

PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH: MINIMISING WAR TRAUMA THROUGH RURAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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Abstract. The study correlates with several UN Sustainable Development Goals, namely: Good Health and Well-being (focusing on students' mental health), Quality Education (highlighting the impact of trauma on the learning process and the creation of a safe educational environment), and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (outlining ways to overcome the consequences of war for the stable development of society). *Aim:* To investigate the impact of war trauma on the mental health of Ukrainian students and to justify the potential of the rural community in developing effective wellbeing strategies and improving their attitude toward learning. *Materials and Methods:* A theoretical analysis of the relevant literature on the outlined problem, complemented by a student survey conducted in March – April 2025 in Ukraine. *Results:* The study revealed that 31.6% of university students reported heightened anxiety over recent months, attributed to the unstable security situation, associated worries, and stress. Nearly half of the respondents (43%) exhibited symptoms of emotional burnout, while 21.7% reported a loss of interest in their studies and general apathy. Only 9% of participants demonstrated resilience and adaptability under martial law and academic demands, as reflected in their ability to mobilise personal resources. The strategies employed by students and educators to preserve mental health included engagement in volunteering and charitable activities (66.4%), ensuring adequate sleep and rest (60.2%), maintaining communication with family and friends, particularly in the rural community (35.7%), participating in physical activity (29.5%), and practising digital hygiene (36.5%), among other coping mechanisms. *Conclusions:* Based on the study findings, practical recommendations have been formulated to create a safe and supportive environment within higher education institutions, to strengthen students' psychological resilience in crisis contexts, including war. The need to harness the resources of the rural education community to promote the mental health of young people was emphasised.

Keywords: pedagogical support, mental health, war trauma, rural community resources, university students, inclusive education, psychology.

1. INTRODUCTION

The full-scale war in Ukraine has fundamentally reshaped everyday life, with especially profound consequences for young people (Rembierz, 2023; Zlyvkov et al., 2023). Students preparing for professional careers across various disciplines must now navigate academic demands while coping with ongoing stress, heightened anxiety, and pervasive uncertainty (Vancampfort, 2015; White, 2020). In this context, the preservation of future professionals' mental health becomes particularly critical (Corrigan,

2004; Søvold et al., 2021), as their psychological and emotional well-being directly influences educational outcomes, professional adjustment, and the country's long-term development (Budnyk et al., 2025). This article explores the challenges students encounter during wartime and provides practical recommendations for both higher education institutions and students themselves to support mental health across diverse circumstances (Galson, 2009), with a special focus on crises. The untapped potential of rural communities plays a significant role in addressing this issue, as specific mechanisms within these communities help to enhance quality of life, improve mental health and boost educational motivation among young people (Wallin & Reimer, 2008).

The aim of the article is to investigate the impact of war-related trauma on students' mental health and subjective well-being, as well as to identify the role of internal resources and the potential of the rural community in mitigating the negative effects of war-related stressors.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research employed the following methods to examine the mental health of students in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war:

(1) theoretical methods, applied to analyze the issue reflected in scientific literature (searched for sources in leading scientometric databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, employing both a systematic keyword search and a snowballing strategy with the terms 'mental health,' 'war conditions,' and 'psychological support');

(2) questioning students to assess the impact of war on their mental health;

(3) to obtain comprehensive results, a mixed-methods research approach was employed, combining quantitative analysis (descriptive statistics, frequency analysis) for processing numerical data with qualitative analysis (content analysis) to interpret respondents' written answers and identify underlying trends in mental health;

(4) SWOT analysis as a tool for identifying the complementarity between students' psychological needs during a state of emergency and the recreational potential of the rural environment.

2.1. Instruments and Procedures

To investigate students' mental health, an anonymous survey was conducted using the authors' questionnaire developed in Google Forms. The instrument addressed several key aspects of students' well-being. It took place during March – April 2025 among students of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, The Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy, and Dragomanov Ukrainian State University in Kyiv (Ukraine), in the context of the ongoing Russian armed aggression. Accordingly, the main criterion for inclusion in the sample was enrollment in bachelor's or master's degree programs during the period of martial law. In total, 244 students participated in the survey, including 227 women and 17 men. This gender imbalance is attributable to the respondents being primarily drawn from the pedagogy and philology departments, which traditionally have predominantly female student populations. Among the respondents, 87.2% reported residing in Ukraine during the war, while 12.7% were living abroad. All participants continued their studies remotely at Ukrainian universities. Participation in the survey was voluntary and confidential, and the questionnaire was distributed via student group chats on Viber. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and the intended use of the data.

