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Psychological health and education: pandemic experience

LUDMYLA PROSANDIEEVA. **Psychological health and education: pandemic experience.** *In the review article, the author substantiates the relevance of the problem under study. The significance and features of transformations taking place in the field of higher education in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic are revealed. Educational and non-educational problems faced by participants in the educational process are analyzed. Particular attention is paid to the study of psychological health and psychological well-being of students and teachers. It is concluded that the effectiveness of solving the problems as regards overcoming the psychological consequences of the pandemic causes the need to develop a system model that would integrate experts from different spheres.*

Keywords: *education, pandemic, psychological health, psychological correction, training, interpersonal communication.*

This topic under study is extremely relevant, as the COVID-19 pandemic has become a serious test not only for Ukrainian society, but for all mankind. During quarantine, humanity began to live in new conditions. There are global changes both at the level of the individual's psyche and at the macro-social level. Significant changes are expected in the future, new scientific approaches, new teaching aids will be formed, interpersonal relations and rules of human life in general will be updated.

Higher education is one of those areas that have been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In an extremely short time, all educational institutions were forced to switch to distance or blended learning. As a result of quarantine measures due to the spread of certain restrictions, there was a need to thoroughly change the forms and methods of university education, to find ways of interpersonal communication between teachers and students, to change the entire system of educational process. In order to ensure the functioning of the higher education system in a pandemic, in a short time various educational institutions conducted large-scale studies that will shed light on the consequences of the crisis and identify further prospects for higher education. The main directions of these studies were: the dynamic transition to distance learning and teaching in universities; exacerbation of mental health problems of a large number of participants in the educational process, exacerbation of post-traumatic states of student youth, problems related to the academic mobility of scientists, teachers, and students; the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on laboratory-and-practical research; strengthening cooperation and interaction of education systems of different countries; affirmation of European values of higher education; overcoming the effects of the crisis and introducing new forms of learning (Cooper A., 2019).

Analysis of modern researches has shown that quarantine, social distancing, and social isolation have a negative impact on the psychological health and physical well-being of all participants in the educational process (Barannikov K., Leshukov O., Nazaikinskaia O., Sukhanova E., Frumin I., 2020). Excessive mental stress, the negative impact of the media, the growth of deviant forms of student behavior due to the emergence of free time, social stigmatization are the main factors of mental health deterioration. The loss of confidence and stability during quarantine has led to a number of fears that significantly affect the psychological and mental health of students and teachers. During the pandemic, other crises intensified, and above all, a crisis of morality, a crisis of tolerance, harmonious interaction between participants in the

educational process (Andreas Schleicher, 2020). Therefore, the education system optimization is one of the urgent problems of modern society, and the search for ways and means of such optimization is a very important problem of psychological science and practice.

The subject of the article is to analyze the impact of threats and destabilizing circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic on the development of higher education, to investigate the peculiarities of strengthening the psychological health of participants in the educational process.

Analysis of COVID-19 influence on higher education shows that the most common consequence of COVID-19 in the education system was the forced transition to distance learning, which opened new, more flexible opportunities for education, namely: blended or hybrid learning, combination of synchronous learning with asynchronous. COVID-19 has increased virtual mobility and collaborative online learning as an alternative to students' physical mobility. Today, distance learning remains relevant for most higher education institutions. Therefore, online support is a key strategy in response to COVID-19. An analysis of European research as to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education has revealed some trends. The first trend is the growing popularity of online education. This form of education will be part of the further development of higher education. Therefore, in order to ensure the effectiveness of distance learning, it is important for university teachers to master the latest teaching methods, including online teaching.

It is important to state that at the present stage, due to the closure of borders, there has been a sharp decline in academic mobility and funding for various international projects. This means canceling the international travels and postponing the scientific conferences, or transferring them to online format.

At the same time, among the problems of academic mobility we can single out the problem concerning applicants for higher education with special needs. Such students need special support from the side of their families and social workers. Difficulties also arose for international students who were forced to suspend their studies or stay in a foreign country for a period of quarantine restrictions.

With the spread of the pandemic in society, distrust in some scientific studies has grown. Authors of the publication "Revenge of the Experts: Will COVID-19 Renew or Diminish Public Trust in Science?" (Aksoy, Eichengreen & Saka, 2020) emphasize that the COVID-19 pandemic has called into question the value of a significant number of researches.

