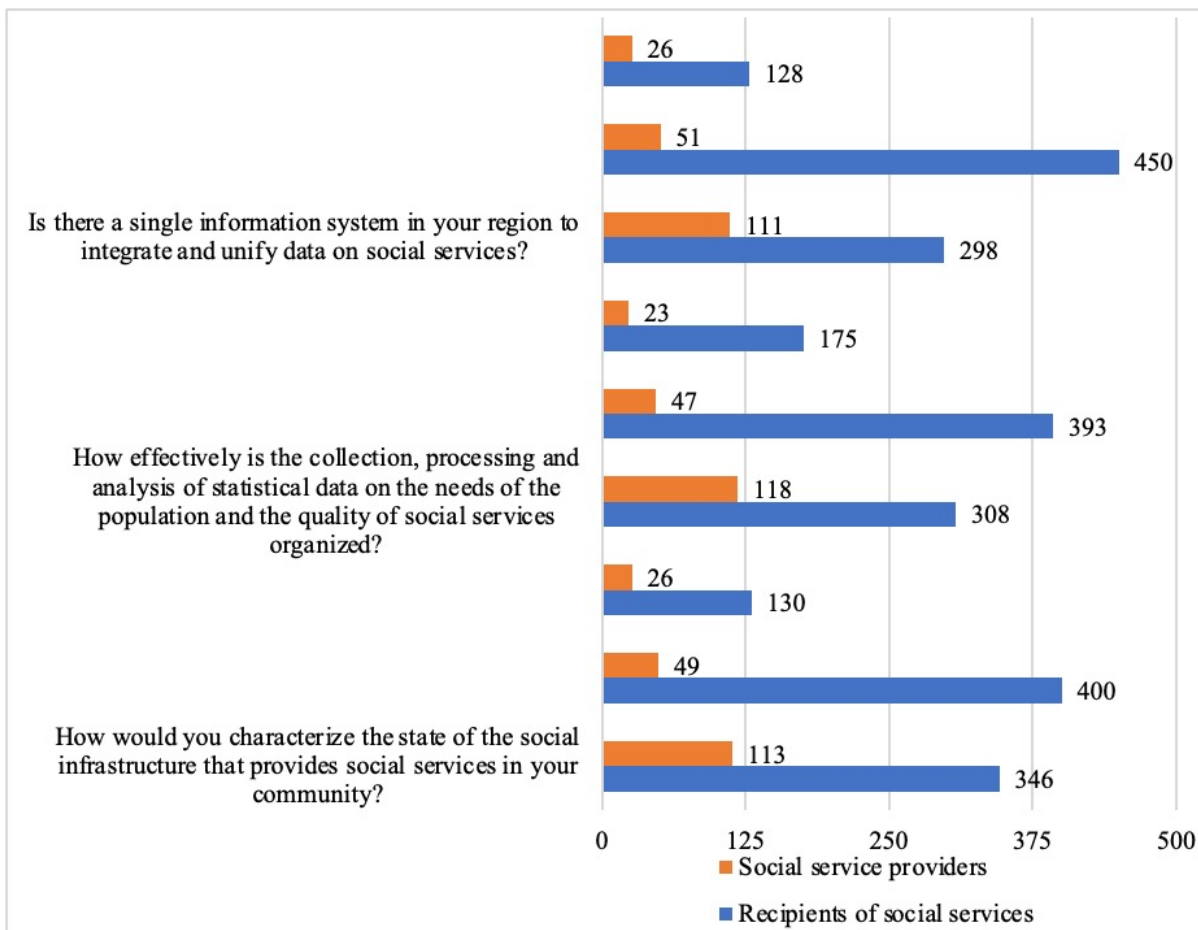

Source: author's own calculations.

Regarding the availability of a unified information system to integrate and unify data on social services, 34% of recipients report it is effective, 51.4% report it is partially effective, and 14.6% report its absence. A similar trend is observed among social service providers: 59% confirm the system's effectiveness, 27.1% report it functioning partially, and 13.8% report its absence (Figure 4).

An analysis of social infrastructure and information systems shows differences in perception between service recipients and providers. While there is a generally positive view of digital technologies for improving service efficiency, the barriers identified—such as insufficient coordination, legal support, and funding—indicate the need for better integration of digital solutions and improvements in systemic processes. This highlights the necessity to enhance coordination and deepen the integration of digital technologies into the social support system.

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Figure 4

Comprehensive assessment of social infrastructure and information systems in the field of social support

Source: author's own calculations.

The identified differences and common trends in how people perceive key aspects of the social support system's operation are crucial for creating strategic plans to modernize the social sector. Most respondents, including both recipients (382 people) and providers (141 people), report a strong positive effect of digital technologies on the efficiency of social services, highlighting the success of digital transformation in enhancing the speed and quality of communication and operational processes. However, a small number of respondents (16 recipients and 1 provider) note a significant negative impact, which may be caused by technical, organizational, or human resource challenges in adapting to new technologies.