Additionally, based on a qualitative analysis of feedback collected from Ukrainian students (2025) temporarily residing in Poland and Italy under international academic programs and projects, the study examined the specific features of their mental health recovery from war-related trauma. The procedure involved evaluating the impact of environmental factors, specifically geographic remoteness from megacities and integration into the natural environment, on the students' psychological rehabilitation

Hypothesis: Students' mental health and subjective well-being under chronic war-related trauma

largely depend on their internal resources, psychological resilience and the mobilization of the rural community's potential, which act as key buffers against the harmful effects of war-related stressors.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Theoretical basis of the study

The World Health Organisation has outlined an action plan extending to 2030 within the framework of its sustainable development agenda, prioritising the reduction of premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one-third through prevention and treatment measures, alongside promoting mental health and overall well-being. The idea is to: *"To promote mental well-being, prevent mental health disorders, provide care, enhance recovery, promote human rights and reduce the mortality, morbidity and disability for individuals with mental health disorders"* (Mental health action plan 2013–2030).

The growing scholarly and policy attention to youth mental health in many countries is therefore unsurprising (Dewa et al., 2018; Stuart, 2006). Of particular concern are trends in mental well-being (Søvold et al., 2021), which have shown a steady decline in recent years due to the impact of epidemics, armed conflicts, social tensions, bullying and cyberbullying, as well as limited material resources and other adverse conditions (Ferrara et al., 2018; Spangler, 1993).

Serious mental disorders (SMDs) are conditions that significantly impair cognitive functioning, behaviour, and an individual's capacity for everyday life (Dewa et al., 2018). These disorders include major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, and psychotic conditions (Vancampfort, 2015). According to data from the Mental Health Foundation, half of all mental health disorders emerge before the age of 14, indicating their long-term impact on an individual's life course, while approximately 20% of adolescents experience mental health problems each year (Breaking the Stigma..., 2025). Psychologically vulnerable groups include individuals with poor physical health or weakened immunity, as well as those prone to obsessive states or emotional instability. Among young people aged 16–24 years, the annual prevalence of psychotic disorders is estimated at 0.5%, while bipolar disorder affects approximately 3.4% (Dewa et al., 2018). Similar patterns have been reported in a wide range of European and North American countries.

For instance, in England, the number of children requiring specialised support due to severe mental health disorders has increased by 77%. In such circumstances, educators may need to engage child protection services or mental health professionals to ensure the provision of appropriate specialised support within educational settings. Institutional frameworks typically include clearly defined procedures for addressing serious mental health concerns among students or colleagues, facilitating access to professional assistance. These provisions also extend to educational institutions, where both students and staff can obtain guidance and support on mental health issues (Breaking the Stigma..., 2025).

In the scientific literature, researchers emphasise the influence of stigma within educational institutions on young people's personal development. According to Corrigan (2004), stigma is particularly harmful as it undermines self-esteem and restricts individuals' access to social opportunities. Moreover, stigma is not merely an expression of individual prejudice but a socially constructed phenomenon. It emerges within educational and other institutional contexts, particularly where diversity is not fully accepted – for example, based on gender, culture, or inclusion. (Fernandez et al., 2023). Therefore, addressing stigma requires not only changes in individual attitudes but also a systemic transformation of the educational and social environment toward tolerance, a redefined philosophy of inclusion (Black-Hawkins, 2014), the strengthening of psychological resilience among participants, and the recognition of neurodiversity as a normative dimension of human variation (Cook, 2024). In this regard, it is essential to acknowledge the ongoing processes of stigmatisation in inclusive education, including within formal educational institutions. For example, empirical evidence suggests that individuals with disabilities, particularly those on the autism spectrum, face disproportionately

higher barriers to employment (Holc et al., 2025). Consequently, the lack of adequate social and institutional support negatively affects their physical and mental health outcomes (Corrigan, 1998; Corrigan et al., 2014; Eisenberg et al., 2009), as well as their quality of life, social integration, and self-esteem (Hendricks, 2010).

