

RESTORING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS IN TIME OF THE TENSED EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WARTIME

RESTAURAR A SAÚDE PSICOLÓGICA E EMOCIONAL DOS ESTUDANTES EM TEMPO DO TENSO PROCESSO EDUCACIONAL EM TEMPO DE GUERRA RUSSO-UCRANIANA*

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Abstract: Restoring the physical and mental health of the young generation is one of the most important tasks of our society, especially now, when the preservation of the nation's gene pool becomes an urgent need, responding to the challenges of Russian-Ukrainian wartime. The analysis of scientific research on the state of health of modern youth has shown the urgency of this problem during the recent decades, and the problem of deteriorating health among the young population in Ukraine is becoming more and more acute, which makes it necessary to find possible ways to solve it for our entire society and for the system of education in particular, which, in turn, has an interdependent effect between health and the quality of students' education, reflecting the success of the nation as a whole, that is why requiring in-depth study. In this article, based on the analysis of modern scientific and methodological literature on this topic and the research conducted in recent years, we aim to investigate the existing patterns in the dynamics of the problem of deteriorating health among the youth of Ukraine and outline the possible ways out of this crisis, taking into account the particularly stressful realities nowadays because of the Russian-Ukrainian war, in which we all became involved.

Keywords: Physical and mental health. Young generation of Ukraine. Psychological and emotional health of students. Tensed educational process during the Russian-Ukrainian wartime.

Resumo: Restaurar a saúde física e mental da jovem geração é uma das tarefas mais importantes de nossa sociedade, especialmente agora, quando a preservação do pool genético da nação se torna uma necessidade urgente, respondendo aos desafios do tempo de guerra russo-ucraniano. A análise das pesquisas científicas sobre o estado de saúde da juventude moderna mostrou a urgência deste problema durante as últimas décadas, e o problema da deterioração da saúde entre a população jovem da Ucrânia está se tornando cada vez mais agudo, o que torna necessário encontrar maneiras possíveis de resolvê-lo para toda nossa sociedade e para o sistema de educação em particular, o que, por sua vez, tem um efeito interdependente entre a saúde e a qualidade da educação dos estudantes, refletindo o sucesso da nação como um todo, e é por isso que é necessário um estudo profundo. Neste artigo, com base na análise da literatura científica e metodológica moderna sobre este tema e nas pesquisas realizadas nos últimos anos, pretendemos investigar os padrões existentes na dinâmica do problema de deterioração da saúde entre os jovens da Ucrânia e delinear as possíveis saídas para esta crise, levando em conta as realidades particularmente estressantes dos dias de hoje por causa da guerra russo-ucraniana, na qual todos nós nos envolvemos.

Palavras-chave: Saúde física e mental. A jovem geração da Ucrânia. Saúde psicológica e emocional dos estudantes. Processo educativo tenso durante a guerra russo-ucraniana.

1. INTRODUCTION

The charter of the World Health Organization defines that health is a state of complete physical, spiritual and social well-being, and not just the absence of diseases or physical defects (Karpinska, 2021). Health is the greatest value of a person and humanity,

as it is of great importance for the full harmonious development of a personality, one's comprehensive self-realization both in the personal and professional sphere, and the health of each individual constitutes the life of the entire society. Therefore, among the most important tasks for every state is always preserving and strengthening the health of the young generation: The Constitution of Ukraine defines that a person, one's life and health are the highest social values of the country. The formation of a healthy lifestyle, education of healthy, comprehensively developed young citizens should become a state priority that unites the people of Ukraine (Andriuchenko, 2019; Azarenkov, 2017).

According to the data of scientific studies in Ukraine, the state of human health is determined by 10% of the level of medicine development, 20% by social and natural conditions, 20% by genetics, and 50% by lifestyle (Karpinska, 2021). Over the last decade, the negative dynamics of the growth of morbidity among young people for all classes of diseases can be traced. Thus, the overall morbidity of youth has increased by 30.9% (Seleznyova, 2014). According to the researchers, this situation is caused by the fact that a deep demographic crisis has been going on in Ukraine for almost two decades, and demographic processes in general reflect the current state of social, population and personal health of people. According to the statistics, up to 80% of children have one or more diseases, only 15–20% are born healthy, every 3rd child has functional abnormalities, and every 5th has nervous disorders; mortality is twice higher than the birth rate (Karpinska, 2021).

