

ONLINE MODULES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH PROMOTION IN TIMES OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

The modern war on the territory of Ukraine is a challenge to the social stability of the whole world. Human losses, mass war migration, economic insecurity, environmental threats, and loss of faith in the peaceful resolution of conflicts generate various controversial processes. However, the slogan “health preservation is the preservation of a nation” would be appropriate in rear resistance to a full-scale military invasion of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine. Millions of Ukrainians are currently faced with an extraordinary challenge to self-preservation both because of objective threats to their physical integrity and derivative emotional states. But preserving life and health is the primary task of further nation-building and a free, peaceful future in the long-term perspective.

Psychological well-being is one of the priorities in health preservation overall. Due to the governmental plan of restoration of Ukraine presented in July 2022 on the recovery.gov.ua site, there is an outlined national mental health program to support the needs of people affected by war. Remarkably, the efforts are oriented toward integrating psychological interventions into health care and education systems and strengthening the role of digital health (e.g., telehealth, patient’s online cabinet). This aim seems to be realistic both because of the opportunity to stay online for most of the war victims and because of the successful work of the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine in making a lot of social services accessible online.

Digitized health promotion is one of the top agendas globally. There is increasing literature and numerous ongoing initiatives exploring how innovative technology and digital interventions can contribute to health and well-being. But there are also some peculiarities and limitations. In our previous research, we found out that there are at least four predictors for successful online support of psychological well-being in Ukrainian citizens (Dvornyk, 2021):

1. High level of online behavior activity in seeking support.
2. Higher than average ability to receive electronic support.
3. High level of identification with the electronic support community.
4. Precise sociodemographic characteristics of users: women in their 20s, with secondary/ special secondary education, satisfied with their financial security, and living alone.

Since the beginning of the Russian full-scale military aggression, we were observing activities in the Ukrainian Internet segment due to the model of psychological well-being support by electronic means in the transitive social conditions, which was also presented in our previous publications (Tytarenko & Dvornyk, 2021). Originally there were outlined such modules as:

1. Finding solutions to maintain positive personal relationships and contribute to the well-being of others.
2. Psychoeducation to maintain a person’s sense of competence and ability to engage in meaningful activity.
3. Monitoring of changes to maintain personal goals.
4. Inner peace achieving and self-expression to maintain self-respect and optimism.

But we’ve discovered new aims during wartime and renamed the modules.

Firstly, it is observed the *Involvement* module. It contains a movement, an intention directed towards potential recipients of psychological support and health promotion. As it is known from crisis counseling, in a state of shock or trauma, a person returns to the basics, reacts primitively, loses higher behavioral attainments, and therefore cannot use more mature methods, cannot ask for help directly and targeted. Thus, online tools can simplify the procedure of applying for assistance.

On the platforms of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter social networks, Viber, Telegram, and WhatsApp messengers, on the governmental and mass media web pages, there is an active distribution of announcements about the readiness of individual specialists or organizations to provide psychological assistance to the population affected by military actions. Predominantly this takes the form of text ads with links to more information. In other cases, users request psychological support on search sites (such as Google), and optimized recommendations play a crucial role.

The second module of psychological health support and promotion is *Psychoeducation*. This module is aimed at instructing how to act in a crisis, ensuring that victims understand their problem, creating motivation to achieve change, and teaching beneficial self-preservation practices, methods of managing anxiety, fear, anger, guilt, etc.

Such concentrated information can be found on the websites of government and charity organizations, in infographics and posts by experts in social networks and messengers, and specialized bots. There are also thematic psychoeducational webinars and video lectures by foreign and domestic psychologists in Zoom, Google-Meet, or other online rooms. Even more popular becomes the influencers phenomenon in YouTube videos and Instagram streams: bloggers, showbusiness celebrities, and social activists follow the empowerment approach in traditional health promotion, outlining the audience’s ability to change the environment and trying to increase health literacy (Hubley, Copeman, & Woodall, 2021). Unfortunately, the quality of such education is usually doubtful and stochastic, so there is

an urgent need to use scientifically based psychoeducation interventions to follow the planned mental health program for Ukraine's war victims.

The third module we've called *Finding solutions*. It allows the users to share concerns, ask for emotional support or possible solutions in the referent chat community, and become a resource for the community themselves. It is presented primarily by personal pages' platforms, closed social network groups, and messengers. For example, there is a group chat "SvitloChat: psychological help to Ukrainians during the war" on Telegram messenger, which gathers over 29 000 participants and works as a hub to connect clients and psychologists. Also, there is an engaging app initiative called "Obiymy" (Hugs) where you can create your network of loved ones who are far away but with whom you can exchange various bodily attention online – touch, hug, kiss, pinch, etc. This module covers the users' need for informational and emotional support and can be used as a way to promote psychological health knowledge due to the "word of mouth" phenomenon.

At last, the fourth module is *Assistance*. It provides long-term socio-psychological support through regular individual or group meetings on Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, Facebook Messenger, or other platforms. Such support is provided mainly by professional associations and the personal initiative of specialists.

The most effective assistance should be recognized as that one based on the previously existed connections. Such connections, to some extent, compensate for the feelings of alienation after traumatic events and the impossibility of physical contact.

We deliberately do not use the 'psychotherapy' word here because classical therapy, where you can slowly unpack old experiences, and gain new ways of interacting with the world, is almost impossible for war victims. The war continues, and the psyche tends to react acutely. On the other hand, this traumatic situation can serve as a stimulus for quality changes, even if it is painful; that's why it requires support.

Due to our practical experience, there are also some observations on the clarity of online assistance to promote psychological health.

In particular, the gadget and the qualitative connection should be available to provide the proper video/ audio. In other cases, the instability of the Internet connection should be compensated by the ability to make a call to a cell phone or continue interaction in a chat. To prevent the negative consequences of disconnection, the specialist needs to have contact with the client's trusted person in case of an emergency.

Also, it is crucial to follow the confidentiality rule to provide a feeling of safety to a client. The clients also need to arrange their space to reduce interruptions by other persons; thus, it will help establish a trusting contact with a specialist.

The presented online modules of psychological health promotion in wartime can be used as a frame to incorporate into a national mental health program in Ukraine, also considering the best European practices. Additional research is needed, including the empirical verification of the effectiveness of such modules in various samples.

References:

Hubley, J., Copeman, J., & Woodall, J. (2021). *Practical health promotion*. Third Edition. John Wiley & Sons.

Dvornyk, M.S. (2021). Sociodemographic specifics of citizens obtaining electronic socio-psychological support during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine. *Scientific Bulletin of Kherson State University. Psychological Sciences Series*, 4, 142–147. (In Ukrainian).

Tytarenko, T.M., & Dvornyk, M.S. (Eds.) (2021). *How to help an individual during the period of transition from war to peace: socio-psychological support (practical guide)*. Preprint. Retrieved from https://personlab.ucoz.ua/_ld/0/24___2021.pdf. (In Ukrainian).