When considered within the context of crises, such as armed conflict, individuals with disabilities are disproportionately exposed to discrimination, marginalisation, and degrading treatment compared to non-disabled persons. At the same time, they are often among the least likely to receive timely and adequate assistance during shelling, missile strikes, or evacuation procedures. Furthermore, a significant proportion of protective infrastructure in Ukraine, including civil shelters, remains insufficiently accessible and inadequately adapted to meet the needs of individuals with special educational needs (Black-Hawkins, 2014).

During crises, including armed conflicts, a general decline in the psychological resilience of professionals across various fields is commonly observed, particularly among those working directly with vulnerable populations. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, widespread burnout among healthcare workers was documented (Vizheh et al., 2020; De Hert, 2020; Woo et al., 2020). In the current context of the war in Ukraine, similar patterns of occupational exhaustion are evident among educators who operate under highly challenging conditions, working with children and families affected by war-related trauma (Brusakova, 2022; Klepko, 2017). This is also pronounced in inclusive education settings (Fernandez et al., 2023), where teacher assistants and other staff support learners with diverse nosological conditions. Under such circumstances, it becomes essential to support professionals in reconstructing or rediscovering meaningful frameworks that foster resilience, sustain engagement, and enable continuity in educational practice (Bushkin, Niekerk & Stroud, 2021). Accordingly, greater emphasis should be placed on the psychological, emotional, spiritual, and moral dimensions of health among higher-education students.

A specific area, which forms the theoretical basis for our research, concerns the use of the potential of the rural community, as well as its natural, educational and socio-cultural resources, to restore students' mental health (Glover et al., 2016; Zinger et al., 2020).

3.2 The social, environmental and educational potential of rural communities in restoring students' mental wellbeing

Harnessing the potential of rural communities is important for supporting students' mental health, particularly those experiencing crisis situations due to the war (Zlyvkov et al., 2023). In contrast to urban environments, rural communities offer unique socio-cultural and natural resources (Reeves & Bylund, 2005).

Firstly, there is social capital and the pedagogy of community interaction. Students returning from the university environment to the village experience closer interpersonal bonds. In particular, joint community events (voluntary work days, charity fairs, religious events) are common in Ukrainian traditions and promote the social and educational inclusion of students. This creates a sense of belonging and security, which is critical for overcoming the trauma of war that they are currently experiencing.

Secondly, the natural environment of the countryside (mountains, forests, open spaces) has a positive impact on the psychological recovery of young people, who on university campuses are usually immersed in digital gadgets and experience greater anxiety due to security challenges during the period of martial law in Ukraine. Therefore, the rural environment, which is familiar to them, serves as a means of eco-therapy and recuperation, ensuring well-being in terms of mental health and education (Engelsen, 2022). After all, organising hikes, outdoor activities and fieldwork helps to reduce anxiety levels due to the distance from urban noise and direct contact with nature.

Thirdly, in rural areas, where authentic traditions are better preserved, students can take part in workshops on traditional crafts (pottery, weaving, woodworking) practised within the local community.

This is an effective form of art therapy that enables chronic stress to be transformed into a creative product whilst developing fine motor skills, which has a positive impact on cognitive functions. In modern education, these ideas are being implemented in secondary and higher education institutions as an innovative trend in maker pedagogy for teamwork, community engagement and the promotion of young people's mental health. In the context of overcoming the consequences of war trauma, traditional religious values also acquire special significance, as they are often more preserved and resilient in this setting. As noted by M. T. Kozubek and R. Silva (2024), religious and ecumenical dialogue within communities is an integral part of intercultural communication, which becomes a vital 'way of life' in times of new social crises and military conflicts. Consequently, the religious traditions (Silva, 2021) of the rural environment serve as a natural psychological and pedagogical resource for restoring peace of mind and building resilience in students.

The fourth aspect is the 'school – university – community' interaction, which has its own specific characteristics in rural areas (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995). The rural school becomes a hub where students (future teachers) can undertake practical placements, helping children with trauma. Such a social mission gives students a sense of their own significance and professional fulfilment, which is an effective mechanism for self-help and mental wellbeing in the educational sphere.