2. METHODOLOGY

The method of this research is descriptive in which the researchers seek answers to the research objectives by studying the research literature and the relevant topic in the past research. The sources to be studied are past researches as well as patterns and guidelines that have been carried out in the research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

If in the early 1990s Ukraine ranked 40th in the world in terms of health indicators, today it has moved far back and occupies a position in the 2nd hundred (Azarenkov, 2017).

And these are the statistics of the last years, even in peacetime, before the war, because currently it is difficult to collect new statistical data for obvious objective reasons. As scientists consider, this decrease in dynamics was caused by many factors, and first of all, ignoring the rules of a healthy lifestyle, on which 50% of a person's life expectancy depends (Yermolova, 2011). In preschool and school-age recently there has been some increase in the number of diseases of the respiratory, digestive, cardiovascular systems, musculoskeletal system, neurological diseases, etc. According to Nechitaylo Yu.M., Buryak O.G., this was due to intensity of the impact on the health of children and adolescents of environmental and medico-social risk factors, deterioration of the nutrition structure, reduction of the effectiveness of traditional preventive measures, popularization of alcohol and tobacco use (Nechitaylo, Buryak, 2016).

The low level of involvement of the population of our country in physical education and sports is also alarming: only every 5th pupil and every 10th student have a sufficient level of health-related physical activity, which is one of the lowest indicators in Europe (Karpinska, 2021). A sedentary lifestyle and eating disorders, in turn, often lead to problems of excess or insufficient body weight, which provides both physical and mental health problems, since complexes in adolescence because of dissatisfaction with one's own body often cause problems with socialization, which initially may provoke neuroticism in a young person, and later can gradually develop into depression and even suicidal moods. When left untreated or undertreated, coping with the pain of mental illness can contribute to self-harm, including thoughts of suicide, which is now the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24 (Center for Disease Control, 2014). According to the data of the World Health Organization, the prevalence of overweight or underweight problems is gradually increasing and ranks 5th in the list of diseases that are causes of death. Thus, in high- and middle-income countries, where the prevalence of underweight and obesity among adults already exceeds 50% of the population, they rank 3rd among the risk factors that cause death, after high blood pressure and tobacco use. Overweight or underweight problems are major risk factors for death, with 3.4 million deaths each year. Obesity is a risk factor for the development of diabetes, coronary heart disease, and cancer (Karpinska, 2021).

According to the results of the research conducted by Ukrainian medical scientists Karpinska T.G., Grabovska T.V., Sereda S.V., Korotky V.V. in 2021, most (88%) of the

teenagers in the test group have a health condition outside the safe range, and only 12% have this indicator at a safe level (Karpinska, 2021). According to the researchers, one of the main reasons for the deterioration of the health of adolescents is insufficiently formed motivation for a healthy lifestyle, which competes with the negative impact of the latest information technologies. Society needs to form the correct education of youth culture in relation to their own health, sustainable motivation to lead a healthy lifestyle, which will make it possible to improve the health of the population and extend their life expectancy.

All of the above-mentioned factors, even before the war, due to the pandemic situation in Ukraine and the whole world, and the forced transition to distance education because of it, had a negative impact on the normal development and health of the young population of Ukraine, the foundation of our state, which should form progressive changes and vectors of social development. And wartime has just added more stress factors, further deepening the existing problems, because it is proven that stress reduces immunity, due to which each body becomes more sensitive to any external or internal stimuli, increasing the already significant risks for the health of our youth and society, thus undermining the future of our country.

Therefore, analyzing the rapid deterioration of health indicators, especially in such a stressful wartime, the questions of determining the current state of health of modern youth, as well as finding ways to preserve, restore and strengthen it, are becoming more and more urgent. As to the Mental health surveillance among children in the United States, made in 2005–2011: “Approximately one in six school-aged youth experiences impairments in life functioning due to a mental illness, and the number of young people experiencing mental illness increases as young people grow older” (Perou, 2013). According to the statistics, in civilized countries even in peace time “more than 1 in 20 young people ages 12 and over report current depression, which among school-aged youth is linked to reduced academic achievement and increased school suspensions” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016).

