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Stress Prevention and Management during the Quarantine

Ivan OKHRIMENKO[1], Nina LYHUN[2]

[1] Doctor in law, professor, Professor of the Department of Legal Psychology, National Academy of Internal Affairs, Kyiv, Ukraine, E-mail: ivango-07@ukr.net, orcid.org/0000-0002-8813-5107

[2] Candidate of psychological sciences, associate professor, Associate professor of the Department of Public and Administrative Management, National Academy of Internal Affairs, Kyiv, Ukraine, E-mail: nvl2111@i.ua, orcid.org/0000-0002-3575-4350

Abstract: The paper analyzes factors of quarantine measures influencing an individual during the COVID-19 epidemic. It mentions that during the quarantine, it should be considered that some individuals are especially vulnerable in crisis situations and they may need additional psychological assistance. The work presents a set of tools, recommended for specialists providing remote psychological assistance to prevent and overcome stress. Preventive and rehabilitation measures (counseling methods; the change in strategies and patterns of behavior; the involvement of rational psychodiagnostic and self-regulation techniques, etc.) are aimed at reducing the risks of stress and its impact on the individual during quarantine under threat of the COVID-19 epidemic. They should result in an increase in communicative openness, emotional stability, social courage, self-confidence, etc.

Keywords: *stress prevention; quarantine measures; crisis situations; psychological assistance; remote work; psychological counseling.*

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1. Introduction

Today, society has faced a completely new situation: the COVID-19 pandemic and the quarantine, enforced around the world, have brought new challenges, which humanity may have experienced before, but not to this extent, both to professional activity and to everyday life. First of all, it concerns stability loss, anxiety, panic, and the risks of the loss of income and material stability in the close future.

Although similar events affect everyone in the same way, people's possible reactions and emotions can vary. Many people feel stunned, confused, or do not understand what is happening. People may experience fear, anxiety, consternation, alienation, etc. Some people react to similar atypical situations moderately, while others react much more sharply. It depends on many factors that can determine the course of such a reaction, in particular: the nature and complexity of the issue faced; previous experience of stressful situations; the support people receive from others; the state of physical health; the cases of personal or family history of mental health problems; cultural roots and established traditions; age (for example, children of different age groups react differently) (Aleksandrov et al., 2017). In addition, it should be taken into account that some individuals are especially vulnerable in a crisis environment and they may need additional psychological assistance. First of all, it concerns people who belong to risk groups or need additional support because of their individual psychological characteristics.

2. Literature Review

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, appropriate quarantine restrictions were imposed on citizens in many countries around the world (the introduction of distance learning at educational institutions, social contacts reduction, self-isolation, attending public places only when absolutely necessary, etc.). Such quarantine measures have a significant impact on the living environment of common people and determine its peculiarities. In particular, sharing the opinion of specialists (Ding & Kalashnyk, 2020), separation from close people, the loss of the freedom of movement, insecurity, and boredom can eventually lead to negative consequences, namely, increased rates of suicide, depression, violent behavior, lawsuits, divorces, etc. Besides, scientists (Nerubasska & Lopuha, 2020) noted that pandemic panic increases the possibilities of post-traumatic stress symptoms of both parents and children who are under quarantine. At the same time, other researchers (Brooks et al., 2020) mentioned depression,

stress, low mood, irritation, insomnia, the symptoms of post-traumatic stress, anger, emotional exhaustion as prominent psychophysiological personality expression during quarantine (low mood (73%) and irritation (57%) are highly prevalent). According to their observations, quarantine measures make people keep clear of those who cough or sneeze, avoid people indoors, or avoid all public places. Hence, it can be argued that being under quarantine for a long time can provoke by far higher post-traumatic stress. This situation may be intensified by the low level of social and information interaction, the use of outdated approaches in public administration (Kalashnyk & Krasivskyy, 2020), which is often combined with a negative psychological effect. Hence, the peculiarities of stress symptoms under quarantine determine the interest in this problem and define the relevance of providing psychological assistance by specialists. Therefore, the ***aim*** of the work is to substantiate the recommendations on providing remote psychological assistance by psychologists under quarantine in order to prevent and manage stress.

3. Methodology

To achieve this aim, a set of theoretical methods, including analysis, synthesis, comprehension, and generalization of the provisions of psychological, socio-psychological literature, and Internet resources on this issue, was used. This made it possible to expand the understanding of the problem and determine the features of the remote work of a psychologist (psychodiagnostic and psychological counseling). In addition, etymology clarification of stress symptoms under quarantine identified self-regulatory techniques that are most relevant in terms of emotional conflict states, provoked by the COVID-19.

The research was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations on Academic Integrity at the National Academy of Internal Affairs, which was developed on the basis of Ukrainian and world experience of ethical rule-making. This document was approved by the Academic Council of the National Academy of Internal Affairs (Protocol No. 5 of 27 March 2018) and put into effect by the order of the President of the Academy (Order No. 422 of 30 March 2018). According to its provisions, the members of the scientific community are guided by the norms and rules of ethical behavior and professional communication, take into account the principles, values, norms, rules, and conditions of academic integrity in their activities.

