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Analysis of the needs and possibilities of using psychological help among the society

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Abstract

Introduction

Young people find themselves in stressful situations more and more frequently. Mental health and access to professional psychical help is necessary. Unfortunately, the availability of the psychologist's offices, as well as knowledge about mental health, is very limited.

Aim of the study

We aimed to check factors that cause stress and the access to psychological help in Poland.

Material and method

In order to analyze the issue, an Internet survey was prepared and disseminated in February and March 2022.

Results

Over 80% of respondents claimed that sometime in their life they needed psychological help, although the majority of them did not seek professional help. 41,1% of people who took part in the survey could get help from psychologists in their place of work or study, but over 83% of them did not seek help there. Everyday problems and situations in work, school or university were mentioned as the most stressful situations (63,7%). According to the respondents' opinion, problems with concentration and nervousness (80,6% and 76,6% respectively) due to stress have a negative influence on their health. 74,2% of young people consider themselves as not stress-resistant. The best option to deal with stress is to listen to music or to converse with their closest ones.

Conclusion

Everyone should have ensured good access to psychological help. There is a great demand for it, regardless of gender or age. Despite the need to see an expert, the majority of people do not ask for help.

Key words: stress; psychological help; psychologist; stressing situations

Introduction

Nowadays young people have to deal with more and more difficult challenges. There is a large amount of stressing situations such as problems in everyday life, situations at school or work or conflict situations. Psychological problems among young people are increasing nowadays. According to a UNICEF report from 2021 [1] psychical wellbeing among young people is getting worse not only in Poland, but worldwide. According to the report the frequency of mental disorders in children aged 10-19 in Poland is 10.8%. Supreme Audit Office data from 2020 on the availability of psychiatric treatment for children and adolescents show that 9% of children need psychological help while the system is inefficient and not able to provide professional support [2].

Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to check the access to the psychologist among people if they feel stressed and how they cope with it. We also checked the knowledge about stress and its influence on health.

Material and method

In order to analyze the issue, a 14 question questionnaire was prepared. The survey was created using Google Forms programme and distributed via Facebook groups between February 25th and March 5th 2022. It was eventually properly filled in by 124 people.

The first part of the survey contained general information about the respondents including age, gender or place of study. Questions specifically related to the topic, describing various questions about stress were gathered in the second part of the survey.

Open question about age was the first one from the first part of the survey. Second one referred to the gender (division into two genders: female or male). The last question in this part of the survey gained information about the recent place of study (primary, secondary, technical, trade school, university or 'I don't go to school anymore').

The second part of the survey began with a question if there was a need for psychologists' help anytime in respondents' lives. Question number five checked if people knew if there was or wasn't psychological help available in their place of work or study. Next question gathered information on whether the respondents ever used this kind of help. Sixth question was similar to the previous one, but asked if they got psychological help in the place of their work or study. In question number 7 respondents pointed out situations that usually cause stress in their life. Question 8 gave respondents the choice to estimate their own resistance to stress from 1 to 5 (where 1 meant very low and 5 - very high resistance). The next question asked how people deal with stressing situations. In this question there was also an ability to add your own answer. Question tenth concerned stress level preceding an exam. Respondents rated their level of stress before an exam on a five-point scale, where one meant very low and five - very high level of stress. The next question was designed to determine if the level of stress during e-learning/e-working increased, decreased or stayed at the same level (there was also an option for those who did not experience this kind of learning or working). The last question was not obligatory, it was a place to leave respondents' opinions about the survey.

Results

One hundred and twenty four people participated in the survey. Most of the respondents were women (84,7%). Age ranged from 13 to 51; the average was 23,62 years and median - 23 years. Most people (89) attended university, 7 high or technical school, 2 trade school, 4 primary school and 22 respondents were workers who had already completed their education.

Only 24 respondents (19,4%) had never needed psychological help. More than every eight of ten people (80,6%) felt the need of this kind of help at some point of their life, but only 37,9% of them actually went to a psychologist. Over 8 out of ten respondents (83,1%) from 37,9% from the previous question did not visit psychologists at their place of work or study, they chose to find a person, who was not related with them at any point. 21 people (16,9%) took advantage of the opportunity to have psychologists nearby and did not search for someone else on their own.