Regarding the main obstacles to innovation, recipients and providers identify common challenges, including insufficient legal and regulatory support (399 and 91, respectively) and limited funding (421 and 84, respectively). These findings highlight the urgent need to reform the legal framework and strengthen financial support for the social sector to establish a stable foundation for innovative growth. Employee resistance and low levels of interagency coordination were also recognized as

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significant barriers, emphasizing the need for effective change management mechanisms and improved interagency cooperation.

The effectiveness of information exchange between social support agencies is mostly rated as "very effective" or "effective" (349 and 301 recipients, 132 and 38 providers), indicating the presence of systemic communication channels. However, there are also instances of satisfactory or ineffective interactions, which may negatively impact the quality of social services. Analyzing joint planning for activities and resources reveals that only about a third of respondents report full coordination of actions across agencies, highlighting room for improving management process coordination.

Prioritization of measures to improve the quality of social services demonstrates unanimity in the need to implement integrated models (399 recipients and 101 providers) and staff development (423 and 88, respectively). The development of digital management systems and ensuring the transparency of social services commissioning are also key areas aligned with current trends in digitalization and accountability in public administration. The financial challenges identified by the respondents are mainly focused on insufficient funding (399 recipients, 101 providers) and inefficient use of resources (345 and 49, respectively), indicating the need to improve the financial management system in the social sector. Lack of transparency in financial processes and the motivation of participants were also noted as requiring increased attention from management structures. In terms of social services, day care for children with disabilities, psychological counseling, and social and military rehabilitation were identified as the highest priorities for development in the region, where the high assessment of their importance reflects the current social needs and challenges that require targeted responses (Table 2).

Table 2

Innovative approaches to digital transformation and interagency coordination in social services

Issue	Answer	Recipients of social services		Providers of social services	
		Number	%	Number of people receiving social services	%
How do you assess the impact of digital technologies on the efficiency of social service delivery?	Significant positive impact	382	43,6	141	75,0
	Moderate positive impact	347	39,6	39	20,7
	No impact at all	97	11,1	4	2,1
	Moderate negative impact	34	3,9	3	1,6
	Significant negative impact	16	1,8	1	0,5
What are the most common obstacles to the implementation of innovations? (Please select up to 3 options)	Lack of regulatory framework	399	45,5	91	48,4
	Insufficient funding	421	48,1	84	44,7
	Resistance of employees	302	34,5	72	38,3
	Low level of interagency coordination	347	39,6	82	43,6
	Insufficient qualification of staff	323	36,9	76	40,4
	Other (lack of technical support; bureaucratic delays; limited access to modern IT solutions)	45	5,1	15	8,0

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Issue	Answer	Recipients of social services		Providers of social services	
		Number	%	Number of people receiving social services	%
Assess the effectiveness of information exchange between social support agencies in your region.	Very effective	349	39,8	132	70,2
	Effective	301	34,4	38	20,2
	Satisfactory	153	17,5	11	5,9
	Ineffective	48	5,5	5	2,7
	Very inefficient	25	2,9	2	1,1
To what extent is joint planning of activities and resources among social protection agencies coordinated?	Fully coordinated	299	34,1	122	64,9
	Partially agreed upon	402	45,9	43	22,9
	Not satisfactorily agreed	128	14,6	21	11,2
	Absent	47	5,4	5	2,7
	Don't know / hard to answer	-		2	1,1
What measures are prioritized to improve the quality of social services? (Select up to 3 options)	Implementation of integrated models	399	45,5	101	53,7
	Professional development of employees	423	48,3	88	46,8
	Development of digital management systems	347	39,6	79	42,0
	Ensuring transparency of social services commissioning	302	34,5	69	36,7
	Involvement of civil society organizations	251	28,7	66	35,1
	Improvement of regulatory and legal support	217	24,8	54	28,7
	Other (introduction of mobile services; strengthening of public control)	32	3,7	11	5,9
What are the main challenges related to the financial support of the social sector in your community? (Please select the most relevant)	Insufficient budget funding	399	45,5	101	53,7
	Inefficient use of resources	345	39,4	49	26,1
	Lack of transparency in financial processes	300	34,2	38	20,2
	Lack of motivation among the participants in the process	201	22,9	31	16,5
	Other (uneven distribution of funds between communities; lack of a financial monitoring system)	51	5,8	15	8,0
What social services do you consider to be the highest priority for development in your region?	Day care for children with disabilities	301	34,4	81	43,1
	Psychological consultations	418	47,7	91	48,4
	Social rehabilitation	349	39,8	71	37,8
	Military rehabilitation	275	31,4	65	34,6
	Professional orientation and employment	289	33,0	59	31,4
	Juvenile prevention	201	22,9	51	27,1
	Other (emergency assistance during emergencies; support for internally displaced persons)	48	5,5	15	8,0

Source: author's own calculations.