4. Results

Owing to the introduction of quarantine, psychologists are switching to remote work with the help of Internet technologies. Working online has a number of peculiarities in contrast to traditional tete-a-tete therapy; online counseling can be practiced through a variety of alternative communication channels.

However, priority is given to consultative methods instead of corrective ones, as the correction is time-consuming and sometimes there is a need to use techniques that involve tactile techniques. Hence, it is worth noting that the main advantages of online counseling are the ability to receive psychological assistance when it is not possible to hold a meeting.

There is a large number of means for remote work to overcome stress under quarantine. In particular, when a person loses control over some life circumstances, one should intensify the transition from the model of "victim" to the model of "responsible person". Getting stuck on the first model leads to fixation on the loss and consumer life position in the ideal case. And only the transition to a strategy of a person who is able to take responsibility for one's own life and for the lives of close people allows considering forced quarantine and related changes as a complicated life task that requires a creative solution and is focused on achieving a positive result. The promotion of responsibility formation should begin with resource work. This can be done with the help of a "resource map" that outlines the relevant criteria for researching a particular individual's resources: family support; support of close people; support of outsiders; real material resource; ideal plans; realistic plans and a positive attitude towards oneself (Hrydkovets′ et al., 2018). Considering these criteria, the resource map will provide a possibility to analyze the available material, psychological, social and spiritual resources and to help a person see the situation not only from the standpoint of traumatic experience but also from the perspective of responsibility for life and adaptation prospects and self-development in new life conditions.

To prevent and overcome stress, motivational interviewing, which can be used in various situations of interaction with a person in a crisis situation (in particular, under quarantine), becomes relevant (Hrydkovets′ et al., 2018), as this approach allows activating internal motivation to change. In our opinion, the advantages of this approach include determining the level of person's motivation to change in general and to continue interaction with a specialist or to visit a group, in particular; the orientation of the work

on facilitating a person's decision to change one's own behavior (which involves the work on internal and external actions); psychological support of a client in accordance with the stages of one's readiness for changes.

An important requirement of psychodiagnostics in general, and remote one in particular, is the use of standardized, reliable and valid methods of diagnostic research (Halyan, 2011), primarily to assess the level of stress (Table 1).

Table 1. Psychodiagnostic techniques for assessing the stress level during a quarantine

The methodology	The aim
Methodology for determining stress resistance and social adaptation (Holmes, Rage)	To determine the degree of stress resistance and the degree of stress
Questionnaire of nervous and mental tension (Nemchin)	To define the degree of mental stress
Methodology for determining the prevalent state (Kulikov)	To identify mood and other characteristics of the individual level of mental states
Questionnaire determining the propensity for stress (Nemchin, Taylor)	To detect anxiety levels and stress resistance

Source: Halyan, 2011

The use of these techniques involves the preservation and restoration of the resource state of a person counseled, because situations with high emotional saturation, the complexity of interpersonal communication, the detection of which requires a psychologist to take significant organizational efforts at the stage of establishing trust and direct psychological assistance, can significantly affect the life.

It should also be noted that during a long-standing stressful situation, it is important for people to master the skills of the psychological state stabilization. Every psychologist has one's own proven effective methods for providing help in a crisis situation, which can be modified to a specific situation, but the thing stabilizing the situation in one case may not be useful in another one. Moreover, the thing used to be helpful may not help or even have a negative effect after some time. The previously studied issue of the mental stability (Alexandrov et al., 2019; Robins et al., 2012) enables us to identify self-regulatory techniques that are rational under quarantine: "Tapping", "Emotion freedom technics", "Anxiety breathing technics".

5. Limits and Discussion

Taking account of rather a serious problem of the COVID-19 spread around the world and the consequences of different quarantine measures, we promote the idea of providing qualified psychological assistance (including remote one) in crisis situations, which is considered in scientific sources (Bridges et al., 2004; Gratz et al., 2010).

Starting with the analysis of the current state of "social withdrawal" and "isolation" accompanied by fear and uncertainty, the idea of understanding the causes of this situation is related to the biological laws of nature (Livytska, 2020). In addition, material losses caused by quarantine create serious socio-economic problems (Brooks, et al., 2020) which, in our opinion, can be considered a risk factor for psychological disorders. Therefore, in conditions of a pandemic, individual psychological components of this issue should not be ruled out because the risk of the neurotic disorders of the most vulnerable individual psychological factors, including emotional instability, anxiety, timidity, etc. increases under quarantine. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic is increasing the number of sleep and eating disorders in the context of increased anxiety in society. Thus, it is not surprising that quarantine has a negative psychological effect, but there is evidence that the psychological effect can be improved by the possibility of remote (excluding the use of traditional tete-a-tete therapy) psychological assistance.

6. Conclusions

On the basis of the analysis conducted, the recommendations on providing psychological assistance to people under quarantine were presented and substantiated. In addition, it becomes clear that preventive and rehabilitation measures (the use of counseling methods; the change in strategies and patterns of behavior; the involvement of valid psychodiagnostic and self-regulation techniques, etc.) are oriented on reducing the risks of stress and its impact on the individual during quarantine under threat of the COVID-19 epidemic. The outlined tools of professional psychological assistance should be focused primarily on increasing communicative openness, emotional stability, social courage, self-confidence, etc.

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