For decades, mental health of individuals has been neglected. World Health Organization also supported this statement by publishing a report in 2001, describing that one’s health, and more importantly well-being, is crucial for a particular country and its society (Mehešová, 2017). World Federation of Mental Health claims that the prevalence of mental disorders is alarming and represents a significant burden for the entire population.

Depression and other mental illnesses have a major impact on the quality of life of individuals and, therefore, it is crucial to pay special attention to mental health (World Federation for Mental Health, 2013). Mankind should realize the importance of mental health. As to Mehešová M., the tendency to neglect it can threaten not only the prosperity of the society but may also lead to an increased rate of psychopathological phenomena (Mehešová, 2017). Modern scientists are concerned that correct health projects promotion, prevention of possible mental illnesses since childhood and early intervention can work (Mental Health and Academic Achievement, 2022).

So, research on the development of the fundamental foundations of individual health deserves special attention, namely: interdisciplinary studies of health mechanisms and factors affecting it, creation of valeological information bases, mathematical models, expert systems for evaluating health indicators, intellectual preservation health, etc.

Keyes (2006) states that mental health is a mix of positive feelings, which are applied in real life situations and measure subjective psychological and social well-being. These variables indicate one's prosperity of mental health where mental illnesses are absent and the individual is balanced in terms of emotional, mental and social well-being. Health depends on many factors: social, economic, environmental, hereditary, etc., however, the education system also plays an important role in solving this problem. Thus, the Law of Ukraine "About Education" dated September 5, 2017 No. 2145-VIII defines education as the basis of intellectual, spiritual, physical and cultural development of the personality and one's successful socialization (Verkhovna Rada information, 2017). So, it is considered that education as a social institution to a large extent affects the state of physical, spiritual, social and mental health of a personality and determines society's need for a qualified education system focused on preserving and strengthening health.

It is known that many factors affect the health of students as risk factors, namely: an increase in the number of stressful situations, related to adaptation to new conditions of living and studying, change daily routine, nutrition, physical activity, etc. According to the data of Institute of Hygiene and Medical Ecology named after O. Marzeev, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, in 2018 only 9% to 45% of school youth were recognized by doctors as healthy, and among them only 30% of people had the high and average level of health. The results of medical-epidemiological, sociological and psycho-pedagogical studies confirm the rapid spread of diseases and the growth of chronic pathology in

students, unsatisfactory functional adaptation to physical and educational loads, especially among the first-year students (State of health, 2018).

Certain symptoms of the influence of some educational load on the emotional state of students may be signaled by such signs as bad mood, irritability, sleep disturbances, and depression. In the course of a recent study by Ukrainian medical students Abidova T. S., Logvinenko O. V. (2021) of the impact of distance learning on students, it was found that almost 30% of the respondents consulted a doctor about the deterioration of health, which was associated specifically with distance learning technologies, but almost half of them ignored the advice of medical professionals regarding the correction of their health condition. Therefore, it is possible to state a lack of awareness among young people of the impact of health risk factors. Such answers show that the level of student awareness of health-preserving measures is low, and the formation of valeological competence requires psychological and pedagogical support.

According to the conditions of this research, students had to independently formulate advice on improving health during distance learning. And in general it turned out to be adequate advice: move more, reduce breaks between meals, learn to rationally allocate free time from classes, less spending time on the phone/computer, walking in the fresh air, sleep at least 8-9 hours, do not overload yourself after classes. Summing up, the researchers concluded that the group of interviewed students had a sufficient theoretical basis for the formation of a healthy lifestyle, but a low level of formation of valeological skills and abilities for turning theory into practice (Abidova T. S., Logvinenko O. V., 2021).

