

## SECTION XXIII. PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY

DOI 10.36074/logos-18.08.2023.64

### MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS DURING INITIAL PERIOD OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9417-3743

**Polyvianaia Maryna**

PsyD, PhD, Senior Research of the Institute of Psychiatry  
*Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv*

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1636-7686

**Pishel Vitaliy**

MD, PhD, Prof., Chief Researcher of the Institute of Psychiatry  
*Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv*

*UKRAINE*

Due to the war in Ukraine which started on February 24, 2022, the problem of mental health has acquired special importance. The results of research in other countries have indicated a significant negative impact of war on the state of mental health of student youth, their high susceptibility to the development of post-traumatic mental disorders, depression, anxiety disorders and addiction to psychoactive substances [1-5]. Therefore, it is currently extremely relevant to determine the structure and clinical features of mental disorders among students, to provide them with psychological and psychiatric assistance as well as the development and implementation of a comprehensive model to protect the mental health of young people in war and post-war periods.

In order to determine the mental health among Ukrainian students during the initial period of the war, an anonymous online survey was conducted three months after Russian invasion. For convenience the questionnaire was sent to students as a Google form. All participants were informed that this study was voluntary and acquired data would only be handled anonymously and confidentially.

1152 people took part in the study (78.6% of our respondents were women, 21.4% were men). The mean age range was  $21.2 \pm 3.7$  years. The majority stated that they changed their place of residence due to the war (70.7%), mostly within Ukraine (63.6%) and a third of them went abroad (36.4%). A quarter of those forced to leave home at the time of the survey were already returned. Students also were asked to assess their psychological well-being in the period before and during the war. The median of psychological well-being before the war was 8 points out of 10 and after 5 points ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Standardized psychodiagnostic scales were used to assess students' mental health: PC-PTSD-5 (post-traumatic stress disorder), PHQ-9 (depression), GAD-7 (generalized anxiety disorder), SCOFF (eating disorders), CAGE (alcohol problems) and ISI (sleep disorders).

On the GAD-7 scale, 19.5% of participants had minimal anxiety, 35.7% mild, 26.4% moderate and 18.3% severe anxiety. According to the PHQ-9 questionnaire, 32.3% of students had minimal symptoms or no signs of depression at all, 20.4% mild, 19.4% moderate, 15.5% severe symptoms and 12.3% suffered from very severe depression.

According to the results of the study, two-thirds of all participants had symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, 15% showed signs with alcohol abuse and a third of the students faced problems of eating disorders. Sleep disorders were less devastating, as most of the participants (81.3%) declared no clinically significant signs of insomnia, or symptoms on a subthreshold level, 15.4% described moderate and 3.3% severe symptoms.

This study revealed significant signs of mental health disorders among young students in Ukraine at the initial stage of the war. To research the dynamics of mental health we will plan to conduct a second study in the near future. The results obtained will serve as the basis for creating a comprehensive model of psychological and psychiatric care for students of Ukrainian universities in war and post-war periods.

*Acknowledgment.* These abstracts have been prepared based on the results of the research project that was implemented with the grant support of the National Research Fund of Ukraine (project registration number: 2022.01/0030).

---

### References:

- [1] Artime, T., Buchholz, K. & Jakupcak M. (2019). Mental health symptoms and treatment utilization among trauma-exposed college students. *Psychol Trauma*. (11), 274-282. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000376>
  - [2] Latifeh, Y., Omar, E., Mohammad H., Fatema M., Nazir, I. & Bisher S. (2021). War-related trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder prevalence among Syrian university students. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*. (12), 19547-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2021.1954774>
  - [3] Naghavi, A., Afsharzada, M., Brailovskaia, J. & Teismann T. (2022). Mental health and suicidality in Afghan students after the Taliban takeover in 2021. *J Affect Disord*. (307), 178-183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2022.04.001>
  - [4] Pereira J., Guedes, C., Gisela, M. & al. (2018). Types of Trauma, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Academic Performance in a Population of University Students. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*. (206), 507-512. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0000000000000842>
  - [5] Veronese, G., Pepe, A., Diab, M., Abu, J. & Kagee, A. (2022). Social support, resilience, and mental health in a low-intensity warfare context: the effects of siege on university students in Gaza. *J Ment Health*. (31), 383-391. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2021.1979486>
-