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Тішечкіна К.В.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS DURING THE PERIOD OF MARTIAL LAW

*У статті приділено увагу психологічному стану студентів вищих навчальних закладів під час воєнного стану, розглядено основні фактори стресу, механізми подолання та системи підтримки, доступні студентам у регіонах, уражених конфліктом.*

**Ключові слова:** психологічний стан, вища освіта, воєнний стан, тривога, посттравматичний стресовий розлад, психічне здоров'я, механізми подолання, академічні порушення.

*The article focuses on the psychological state of students of higher education institutions during martial law, examining the main stress factors, coping mechanisms, and support systems available to students in regions affected by the conflict.*

**Keywords:** psychological state, higher education, martial law, anxiety, PTSD, mental health, coping mechanisms, academic disruption.

Since 2022, Ukraine has been in difficult conditions that significantly affect both the psychological state of a person in general and the educational process in particular. Martial law imposes strict governmental control, often in response to political instability, war, or national emergencies. In such periods, higher education students face unique psychological challenges, including stress, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) [1-6]. This article explores the mental health struggles of students under martial law, highlighting the importance of psychological support systems.

One of the primary concerns for students during martial law is the disruption of their academic journey. Universities may shut down temporarily or transition to online learning, which may not be accessible to all students. The uncertainty surrounding examinations, graduation, and future career prospects exacerbates anxiety and stress.

Even in conditions of peaceful existence, stress is an indispensable component of human life. Stress is the body's reaction to a certain threat, challenge, or physical or psychological barrier. There are several concepts of stress, among which the most common are the biological and psychological concepts. According to the biological concept, stress is the body's reaction to any external or internal stimuli that disrupt its homeostasis (for example, physical danger). The psychological concept explains stress as a state that occurs when a person believes that he is unable to cope with a certain situation. Such a state may include feelings of disrespect, loss of control, inability to solve the problem, and other factors) [3].

Moreover the presence of military forces, curfews, and restrictions contribute to heightened fear and anxiety. Students may worry about their safety and that of their families. Continuous

exposure to distressing news reports and social media updates can also intensify psychological distress.

Many students rely on part-time jobs or financial aid to sustain their education. Under martial law, economic instability often leads to job losses and financial difficulties, making it harder for students to focus on their studies. Additionally, social isolation due to restrictions on movement affects students' ability to connect with peers and maintain emotional well-being.

Students who witness violence, destruction, or loss of loved ones are at high risk of developing PTSD. Symptoms include nightmares, flashbacks, emotional numbness, and heightened vigilance. Without proper psychological support, these symptoms can lead to long-term mental health issues.

What coping mechanisms are there?

Strong social networks, including family, friends, and university communities, play a crucial role in buffering stress. Engaging in conversations and sharing emotions with trusted individuals can help students cope with trauma.

Many universities and organizations provide counseling services for students facing psychological distress. Access to professional therapists, either online or in person, can significantly improve students' mental well-being.

Practicing mindfulness, meditation, and relaxation techniques helps students manage anxiety and stress. Exercise, proper nutrition, and sufficient sleep also contribute to overall mental stability.

Universities can support students by offering flexible deadlines, mental health leave, and alternative examination methods. Establishing helplines, peer counseling groups, and stress management workshops can also assist students in coping with their challenges.

Student life is a period of active intellectual and creative growth, during which new career and social opportunities open up for a young person. At this stage, the foundation is laid for further development and future creative and professional realization of the personality. Students were usually characterized by stress due to factors such as poor academic performance and insufficient understanding of the subject; the need to quickly assimilate a large amount of complex information; problems in relationships with classmates and teachers; lack of time; strong emotional experiences due to taking exams and tests; the search for professional self-identity; fear of the first professional steps after graduating from a higher education institution, etc. Implementing comprehensive mental health programs, academic support systems, and community engagement initiatives is essential for fostering resilience among students. Governments and educational institutions must prioritize students' mental well-being to ensure their academic success and future contributions to society.

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