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 rise in the number of disabled people, and increase the risk of suicidal phenomena. One in four suffers from a certain form of mental illness (Owen, 2016). Mental illness affects people throughout life and imposes a huge burden on the family and society. Mental health maintenance turns into an issue of universal significance, as well as into 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: mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. It determines by biological, economic, social, 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. The paper aims to investigate contemporary Ukrainian high school students’ attitude toward mental health problems and the ways of solving them.

Methods and organization of research. Exploratory research design was used to conduct this study. The authors have used “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 “Causes of mental health issues and the ways of solving them” pilot questionnaire elaborated by the authors.

Results and Discussion. We have always been interested in how people try to overcome their challenges, which way is the best to their mind, and who actually has a responsibility for the problems they have. It is not easy to give only one correct answer, because it depends on personal way of thinking, how the human was growing up and the political situation around them. During the survey of high school students (age 16-17), 28 respondents were questioned regarding mental health problems, their roots and the ways of treatment. Almost 78% answered that one of the main roots is family setting, because parents are the first people the kid talks to with, and parents are mediators who help their child to interpret the world and interiorize its rules. It is a very frequent situation, when individual is full of complexes because of parents’ everyday quarrels. The main reason is that children think that they are responsible and are guilty for all those screams and sufferings. After that, as usual, parents get divorced and each of them says to the child that his mother or father has the wrong way of thinking or actions, etc. Living for a long time in such tense atmosphere may cause complexes, which make life more difficult. 13% think that country’s political situation belongs to the person’s way of thinking and common psychological status. And that’s true, because in the last 4 years Ukrainian people are getting stressed because of the war in the East. And 9% of respondents are sure that mental health problems’ roots are inside each person: each individual is the only one, who is responsible for his/her life and any critical situation that happens. Actually, it was quite unexpected that most of respondents think parents cause complexes and other mental problems.
The other research was conducted regarding the ways of solving mental health problems. 44% of respondents think that specialists can help to cope with mental health issues and there is nothing shameful in asking for help. 26% prefer talking to their friends or parents. They say that there is no difference between friend’s and specialist’s support. 19% think that anonymous chat is the best decision. Yet 11% hold the view that nothing can be changed, so that individual with mental health problems should better be reduced to silence or isolated.

**Limitations and strengths of the study.** Our study has limitations as well. A small enough 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.** Obtained results show that there are still people who ignore their mental health problems and try to avoid any specialist’s help being in fear of stigmatization and discrimination, so that we have to explain the danger of self-sabotaging behaviors such as passivity, avoidance or denial.

**Conclusions.** In conclusion we can say that most of the respondents realize the importance of mental health problems and would better ask specialists for help, rather than just talk about it and still live with the problem.

**Keywords:** Mental health, mental health problems, individual, mental disorders, roots, treatment

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