The data presented in Table 2 show that digitization, modernization of the regulatory framework, systematic professional development of staff, and optimization of financial support are key factors for improving the efficiency and sustainable development of the social services system. Addressing the identified problems, such as insufficient funding, poor interagency coordination, and staff resistance, will be necessary for the effective implementation of innovative models.

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Discussion

According to the results of the empirical study, which included representative samples of both recipients and providers of social services, it is worth noting that they confirm the fundamental role of Rogers' (2010) theory of innovation diffusion in systematizing the determinants of the process of adoption and implementation of digital and organizational innovations in the field of social support. In particular, the study demonstrates that the relative advantages of digital technologies - including increased accessibility of services, optimization of communication processes, and integration of stakeholders - create a strong incentive to modernize administrative practices (Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Hill & Shaw, 2011; Andriyiv et al., 2022). At the same time, empirical evidence suggests a significant heterogeneity in the degree of implementation of innovative models, which is a consequence of the complex interaction of organizational, human resources, and regulatory barriers.

First, the role of interagency cooperation as a basis for coordinating the efforts of different sectors of the social sphere is confirmed as one of the key factors for the sustainable functioning of innovative approaches (Rønning & Knutagard, 2015; Anheier et al., 2019). However, the data obtained indicate significant differences in the perception of formalization of regulations and the level of coordination between recipients and providers of social services, which indicates the existence of communication and partnership problems that may limit the effectiveness of service delivery and require strengthening of transparent mechanisms of interagency coordination.

Second, the importance of human resources as a critical factor in the implementation of innovative practices is confirmed by the identification of heterogeneity in assessments of its compliance with modern requirements among different groups of respondents. The results of the study are consistent with the findings of Sawyer and Henriksen (2024) and Luthra and Mangla (2018) regarding the need for targeted modernization of competencies, systematic professional development, and motivational mechanisms to ensure human resources capable of supporting the sustainable development of social innovations. The identified uneven access to professional development and the lack of systematicity in this process illustrate the current challenges of human resources policy in the social sphere.

Third, the social infrastructure and information systems that provide social support demonstrate a mixed level of development. Differences in the perception of their quality between recipients and providers indicate that there is potential for improving the integration of digital technologies and increasing the level of interagency coordination and interaction (Mulgan, 2012). At the same time, a positive assessment of the impact of digital tools on the efficiency of service delivery confirms the effectiveness of digital transformation in the social sector, but also points to the need to overcome technical and organizational challenges.

Thus, the study shows that the successful implementation of innovative approaches to social support and interagency cooperation requires a comprehensive method that includes updating the regulatory framework, developing human resources, improving coordination systems, and intensifying digital integration. Removing the

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identified barriers will help open up opportunities for the development of adaptive, integrated and sustainable models of social service management that can respond to current challenges and ensure the quality and accessibility of social support. Further research efforts should focus on developing and testing practical mechanisms to optimize interagency cooperation, modernize human resources policies, and scale digital solutions, considering local contexts and socio-cultural characteristics, to help increase social inclusion, improve service delivery efficiency, and support sustainable community development.

Conclusion

The results of this study confirm the importance of implementing integrated, innovative models of social support administration and interagency cooperation as key factors in improving the quality of social services. The analysis of empirical data shows a generally high level of awareness of the conceptual foundations of an integrated approach among both recipients and providers of social services, as confirmed by a significant percentage of respondents who have a full understanding of interagency coordination. At the same time, differences in perceptions of the degree of formalization of regulations and the level of coordination between these groups indicate systemic challenges related to insufficient legal and regulatory support, the lack of common standards, and communication barriers. The study of the human resources potential of the social sector reveals heterogeneity in assessments of personnel readiness to implement innovative approaches, underscoring the need to develop professional training, motivation, and advanced training for social work professionals. The practical implementation of modern methods, such as case management and multidisciplinary teams, is progressing but remains incomplete, underscoring the importance of comprehensive staff support and the improvement of organizational mechanisms. In terms of social infrastructure and information systems, differences in the perception of its development and effectiveness between recipients and providers of social services were identified, which emphasizes the urgent need to strengthen the integration of digital technologies and unify information flows. The identified barriers, in particular, limited funding, low levels of interagency coordination, and organizational complexity, require targeted attention in management decisions and policies.

The practical significance of the study lies in the fact that its findings can serve as a basis for developing comprehensive management strategies to optimize interagency cooperation, modernize human resources policy, and accelerate digital transformation in the field of social services. The proposed recommendations will help to increase the effectiveness of social support, ensure sustainable development of the social sphere, and better meet the needs of vulnerable groups. Further research should focus on mechanisms to overcome the identified barriers, including the development of effective models of regulatory and legal regulation, integrated approaches to human resource development, and the integration of digital solutions, taking into account the specifics of interagency cooperation across different regions and social contexts.

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