73 (30,6%) people did not know if there was or was not psychologists available in their place of work or learning and 28,2% knew that it wasn't. A little over 40% (41,1%) of respondents were sure that they have such a person in the immediate surrounding.

Next question was the multiple choice one where 80 (64,5%) of the respondents were stressed due to situations in school, university or work. The same amount of people picked everyday life problems. 68 people (54,8%) chose conflict situations, 65 (52,4%) problems in the family, 63 (50,8%) situations in the country or in the world. The same number of people (56 which is 45,2%) agreed that they are stressed when they: have not got enough time or information; feel inadequate; and before an exam. A little bit less because 52 people (41,9%) felt stressed when exhausted. 19 people (15,3%) choose road situations as the stressing factor.

The biggest influence that stress is causing to our health were problems with concentration, reported by 100 respondents (80,6%) Second place was taken by neurosis with 95 choices (76,6%). 94 people (75,8%) pointed out stomach ache. Three quarters of the respondents claimed that the result of stress can be gaining or losing weight. Depression was chosen by 90 people (72,6%). Other consequences were: chest pain with 78 choices (62,9%); palpitations - 77 (62,1%); organism's low immunity - 75 (60,5%). Stomach ulcers were chosen by 64 people (51,6%); shallow breath by 53 (42,7%); hypertension by 50 (40,3%); muscle tension leading to injuries and inflammation by 46 (37,1%). 3 people did not know the answer to this question (2,4%) and the same number of respondents thought that all the answers were correct.

We also asked how high respondents evaluate their resistance to stress. In the five-grade scale 16 respondents chose option 1 (very bad), 45 option 2 (bad), 47 option 3 and stayed neutral, 12 option 4 (good) and only 4 option 5 (very good). An average score was 2,54.

The main way of dealing with stress was listening to music (59,7%). Talking with closest ones stayed at second place with 67 choices (54%). Respondents' choices were also watching films (46%), browsing social media (45,2%), going for a walk (41,9%). A little bit over four out of ten respondents (40,3%) claimed that they go to sleep according to 39 (31,4%) that exercise to help themselves to deal with stress. 34 respondents (27,4%) play with their pet, 23 (18,5%) reach for alcohol or drugs, 22 (17,7%) play games. Reading a book helps 19 people (15,3%) and doing yoga and meditation helps 10 people (16,1%). 4 people admit to snacking as a help in coping with stress. On the other hand, 4 respondents claimed that none of the options above helped them.

In the five-grade scale, no one chose option 1 (very little), 12 - option 2 (little), 34 - option 3 (average), 48 - option 4 (big) and 30 -option 5 (very big), as an answer to how much stress was felt by them before an exam. An average score was 3,77%.

43,5% admitted that the level of stress during e-learning decreased. 31,5% of respondents chose the option that their stress level stayed at the same level and in 21% cases it increased. This question did not concern 4% of people taking part in the survey.

The last question was for additional remarks, but it was not obligatory.

Discussion

Stress level is rising among young people, which can be caused by COVID-19 pandemic [3,4], political situation, war [5] or daily life struggles. A Kraków study [6] showed that one tenth of students perceive a high level of stress. Persistent physical symptoms may lead to considerable social consequences and can negatively affect health and ones' wellbeing [7, 8]. Psychological help is also essential to prevent suicide among young people [9]. It is especially important, because suicides are the second most common death cause among teenagers in Poland, according to Police Headquarters [2]. It was observed [10, 11] that the access to professional help should be facilitated, which corresponds with our study.

Conclusion

Significant number of young people have ever felt the need to contact a psychologist, but a minority of them have actually used the help. Availability of psychological help at work, university or school is still insufficient and there is no law which would require chefs to provide psychological help in the place of study or work. It can lead to delay or complete failure to consult a specialist by people who need them. There is an urge to improve the access to professionals and to disseminate this issue among young people. It is very important especially in recent times when the level of stress in society is growing.

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