Thus, among the strengths – as internal resources of the rural community – that contribute to a young person's psychological well-being, social cohesion stands out above all else; that is, the close interpersonal bonds within the village, which enable the creation of a system of rapid response and emotional support during the difficult times of war. At the same time, direct access to nature is an effective tool for eco-therapy and sensory recovery following stress. Undoubtedly, another strength of the rural community is the high level of preservation of cultural heritage, which helps students who come to the village after studying in the urban university environment to find a sense of belonging in their national identity (Fig. 1).

At the same time, rural communities face certain resource constraints in terms of mental recovery, and this serves as an incentive to introduce innovations in education (Zinger et al., 2020). The lack of rapid access to specialised psychological support centres in villages (as most such centres operate in cities) stimulates the development of digital support and mobile counselling teams that integrate the resources of local government and educational institutions. Thus, the SWOT analysis also highlights weaknesses or internal constraints to students' full psychological well-being – in some cases, poor internet connectivity, which limits access to online psychological support platforms or necessary tools for development, the lack of specialist crisis psychologists or rehabilitation specialists directly within institutions in rural areas. It is worth noting that the prevalence of a number of stereotypes among rural residents regarding mental health often prevents them from seeking timely help from a specialist. However, these strengths and weaknesses can be utilised to effectively address the objectives of our research.

The strategy of cross-linking, in the context of restoring students' mental wellbeing, demonstrates the use of internal resources to realise the external potential of rural communities. After all, rural areas possess a unique 'green' resource that serves as an ideal platform for implementing innovative educational approaches. The use of Maker pedagogy methods (for example, creating street art installations, building eco-playgrounds or jointly setting up 'victory gardens') allows the natural environment to be transformed into a space for art therapy. This helps students channel their anxiety and restore their psycho-emotional stability (Galson, 2009).

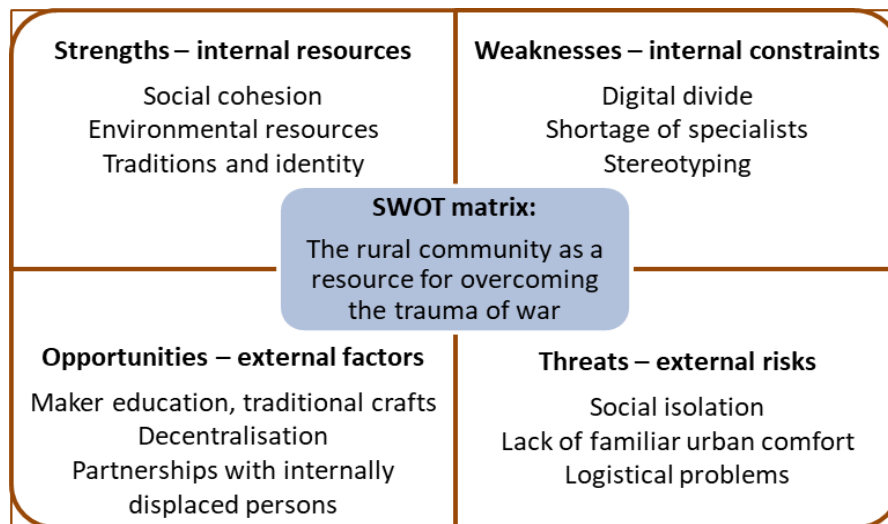


Fig. 1. SWOT matrix: The rural community as a resource for overcoming war trauma and restoring students' mental health

Source: Authors' elaboration

There is also a strategy to mitigate these weaknesses by leveraging external resources. For example, a major barrier for rural communities is the shortage of specialist professionals (psychotherapists, rehabilitation specialists), who are in high demand during a state of emergency (Budnyk et al., 2024). Utilising the opportunities offered by grant programmes and international partnerships allows for the engagement of external expert support. This is implemented through a cascade training model: the experts involved conduct intensive training sessions for local teachers, helping them develop the relevant competencies (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995). In this way, local teachers become facilitators of primary psychological support, compensating for the lack of specialised centres. Students undertaking placements in rural areas can also join this work as volunteers (Glover, 2016). After all, there is a migration of young people and active teachers to large cities or abroad.

Thus, in the context of overcoming the trauma of war (Klepko, 2017) and strengthening students' mental health, the rural community should be viewed not merely as an administrative unit or a 'place of residence', but as a holistic therapeutic landscape. A key factor here is social capital for resilience, which fosters strong horizontal connections and collective support in conditions of martial law.

