

Interdependent: Mental Health, Social Development, Youth' Socially-Oriented Activity (on the example of a country in transition)

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Introduction. The current stage of global social development is characterized by circular causality: most social challenges negatively affect the mental health of people and the social community in general; on the other side, shortcomings in the systems of mental health (both at the individual and social levels) lead to the aggravation of social problems and decrease the functional abilities of people.

The need for of this investigation is also influenced by: the urgent need for youth of transitional countries to meet new social challenges and reflect on their changing social reality; issues of developing innovative social technologies to enhance social competences of youth, their perceptions of duties and risks in social activity; the need to develop conditions for building personal tolerance to or coping with the situation of uncertainty, and to positively impact their mental health.

Methodology. The study sample consists of 1560 young people (18–22 years old). The survey design (3 questionnaires) collected data representing: (a) demographic, social, work characteristics; (b) study respondents' reflections on social conditions; (c) respondents' reflection on and representation of their own mental health. The questionnaire was structured in such a way as to represent different aspects of caring for one's own mental health (interpersonal communication; physical activity; eating and drinking; listening to one's own body; social representation; mental and physical relaxation; self-perception; interpersonal relationships).

This study utilized a descriptive, cross-sectional research design, and used 3 different methods of analysis: (a) descriptive statistics; (b) correlational analysis; (c) content analysis.

Results, Discussion and Conclusions. The respondents perceived the following to be the main problems of social development: "quality of society life" (poverty, social support, health protection, criminal activity, etc) – 80%; "conditions of labor activity" (unemployment, instability, etc) – 75%; "specific problems" (lack of common values; reduction in the value of human life; overpopulation; digitalization of human life, robotization) – 62%. In order to address these social issues, respondents chose the following spheres in which to conduct their volunteer activity: "fitness and physical activities" (54%); "child development programs" (50%); "educational-training programs" (34%). The main motivations to increase participation in volunteer work as part of their social activity were: "to gain moral satisfaction" (62%); "to gain material compensation" (60%); "to have convenient labor conditions" (38%). However, the respondents reported actually spending a little more than 2 hours per week involved in activities to support socially-oriented work in their own environment. The results of this investigation could be interpreted as possibly related to: an insufficient level of competency in organizing their volunteer work; ambiguous, undefined, restructured attitudes to conducting socially-oriented work; active creation of new forms of volunteer activities; formatting new, nontraditional bases for conducting social activities. At the level of health protection, this transitional country's modern youth's low level of self-esteem and of mental well-being, combined

with a rather high level of moral and psychological exhaustion suggests the need to create accessible centres of social and psychological assistance at higher educational establishments, centres of social psychological service near their place of residence, and the normalization of using these resources.

Practical\social value. The results of this investigation assist in identifying avenues to form personal models of social success for youth; to shape mental health for a creative and active young generation of a transitional society; to optimize successful deployment of personal potential of youth in the sphere of their life's social and professional activity.

Keywords: mental health, social development, social activity, transitional societies