

Mental health as a global priority

Ivana Piterová  |  piterova@saske.sk

Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of Slovak Academy of Science, the Institute of Social Sciences, Košice, Slovak Republic

October 10 is World Mental Health Day, so the editorial of the third, autumn issue of the journal *Individual and Society* is devoted to this topic. Recent events, the Covid-19 pandemic and the outbreak of war in Ukraine, underline the importance of talking about mental health, and of trying to make mental health and well-being for all a global priority (World Federation for Mental Health, 2022). Fortunately, researchers all over the world promptly reacted and included mental health related items into their surveys. This issue offers two interesting research articles aiming at Covid-19 pandemic, students, and mental health.

The first research article presents the empirical results of a sociological study aimed at identifying the dynamics of Internet use by Ukrainian students in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and related quarantine restrictions. This article is authored by Yaryna Khmil from the University of Lviv, and Olesia Benchak from the Uzhhorod National University in Ukraine, who in connection with the observed one-third increase in internet use stated that “The epidemic of COVID-19 and then the war in Ukraine made the Internet an indispensable element of the daily life of users all over the world and in our country in particular.” The digital world is helping many people to overcome these difficult moments associated with pandemic measures or ongoing military conflict, but on the other hand, there already is evidence that daily internet use time is associated with the risk of psychosocial problems and digital addiction, which has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic (Meng et al., 2022; Min-Pei Lin, 2020).

According to World Health Organization (WHO), Covid-19 pandemic has triggered a 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. Especially, young people, women, and people with pre-existing physical health conditions are disproportionately at risk of mental disorders (WHO, 2022). The second research paper, authored by Anna Janovská and her colleagues from the University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Košice, surprisingly found a decrease in depression in adolescents during the first Covid-19 lockdown. The authors highlighted “the importance of positive parenting, social support, and peer relationships in reducing depressive symptoms in adolescence and showed that interpersonal factors (especially family processes and peer relationships) can play a significant role in reducing depressive symptoms in a situation as challenging as the COVID-19 pandemic”.

War in Ukraine together with the Covid-19 pandemic put millions of people at risk of mental disorders (Chaaya et al., 2022). Health care facilities were attacked, many civilians have been killed, and many people succumbed to the disease. More than 7.6 million refugees from Ukraine have crossed the borders into neighbouring countries and beyond (Operational data portal, 2022). Many of those who stayed have been displaced to safer parts of a country, went to fight, and were separated from their families. As regional director of WHO, Hans Kluge, and WHO representative in Ukraine, Jarno Habicht, (2022) stated that Ukraine’s mental health crisis could impact generations to come. Moreover, the conflict has created a refugee crisis and a humanitarian crisis, and has increased prices and the economic risk for both people and countries that are still recovering from the pandemic.

In conclusion, I would like to call on researchers to address the topic of mental health, but also group processes and inter-group relations, in the context of the crisis that Europe is facing. We would welcome more studies focusing on its psychological and social consequences both for the individual and society.

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