3.3 Findings of an empirical study on students' mental health in wartime conditions

In a survey examining the mental well-being of Ukrainian students during the crisis, the questions focused on their psychological and emotional state, as well as the strategies they used to maintain cognitive health during wartime. The assessment of students' mental well-being in Ukraine included selecting the option that best described their psychological state over recent months (Fig. 2). Among the 244 respondents, 21.7% (n = 53) reported experiencing a predominance of sadness and apathy, characterised by loss of interest in usual activities, feelings of helplessness, and depressed mood. Anxiety and fear were reported by 16% of students (n = 39), reflecting persistent concern for their own safety and that of their loved ones. A notable proportion (12.3%) reported feelings of anger and irritation, manifesting as tension and conflict in interpersonal communication. In comparison, 10.7% (n = 26) reported uncertainty, expressed as difficulty planning for the future and a lack of clarity about upcoming events. A smaller segment of respondents (9%, n = 22) demonstrated resilience and adaptability to the conditions of martial law and professional training, as reflected in their ability to mobilise internal resources, adjust to air-raid alerts, and cope with intermittent shelling.

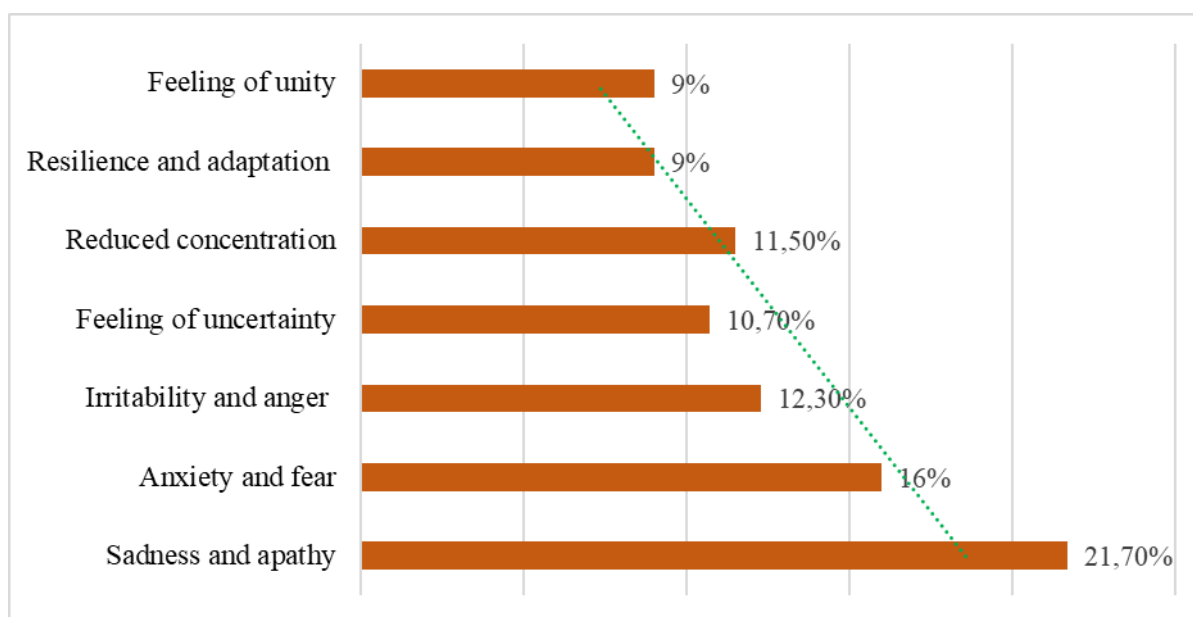


Fig. 2. Levels of emotional and psychological well-being: key influencing factors

Source: Authors' elaboration

For the remaining questions, we received the following responses: only 6 of 244 respondents reported regularly using professional psychological support, while 10 students (4.01%) reported occasionally accessing such services. A larger group ($n = 97$; 39.75%) reported having access to psychological support but not currently requiring it. More than one-third of respondents ($n = 79$; 32.38%) perceived no need to consult a psychologist at their age, despite the ongoing crisis, whereas 2.3% ($n = 52$) acknowledged the need for support but were unable to access it. Regarding sources of psychological and emotional support, the majority of students ($n = 99$; 40.57%) identified family members – parents, siblings, or other close relatives – as their primary source of comfort, providing a sense of safety, stress relief, and opportunities to discuss personal experiences. A comparable proportion ($n = 97$; 39.75%) reported relying primarily on friends for emotional support.