So, health is an integral characteristic which reflects the influence of genetic predispositions, social, cultural, environmental, medical and other factors and is a complex result interaction with the environment and society (Abidova T. S., 2021). Preservation of health becomes a particularly urgent task in the conditions of distance learning, when increasing the educational load, violations of sanitary and hygienic conditions cause the growth of various forms of pathological conditions and deviations, such as postural disorders, diseases of the upper respiratory tract, the spread of diseases of the digestive system, diseases of organs sight, etc.

Considering the age-specific features of the development of emotional intelligence, Abidova T. S. and Logvinenko O. V. (2021) advise to develop the health-saving competence of students through awareness of the consequences of the influence of health

risk factors by introducing into the educational process practical classes (trainings, seminars, conferences) with the analysis of existing, potential and priority health problems. Thus, directing efforts both to educational activities among student youth, and to the development and implementation of programs for the formation of valeological competence among young people, to ensure psychological and pedagogical conditions for its formation.

As for restoring the psychological and emotional health of students in time of the tensed and stressed educational process (Rybinska, 2021-2022), like the war time as it is now, we may follow the given advice of psychologists and scientists:

1) Spending even a small amount of time in a natural setting can result in improvements in psychological health (Payne, 2020),

2) There is little doubt that humor enables people to cope better with stress. It has long been believed that “humor and laughter play an important role in the maintenance of both psychological and physiological health and wellbeing in the face of stress” (Lefcourt & Martin, 1986).

Recent research published by Heather S. Lonczak on the site PositivePsychology.com (2020) support this connection. For example, in a study by Abel (2002), coping strategies were examined concerning humor and various types of stress. Participants were categorized into either high or low sense of humor groups. It was found that those within the high sense of humor category appraised relatively lower amounts of stress and anxiety.

The impact of humor on stress also was investigated in a medical study using humor as a complementary therapy among cancer patients (Bennett, Zeller, Rosenberg, & McCann, 2003). After watching a funny video, cancer patients reported significantly less stress, and a negative correlation was found between stress and amount of mirthful laughter.

Interestingly, those who were higher in humor scores were also found to have increased immune functioning (Bennett et al., 2003). In general, research reviews have documented that positive styles of humor are related to lower perceptions of stress (Mauriello & McConatha, 2007).

3) A student should be respected as a person with human dignity, to full physical, social, moral, and intellectual development, to humane and healthful conditions of learning.

This, however, should not stay merely on paper but should be whole-heartedly carried out to be true to its commitment of providing excellence, integrity, and service (Alma, 2019).

4. CONCLUSIONS

As we can see, the development of all possible measures to preserve and strengthen health determines the priorities of formation a healthy lifestyle as a needed skill, taking into account psycho-physiological, age factors and individual peculiarities of students; studying the influence of social environment on the condition of their health; strengthening information provision of activities with formation of a healthy lifestyle in educational institutions, in the conditions of distance learning and especially in the current extremely difficult conditions of wartime, which requires special psychological and new pedagogical approaches, quick reaction and implementation.

That is why the teachers of educational institutions nowadays have double responsibility: as adults and teachers who, by their example, should inspire their students to study, maintain optimism and faith in our victory and a better future, for which it is worth fighting. And in order to inspire others and convey optimism and confidence, we need to be in a resource ourselves, so that to have what to share with others, and for this purpose we as teachers need to be able to find inner strength for psychological support even in seemingly the most hopeless and difficult circumstances, in which it is very difficult and almost impossible to keep calm, since war is the antonym of calmness, because a priori it has nothing to do with security: neither mental nor physical. However, the mental health of pupils / students often reflects the state of well-being of their teachers, transmitted on a subconscious level, and physical health directly depends on the mental state, so if we want to help our country, at first we have to help ourselves in order to be able to help others.

Where can we get this inner strength for supporting others? As psychologists say, “if you can’t change the situation, the only thing left to do is... to change your attitude towards it”. So positive thinking and work are the best ways to switch from worrying destructive thoughts to constructive, socially useful actions, when everyone is engaged in the field of one’s profession, in those tasks that are under our control, thereby supporting the fronts of our state in various areas. And undoubtedly the profession of a teacher is one of the most responsible in terms of the influence on their students.

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