

## SECTION 6

### PSYCHOLOGY

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#### **ASSESSING STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES IN UKRAINIAN STUDENTS DURING WARTIME**

In today's world the critical importance of supporting emotional well-being cannot be overstated, especially in regions like Ukraine, where the profound scars of war have had, and continue to have, a lasting impact on the community's psyche. According to Ilona Kostikova et al., "stress is a reaction of the body in response to a very strong action or stimulus from the outside, which exceeds the norm" [1, p.153]. Another perspective on the definition of stress comes from the World Health Organization (WHO), which describes stress as a state of mental tension and worry caused by challenging situations. Stress is seen as a natural human response that prompts individuals to deal with threats and challenges in their lives. While a certain amount of stress can be beneficial, aiding in daily activities, excessive stress can lead to physical and mental health issues. It's emphasized that the experience of stress and the way individuals cope with it can significantly impact their overall well-being (WHO) [2].

Psychological and emotional recovery during wartime is a critical process that focuses on fostering wellness and resilience amid the trauma associated with armed conflicts. This recovery involves a range of interventions designed to alleviate distress and enhance coping strategies.

To gain a deeper understanding of the needs and preferences of students in the context of the current circumstances, we conducted an extensive survey targeting a diverse group of students at State University of

Trade and Economics. Utilizing Google Forms, this survey aimed to capture various dimensions of student life, encompassing their experiences amidst the ongoing conflict and their strategies for coping with stress.

A total of two hundred seventy respondents participated in the anonymous survey. The majority of respondents were 18 years old (44.1%), followed by 17 (27%), 19 (21,9%), and a smaller percentage of respondents were 20 (4.8%) or older (2,2%). Owing to the ongoing war in Ukraine, the mode of education delivery varied significantly: 150 (55,6%) of respondents were studying online, 103 (38.1%) were engaged in a hybrid model, and a mere 17 (6.3%) were attending classes in person.

Respondents were asked if they have had to relocate due to the war and, if so, how many times. 120 (44.4%) indicated that they have not had to relocate; 107 (39.6%) reported that they have had to relocate once; 26 (9.6%) have had to relocate twice; 17 (6.3%) have relocated three times or more.

To the question of how they would rate their level of academic stress since the war began, on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being very low and 5 being very high), respondents answered as follows: 35 (13%) rated their academic stress as 1, indicating very low stress; 50 (18.5%) gave a rating of 2, suggesting low stress; 88 (32,6%) chose 3, indicating a moderate level of stress; 69 (25,6%) rated their stress level as 4, which suggests high stress; 28 (10,4%) of the respondents selected 5, indicating a very high level of academic stress. These results reveal a significant range in perceived academic stress levels, with a notable proportion of participants experiencing very high stress.

In a survey of 270 participants regarding the primary sources of academic stress, deadlines were the most cited factor, accounting for 126 46.7% of responses. Online learning challenges were also a significant source of stress, representing 61 (22,6%) of responses. Communication with faculty was identified as a primary stressor by 17 (6,3%) of the participants, and offline learning challenges were noted by 66 (24,4%) of the respondents. These findings highlight the impact of various aspects of the academic environment on student stress levels during the war.

In the survey, participants were asked to select all the methods they use to cope with stress related to the war and their studies. From 270 respondents, the coping strategies ranked as follows: music was the most popular method, chosen by 200 respondents (74.3%). Talking with friends/family was the second most common strategy, with 206 respondents (76.6%) using it. Sleeping was also a prevalent choice, selected by 186 participants (69.1%). Engaging in hobbies was another significant stress-reliever for 161 respondents (59.9%). Physical activity or exercise was chosen by 131 individuals (48.7%). Computer or board games were reported

by 120 respondents (44.6%). Reading was indicated by 98 participants (36.4%). Cooking was selected by 95 respondents (35.3%). Humor, such as stand-ups and comedies, was chosen by 74 individuals (27.5%). Studying was mentioned by 75 participants (27.9%). Seeking professional psychology services was less common, with 68 respondents (25.3%). Empathy (realizing that some care for someone) was the least selected method, noted by 24 individuals (8.9%). These results show the varied strategies students use to manage stress, with music, social interaction, and sleep being the top methods.

In response to whether they have sought psychological support since the war began, the survey participants' answers were as follows: 210 (77.8%) indicated they have not sought psychological support. 5 (1.9%) sought support through university services. 26 (9.6%) used private counseling services. 25 (9.3%) turned to online services for psychological support. This suggests that the vast majority of the respondents have not pursued psychological support during the war, with a smaller portion utilizing services offered by universities, private counseling, and online platforms.

In the survey, participants reported the emotional or psychological symptoms they have experienced more frequently since the war began. Increased anxiety was reported by 79 (29.3%) of participants. Sadness or depression was experienced more frequently by 80 (29.6%). Difficulty sleeping was noted by 42 (15.6%) of the respondents. Feelings of isolation were felt by 31 (11.5%). Increased irritability was observed by 38 (14.1%). The survey indicates that anxiety and sadness/depression are the most commonly heightened emotional responses due to the war, followed by disruptions in sleep, increased feelings of isolation, and a rise in irritability among respondents.

In conclusion, the survey on youth coping with stress during wartime reveals a complex picture of resilience and self-reliance. While most young individuals report experiencing stress, they predominantly do not seek professional help to manage their psychological strain. Instead, they lean on the age-old human remedy of socialization, finding solace in the company of family and friends. This interpersonal engagement emerges as the keystone in their coping architecture. The sharing of experiences and emotional support obtained within their social circles plays a crucial role in mitigating the stressors brought on by the uncertainties and challenges of wartime. It appears that, for these young people, the warmth of personal relationships acts as a buffer against the hardships they face, underscoring the importance of a strong social network in fostering psychological resilience in turbulent times.

## References

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## **STRESSORS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON ADAPTATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

The significance of this research lies in the importance of understanding stressors and adaptation methods to ensure psychological well-being. Understanding these aspects can help develop effective stress management strategies and improve people's quality of life. Therefore, studying psychological stress and adaptation is of great importance to contemporary society and can lead to significant discoveries in psychological science.

Stress is a non-specific response of the organism to any demand placed on it, aimed at creating adaptation or adaptation of the organism to difficulties. Stress is a response to a threat, real or imagined. [2, p. 3].

A review of current research in the field of stress and adaptation reveals a growing interest in understanding the complex interplay between stressors, individual coping mechanisms, and the impact on physical and mental health. Research has shown that chronic stress can contribute to the development of conditions such as cardiovascular disease, depression, and anxiety disorders [3, p. 9].

Stressors are strong external stimuli that disrupt internal balance. The body responds to any stressor, whether pleasant or unpleasant, with a