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# Future minds in global health – The International Young Researchers' Symposium on Global Health 2024

Global health in the network of international research collaborations



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## # Preface

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

The years 2024 and 2025 are marked by profound global crises that are challenging healthcare systems worldwide. Political upheavals, wars, environmental disasters, and social inequalities directly impact global health. The re-election of Donald Trump as President of the United States has brought about drastic health policy decisions: the withdrawal of the U.S. from the WHO, the appointment of an anti-vaccination advocate as Health Secretary, and the shutdown of USAID – one of the largest organizations for international development cooperation – are just a few measures with far-reaching humanitarian and health consequences. At the same time, the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East continue to claim countless lives, while climate change and the rapid loss of biodiversity increasingly affect our environment and well-being.

In a world where complex challenges demand new approaches, it is more important than ever for science and research to engage actively with global health issues. However, we cannot rely solely on large international organizations like WHO, UN, or G7 that celebrates its 50th anniversary, G20 etc. While these institutions can develop crucial programs and strategies, real change often begins at the regional and local levels. This is where new ideas and innovative research approaches come into play – developed by dedicated young scientists who not only analyze problems but also create practical solutions that serve as role models for other regions and settings.

This was precisely the focus of the 6th International Young Researchers' Symposium on Global Health, held on October 12th and 13th, 2024, ahead of the World Health Summit in Berlin. The research presented covered a wide range of global health issues, from mental health and telemedicine to infectious diseases and environmental sustainability. The projects showcased were not only scientifically sound but also innovative and inspiring – so much so that we decided to compile the contributions into this volume.

We are proud to present the 7th edition of the Akkon Schriftenreihe with this book. The research findings gathered here provide not only valuable scientific insights but also critical perspectives and solutions for some of the most pressing health challenges of our time. May this volume serve as a catalyst for further research, interdisciplinary exchange, and new ideas – paving the way for a healthier and more sustainable world.

Our big thanks goes to all contributors, their supervisors, their respective institutions and also sponsors for their wonderful support and collaboration.

Enjoy reading!

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## #10.1 Ukraine

### Mental Health of the Population in the Volyn Region during Wartime

*Olha Bukareva, Viktoriia Komarchuk, Valentyna Fedorchuk-Moroz*

**ABSTRACT.** This article is devoted to the study of the issues of preserving the mental health of Ukrainians during the war, in particular in the Volyn region. The main attention is paid to the analysis of the psychological impact of the war on the mental health of the population of the Volyn region. This article analyzes the results of a survey of Volyn residents within the framework of the All-Ukrainian program of psychological health "How are you?". The issue of providing counseling services and psychological support to improve the mental health of students at Lutsk National Technical University was also highlighted.

**INTRODUCTION.** The issue of mental health in Ukraine is becoming increasingly relevant every day. This is primarily due to daily stress, volatility, unpredictability, and the uncertainty of the situation in the country. The war in Ukraine has been ongoing for the third year, and it is evident that during this time, the mental health of Ukrainians has inevitably deteriorated. As a result, both the civilian population and military veterans exhibit a range of conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depressive episodes, depression, anxiety disorders, and others. Additionally, as of March 2024, since the beginning of

the full-scale invasion, 18,944 businesses in Ukraine have been relocated from dangerous regions to safer ones.<sup>1</sup> These processes negatively affect all participants in the labor sphere, impacting both their mental health and their ability to work and overall productivity. According to experts from the State Labor Service of Ukraine, psychological and social issues lead to lost working time, increase the risk of workplace accidents, and create a tense atmosphere within teams.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the relevance of studying the mental health of citizens during the war and post-war reconstruction is beyond doubt.

**ANALYSIS OF RECENT STUDIES AND PUBLICATIONS.** A significant number of domestic and international researchers have studied the impact of military conflicts on mental health. Among them are I. Pyholenko, O. Tkachyshyna, L. Kotlova, I. Dolinchuk, S. Kuzikova, V. Zlyvkov, S. Lukomska, T. Shcherbak, O. Kotukh, F. Baingan, I.J. Bodh, B.L. Green, K. Siegfried, Sh. A. Sheikh, and others. Furthermore, the issue of ensuring the psychophysiological resilience of various population groups in Ukraine during martial law and post-war recovery has been explored by Kokun O.M., Bakhmutova L.M., Kruzheva T.V., and others.<sup>3</sup> They propose modern diagnostic

approaches, methods for increasing resilience, and ways to provide psychological support.

Karamushka L. M. analyzed the content and key components of individual mental health (using organizational employees as an example) during wartime and its potential risks.<sup>4</sup> The author provided recommendations on maintaining and supporting employees' mental health in key areas such as stress resistance, relationship-building, professional activity, and self-actualization.