After all, there are areas of knowledge that require laboratory work, practical experience and external cooperation. Therefore, according to scientists, distance learning cannot provide effective mastery of all disciplines and specialties without exception. Thus, scientific activity is extremely important today, despite the epidemic, although the level of trust in scientists and the results of their work is somewhat declining. The growing need for open access to researches is one of the consequences of this situation. At the same time, educators from all countries recognize the importance of international cooperation in order to share experiences in the development and improvement of education in the pandemic. However, during the quarantine period, some higher education institutions were forced to suspend such cooperation due to the impossibility of physical presence and due to deteriorating economic conditions. As a result, some of them were forced to cease their activities altogether. At the same time, many higher education institutions have managed to maintain this line of work in order to master students' practical skills.

In general, higher education has responded innovatively and quickly to the powerful crisis that has arisen in each region. However, according to the survey, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic depends on the education system of a particular region (Pristai D., 2020).

According to viewpoints of the scientists (Cooper A., 2019, etc.) who study the process of dynamic changes in modern education, the development of education is inextricably linked with the formation of psychological stability and resilience in the process of post-traumatic experiences. Restriction of contacts in the process of self-isolation, excessive restraint, negative emotions, increased aggression indicate the inability of the population to objective self-analysis, self-correction, overcoming intrapersonal contradictions, which, in turn, can lead to distorted self-perception, destruction of personal space. Thus, according to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) T.A. Gebreisus "infodemia" (a new term of modern world reality, which means the spread of excessive misinformation, incitement and intimidation) seriously complicates people's self-perception of themselves and others (Aksoy, C.G., Eichengreen, B. & Saka, O., 2020). All these social changes are primarily a challenge for psychologists, which can be successfully overcome due to the fact that *self-awareness* will be the main strategy of human behavior. How to take care of your mental health, and how to help students and teachers be resilient to stress in these crisis situations?

The ability to self-respect and mutual understanding, the formation of

a collective social consciousness, empathy and altruism are necessary “new rules of life” of mankind. Today, psychology is aimed at the development of human personality to give impetus to the self-transcendence of the “Ego”, to “going beyond the possible”, based on empathy and understanding of themselves and others, in the extraordinary conditions of the pandemic. This sets new tasks for psychologists-practitioners in psychological prevention and crisis counseling.

Therefore, psychological practice, first of all, aims to prepare a person for healthy interaction with the information space. In the conditions of quarantine and distance communication it is important to optimize instrumental skills to identify reliable sources, recognize fakes, verify facts, understand message logic and contexts, recognize and level psychological manipulations, stimulate flexible thinking in general. It is necessary to help students and teachers find many benefits in the new information world: communication in Zoom, online conferences, online re-profiling each of which being a *reflective megaresource* aimed at *self-transcendence* of a person’s “Ego”, going beyond the possible, “raising” themselves, which means maintaining and strengthening their psychological well-being and health.

Kyiv University of Culture and Arts has actively supported the idea of the World Health Organization to strengthen human psychological health and overcome post-traumatic events. Thus, for two years in a row, the Department of Psychology has been running the Social and Psychological Center of KNUKiM, where all interested students have the opportunity to undergo individual online consultations with psychologists. In the process of such corrective work, psychologists help a person to preserve the inner well-being of the individual; help to verbalize as much as possible the events that take place in social life, convince that these phenomena are unusual, but nothing bad will happen.

The Center’s consultants conducted a study to determine the level of emotional state of students during the pandemic. According to the survey, it is employment and work that reduces anxiety and improves the emotional state of students. Most of the respondents testified to the improvement of their mental state after the trainings “Psychology of Health”, “Tips for Keeping Calm”, “Ways to Optimize Social Isolation”. If at the beginning of psychological correction students showed significant negative emotions, feelings of isolation from others, there were violations of life plans, depressed mood due to inability to change circumstances, acute reactions to traumatic events, uncertainty in the future, at the

end of individual and group trainings significant positive changes and restoration of their harmonious emotional state took place. Thus, in order to accelerate the process of personal recovery through the experience of positive emotions, the students organized a theater of emotions as a tool of psychological rehabilitation, successfully developed and implemented the first scenarios of correctional work. Preventive measures were implemented in educational activities, including thematic conversations, trainings, optimization of the educational process in certain subjects in the direction of activating the mechanisms of self-reflection and self-realization.