The most frequently reported strategy was engagement in volunteering and charitable activities (66.4%; $n = 162$), which participants indicated enhanced stress resilience and fostered a sense of hope and confidence in both national defence and personal safety (Figure 3). Maintaining a regular sleep schedule and obtaining sufficient rest under ongoing stress were reported by 60.2% of respondents. More than one-third of students (35.7%) identified social interaction – meeting with friends and family, keeping in touch with loved ones in remote rural areas, and participating in online communities – as a key coping mechanism. A comparable proportion (35.2%; $n = 86$) reported using relaxation techniques, including breathing exercises, meditation, and aromatherapy. Notably, 89 respondents (36.5%) identified digital hygiene – limiting time spent on social media and news feeds – as an effective method for mitigating anxiety and worry in wartime conditions. Additionally, humour, including watching comedies and engaging in playful interactions, was cited by 20.5% of participants as a coping mechanism. Such activities provide temporary relief from stress by diverting attention from negative thoughts and facilitating a positive psychological reset.

Thus, the interplay of perceived stability, interaction, and access to self-help resources appears to facilitate the maintenance of mental health among participants in the educational process in war conditions. The study confirms the role of the rural community as a holistic resource that, through mechanisms of communication, social support, and direct interaction with the natural environment, contributes to the restoration of students' psychological stability and resilience.

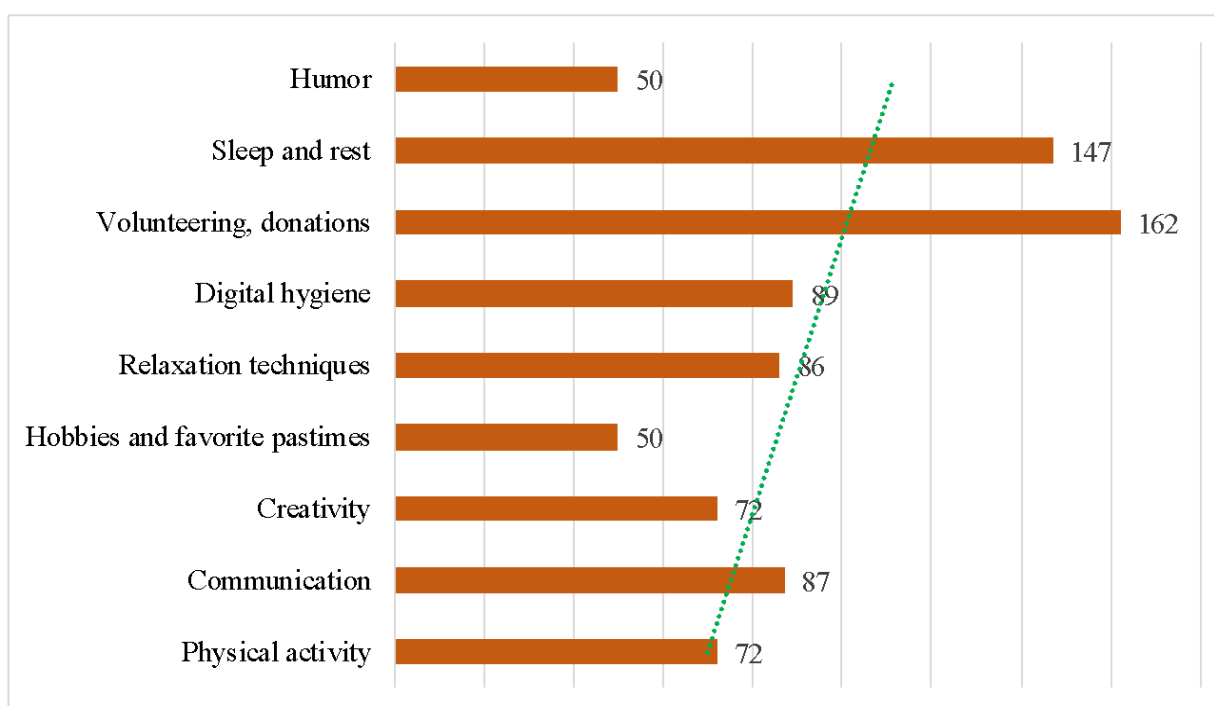


Fig. 3. Strategies employed by students to maintain stress resilience during wartime

Source: Authors' elaboration

Regarding the adaptation of the educational/working process to wartime conditions, taking into account the psychological needs of students and scientific and pedagogical staff, the following results were obtained: among 244 respondents, only 32 (13.1%) reported that such adaptation had been fully implemented. A larger proportion – 88 respondents (36.1%) – indicated partial adaptation, while 38 respondents (15.6%) reported that no adaptation measures had been introduced.

