Mental Health Problems and the Ways of Solving Them

through the Eyes of Ukrainian High School Students

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Introduction. One of the biggest challenges of today's world is mental health problems, which lead to hospitalization, provoke a rise in the number of people with disabilities, and increase the risk of suicide. One in four suffers from some form of mental illness (Owen, 2016). Mental illness affects people throughout their lifetime and imposes a huge burden not only on the individual but also on the family and society. Thus, mental health maintenance is an issue of universal significance, as well as a problem of national security of any given country. It is especially important in Ukraine in relation to the economic, political, social, cultural realities, under conditions of war, conflict and insecurity in the East.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2016). Mental well-being is an important component of health and is more than the absence of mental disorders. It is determined by biological, economic, social, and environmental factors (WHO, 2016). Though these factors are tightly interconnected, contemporary psychiatry and psychology work in the frame of different paradigms, which are based on the preference of one of them.

Purpose. This paper aims to investigate contemporary Ukrainian high school students' attitudes toward mental health problems and ways of solving them.

Methods and organization of research. An exploratory research design was used to conduct this study. The authors used the "Mental health problems are the results of…" questionnaire developed at the University of Liverpool by Prof. P. Kinderman and his colleagues (Psychology and Mental Health, 2017), along with the "Causes of mental health issues and the ways of solving them" pilot questionnaire elaborated on by the authors.

Results and Discussion. We have always been interested in how people try to overcome their challenges, which approaches they believe to be the best, and who they believe actually has responsibility for the problems people have. It is not easy to give only one correct answer, because the response depends upon the individual's way of thinking, how the person was raised or grew up, and the social and political situation around them. During a survey of high school students (age 16–17), 28 respondents were asked about mental health problems, what they believed about their roots and the ways of treatment. Almost 78% responded that one of the main roots was the family setting, because parents are the first people children talk to, and parents are mediators who help their child to interpret the world and internalize its rules. Frequently, it was believed that if an individual was full of complexes, their parent's every day quarrels were largely responsible; children believe that they are responsible and are guilty

for all those screams and sufferings. Following these quarrels, parents divorced and each parent attributes responsibility for the break up to the other parent who has 'the wrong way of thinking or actions, etc.' Living for a long time in such a tense atmosphere may cause complexes, which make life more difficult. 13% of the respondents thought that the country's political situation contributes to the individual's way of thinking and common psychological status. And it is that in the last 4 years' Ukrainian people have been living with the ongoing stress of the war in the East. 9% of respondents were certain that the roots of mental health problems are inside each person: each individual is the only one responsible for his/her life and any critical situation that happens. Actually, it was quite unexpected that most of respondents thought parents cause complexes and other mental problems. As noted, further research was conducted regarding the ways of solving mental health problems. 44% of respondents thought that specialists can help individuals cope with mental health issues and there is nothing shameful in asking for help. 26% preferred talking to their friends or parents. They said that there is no difference between a friend's and specialist's support. 19% of respondents thought that anonymous chat was the best choice. Still, 11% held the view that nothing can be changed, so individuals with mental health problems should better be reduced to silence or isolated.

Limitations and strengths of the study. Our study has limitations as well as strengths. The small respondent pool does not allow us to draw unambiguous conclusions. However, these pilot surveys provide an avenue for more complex, interdisciplinary research in mental health issues and ways to overcome them (Danylova, 2017; Danylova, 2018).

Practical/Social value. The results obtained demonstrated that there are still people who ignore their mental health problems and try to avoid any specialist's help, for fear of stigmatization and discrimination. Because of these attitudes we must explain the danger of self-sabotaging behaviours such as passivity, avoidance or denial when it comes to mental health.

Conclusions. In conclusion we can say that despite a still-existing view of some youth that mental health challenges cannot be treated and are the responsibility of the individual, most of the respondents realized the importance of acknowledging mental health problems and believed it would be best to ask specialists for help rather than just talk about it and live with the problem unaided.

Keywords: mental health, mental health problems, individual, mental disorders, roots, treatment.

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