In general, in an extremely short period of time, the management and teachers of the university managed to transform many years of experience of the educational process from offline to online, adding a lot of creativity, ingenuity and efficiency. Undoubtedly, this whole process was “accompanied” by emotional tension, stress, and sometimes even despair. However, the most important thing is that during the period of forced lockdown all participants of the educational process acquired a number of new competencies. As a result, the level of digitalization of teachers and students has increased, the educational process has become more mobile, and distance learning has become interesting and fashionable. New interesting psychological tools for successful interaction in the system of interaction “teacher-student” were also obtained. First of all, both teachers and students share the idea of realizing the importance and value of real “live” communication. The university is a “venue”, and learning there is a “life phase of the team” during which important friendships are established between students and a multi-vector social network is built. In general, *self-awareness, self-education, active self-realization, creative work, and intellectual life contributed to the strengthening of psychological health.*

Thus, distance education in Ukraine has a number of very significant advantages: the ability to improve skills online: significant savings of time and money, especially in the context of foreign study and internship; opportunity to reach a much larger audience during conferences, webinars, etc.; opportunity to hold joint meetings of departments, Specialized Academic Councils, workshops and to promptly resolve organizational issues of universities. It should be noted that in Ukraine, no thorough research has been conducted on the psychological consequences of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education. The analysis of the problem is also complicated because of the lack of available verified data concerning the psychological health of students and teachers. The

available data are insufficiently complete and out of sync with similar data from other countries (Bakhrushin V., 2020).

So, in order to successfully solve the pressing issues of stopping the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening the psychological health of adolescents, it is necessary to develop a flexible model that could integrate experts from different fields: psychologists, educators, politicians, journalists, health professionals, public activists on the Internet platforms for the implementation of specific activities in the educational environment and building effective psychological and pedagogical strategies to overcome the coronavirus in general. In such a model, it is necessary to provide for the possibility to combine traditional interaction between participants in the educational process with online development for distance learning in higher education. The actualization of the training of specialists in the field of medicine, as well as culture and arts, has become common to all countries.

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Abstracts

ЛЮДМИЛА ПРОСАНДЄЄВА. Психологічне здоров'я і освіта: досвід пандемії. В оглядовій статті автором обґрунтовано актуальність досліджуваної проблеми. Розкрито значення й особливості трансформаційних перетворень, що відбуваються у сфері вищої освіти у зв'язку з пандемією COVID-19. Проаналізовано освітні і позаосвітні проблеми, з якими стикаються учасники навчального процесу. Особлива увага приділена дослідженню психологічного здоров'я і психологічного благополуччя студентів та викладачів. Зроблено висновки про те, що ефективність вирішення проблем подолання психологічних наслідків пандемії зумовлює необхідність розроблення системної моделі, яка б інтегрувала експертів різних різних галузей. **Ключові слова:** освіта, пандемія, психологічне здоров'я, психологічна корекція, тренінг, міжособисте спілкування.

ЛЮДМИЛА ПРОСАНДЄЄВА. Психологическое здоровье и образование: опыт пандемии. В обзорной статье автор обосновывает актуальность исследуемой проблемы. Выявлены значение и особенности трансформационных преобразований, происходящих в сфере высшего образования в связи с пандемией COVID-19. Проанализированы образовательные и необразовательные проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются участники образовательного процесса. Особое внимание уделяется изучению психологического здоровья и психологического благополучия студентов и преподавателей. Сделан вывод о том, что эффективность решения проблем преодоления психологических последствий пандемии обуславливает необходимость разработки системной модели, которая бы интегрировала специалистов из разных отраслей.

Ключевые слова: образование, пандемия, психологическое здоровье, психологическая коррекция, обучение, межличностное общение.

LUDMYŁA PROSANDIEJEWA. **Psychologiczne zdrowie i edukacja: doświadczenie pandemii.** W artykule przeglądowym autor uzasadnił aktualność badanego problemu. Opisano znaczenie i cechy charakterystyczne przemian transformacyjnych zachodzących w szkolnictwie wyższym w związku z pandemią COVID-19. Przeanalizowano problemy edukacyjne i pozaedukacyjne, z którymi borykają się uczestnicy procesu edukacyjnego. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono badaniom zdrowia psychicznego i dobrostanu psychicznego studentów i nauczycieli. Stwierdzono, że skuteczność rozwiązania problemów pokonania psychologicznych skutków pandemii wymaga opracowania modelu systemowego integrującego ekspertów z różnych dziedzin.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja, pandemia, zdrowie psychiczne, korekta psychologiczna, trening, komunikacja interpersonalna.