The open-ended question in the questionnaire asked respondents to reflect on the factors that most effectively support students' mental health during wartime. The responses obtained can be systematically grouped into several thematic categories.

1. The majority of students emphasised that war disrupts the normal rhythm of life and is accompanied by widespread psycho-emotional trauma. In this context, one of the key priorities is the restoration of stability and a sense that life continues, as well as the re-establishment, where possible, of personal control over actions and decisions – thereby fostering a sense of normality rather than chaos and helplessness (Frankl, 1967). Accordingly, during wartime, there is a strong need to maintain a structured daily routine that includes study, work, and rest. This involves a clearly organised schedule of classes and examinations (including online or blended formats) and planned extracurricular activities. Such a structure enables students to redirect attention from distressing external events and anxiety-inducing news toward predictable academic tasks and everyday responsibilities.

2. *Communication and a sense of belonging* to the university community represent a significant source of psychological support. Accordingly, a considerable proportion of respondents underscored the importance of discussing personal difficulties and participating in joint initiatives with peers, academic staff, and other members of the institution. Such forms of interaction help to alleviate feelings of loneliness and facilitate a more constructive processing and interpretation of personal emotional experiences. Furthermore, respondents emphasised the value of collective engagement and shared social responsibility, including volunteering and assisting others, particularly those who are internally displaced. Many refugees from the war are in rural areas of Ukraine, so helping them also provides psychological support for young people.

These activities strengthen cohesion within the academic community and serve as an important motivational resource, mitigating feelings of helplessness and supporting the coping process in relation

to individual psychological trauma (Pascoe, Hetrick & Parker, 2020).

3. *Access to resources and self-help strategies* constitutes the third thematic category identified by a proportion of respondents from Ukrainian universities. During the ongoing military-political crisis, students – as an active and forward-looking segment of society – tend to seek continuous updates on current events, many of which are negative and can adversely affect psychological well-being. In this regard, *the ability to regulate information consumption and limit constant exposure to social media* becomes essential to prevent information overload. Concurrently, both online and offline environments provide access to a broad range of self-regulation strategies, including meditation, physical activity, and creative practices, as well as various *psychotherapeutic approaches*. In addition, many students report the availability of qualified psychological support services, alongside the growing presence of peer support and mutual aid groups.

Thus, the combination of perceived stability (or its illusion), social support and interaction, and access to self-help resources contributes to preserving participants' mental health in the educational process under wartime conditions. This is of particular importance for young people acquiring professional qualifications, who are expected to contribute to the country's protection and post-war reconstruction.

The findings from both theoretical and empirical investigations allowed for the identification of key mental health challenges faced by future educators during wartime, which constitutes a significant psychotraumatic event. Particular attention was given to the examination of anxiety, defined as *a specific psycho-emotional state* in which individuals experience fear of potential threats, whether real or perceived (Spielberger, 2013).

Among Ukrainian students, anxiety and fear arising from persistent air raid alerts, shelling, and reports from the front line generate prolonged stress, which adversely affects concentration, disrupts sleep patterns, and impairs overall academic functioning (Sereda, 2022). Moreover, exposure to such stressful conditions negatively impacts cognitive processes, thereby hindering the acquisition of new knowledge (Amaral et al., 2017).