Sharovatova O.P. and Morozov A.I. in their study<sup>5</sup> argue that awareness of the situation and future steps, the presence of a clear action plan in emergencies, and constructive communication help reduce anxiety levels and enhance employees' psychological resilience in difficult times. Fedorchuk-Moroz V.I. and Bondarchuk L.F. recommend that business leaders and managers pay attention to the mental health of different categories of employees, including discharged military personnel, those who did not participate in combat, and individuals with disabilities involved in production – whose numbers will increase over the years due to military actions.<sup>6</sup>

Tsona V. in<sup>7</sup> states that the most significant loss of working hours results from mental health issues, specifically due to increased workloads and the lack of managerial support – two aspects relevant to businesses of any size.

**RESULTS.** The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 significantly impacted the lives of Ukrainians, including their mental health. Oleksandra Mashkevych, Director of the Department of Medical Services at the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, states that more than 15 million people in the country will require psychological assistance. Among them, 3.5 million will experience certain mental disorders, and about one million will have moderate to severe mental health issues. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022, the use of antidepressants has peaked, and sales of over-the-counter sedatives doubled in March–April 2022 compared to 2021. The previous peak was recorded in March 2020 due to panic caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>8</sup>

Since March 2023, the nationwide mental health program "How Are You?" has been in operation, launched in Ukraine at the initiative of Olena Zelenska. It operates with the support of the government, non-governmental organizations, and partners such as the WHO, UNICEF, USAID, the International Organization for Migration, the International Medical Corps, the World Bank, the international independent medical organization Doctors Without Borders, and the UN Development Program. Additionally, various executive bodies of Ukraine, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Policy, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Econo-

### #10.1 Ukraine Mental Health of the Population in the Volyn Region during Wartime

my, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, are involved in the program. Each region has interregional program coordinators who collaborate with local authorities to develop steps for its implementation. Experts have developed practical tools for mental health care and resilience-building, particularly for children and adolescents, veterans, and healthcare workers. In the Volyn region, as part of the program, a survey of nearly 4,000 residents was conducted. The results showed:

- 22% of respondents from Volyn have experienced potentially traumatic events during the war.
- 27.2% have experienced panic attacks where nothing could calm them down.
- 33.1% feel indifferent to things they usually enjoy and experience apathy.
- 31% report feelings of hopelessness and persistent thoughts about the meaning of the future.

Age analysis has shown that these conditions are most prevalent among young people. Therefore, in Volyn, numerous activities are being conducted to address mental health and provide psychosocial support for schoolchildren and students (more than a thousand individuals).

From 2023 to 2024, the following initiatives have been implemented: 4,872 group mental health and psychosocial support sessions were held in general secondary education institutions in Volyn. Over 70 educational events on mental health, stress management, and

burnout prevention were organized for students. More than 30 training sessions and meetings were conducted for academic and educational staff<sup>9</sup>. Several mental health initiatives are also being implemented in the healthcare sector. In Volyn, the mhGAP (Mental Health Gap Action Program) – which aims to involve non-specialized psychiatric personnel in providing proper mental health care – has been successfully completed by 97% of family doctors in medical institutions across the region.

Out of 54 municipalities in the region, 49 currently provide psychological support services.

In four municipalities of the Volyn region, resilience centers have been established to provide psychological support. Various civil society organizations in Volyn are involved in the implementation of these programs.

In the Lutsk City Community, the FOX-HOUSE Inclusive Resilience Center was opened. It offers comprehensive support services to community residents, with a particular focus on defenders and their families.

In Novovolynsk, a Resilience Center was established by the Caritas Volyn organization. Over 2,000 people have sought assistance there, including: (955 individual consultations; 1,273 group sessions).

More than one-third of those seeking support were military personnel and their families, while another third con-

sisted of internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>9</sup>

Every year, on the occasion of World Mental Health Day, which is observed globally on October 10, LNTU organizes trainings, workshops, and guest lectures to raise awareness and promote mental well-being among students.

To enhance students' resilience, a Mediation and Psychology Center has been established at the university. This center provides individual psychological counseling, prevention, and correction of negative emotional states, as well as mediation services.

**CONCLUSIONS.** Summarizing the above, it is evident that the demand for psychosocial support among Ukrainians will continue to grow both during and after the war. In our opinion, it is essential to continuously assess the demand for these services and gather feedback on their implementation. One potential approach is to involve students in organizing mentorship programs aimed at improving the mental health of young people. Furthermore, it is crucial for employers to implement specific measures to reduce risks, enhance psychosocial well-being, and create a healthy work environment. —

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