Another factor impeding professional training in higher education is the loss of a sense of security and stability. Accordingly, creating a safe and supportive educational environment is essential for the psychological well-being of both teachers and students (Wass & Golding, 2014). Team-building practices have been shown to play a key role in mitigating trauma and fostering psychological resilience and well-being (Georgopoulou, 2024). Simultaneously, integrating traditional and innovative methods adapted to current challenges is necessary. L. Witkowski (2024) emphasises the importance of critically re-evaluating tradition, which provides a significant symbolic and energetic foundation for cultural development. In the current context, a renewed interpretation of historical and cultural heritage is particularly relevant for populations defending national values and priorities, as socio-emotional engagement – including through technological means – can facilitate recovery from war-related trauma (Zlyvkov et al., 2023). Psychological and emotional exhaustion associated with the war has a markedly detrimental effect on students' mental health. Many Ukrainian students are required to balance their academic tasks with volunteer activities, support for relatives, or even military service. Exposure to such stress in an unstable security environment contributes to emotional burnout. To address these challenges, researchers have proposed using digital technologies, including simulations, virtual reality, and augmented reality, particularly in medical universities, where students frequently experience heightened stress due to the influx of war-affected individuals (Woo et al., 2020).

An important factor in the mental rehabilitation of university students in large cities is the utilisation of the integrative potential of rural communities, which combines social and educational resources, the natural environment and ethno-cultural traditions. Under martial law, rural areas become a conducive environment for digital detox, helping to restore young people's psychological well-being. At the same time, rural educational institutions serve as a powerful base for teaching practice and the development of future teachers or educators (Glover, 2016), ensuring a combination of professional communication

with elements of psychotherapeutic support during a crisis period (Engelsen, 2022; Rizzi et al., 2022).

In the context of minimising the effects of war-related trauma and chronic stress among students, the study paid particular attention to the therapeutic potential of the natural environment. It was found that areas remote from major industrial centres and ecologically clean zones possess a unique stress-relieving resource that significantly accelerates the mental recovery of young people. A striking confirmation of this is the experience of Ukrainian students who are currently integrated into the European educational space through various international projects and exchange programmes.

The study analysed the experiences of eight Ukrainian students who went to study at the University of Gdańsk and Pomeranian University in Słupsk (Poland). According to the respondents, one of the key factors in stabilising their psychological and emotional state is spending regular time on the Baltic Sea coast. Aerotherapy (air rich in iodine and sea salts), thalassotherapy, as well as visual and auditory contact with the sea, act as natural sedatives. Students note that regular trips to the coast help to reduce anxiety levels, overcome emotional burnout, improve sleep quality and restore the inner resources necessary for successful study.

The rehabilitation programme for young people at the 'Rondine' International Centre (Cittadella della Pace), situated in the heart of Tuscany (Italy), far from the hustle and bustle of the city, is no less compelling. According to two Ukrainian students who live and study at the centre, the geographical remoteness and being surrounded by nature create a safe emotional cocoon. They noted that maximising distance from urban stress and immersing oneself in an authentic natural environment enables them to process the traumatic experience of war more effectively and adapt to new circumstances.

Thus, both the coastal landscapes of the Baltic and the mountainous and forested regions of the Apennines demonstrate that the recreational potential of remote areas is an effective tool in the comprehensive support of the mental health of Ukrainian students who have experienced the trauma of war.

A student's pedagogical rehabilitation and the restoration of their mental health require the involvement of a broader social environment, based on a personalist conception of the human person. In this context, the pedagogical proposal by Chiara Lubich is particularly relevant, with 'active love' and the attainment of 'unity' serving as key categories (Kozubek & Silva, 2024). Thanks to its close-knit nature and strong sense of solidarity, the rural community is capable of putting this approach into practice by surrounding the traumatised child with an atmosphere of acceptance, mutual support and interpersonal dialogue, which is a fundamental prerequisite for restoring psychological well-being.

Limitations of the study. Because the research relied solely on respondents' subjective assessments of their mental health, stress levels, and overall well-being – rather than objective clinical or behavioural indicators – the findings should be interpreted as self-reported reflections on their experiences and awareness of their psycho-emotional state. There is also a potential risk of response bias arising from the sensitive wartime context. Furthermore, the sample comprises only universities in western Ukraine, limiting the generalisability of the findings to the broader student population. Nonetheless, the results offer a valuable reference point and foundation for subsequent scholarly inquiry.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study identified the primary mental health challenges faced by Ukrainian students amid ongoing Russian military aggression. Key issues included chronic trauma, elevated chronic anxiety, and increased risk of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

An analysis of the scientific literature confirms that the realities of war have a systemic impact on students' psycho-emotional well-being. Theoretical sources indicate a direct correlation between exposure to various types of trauma (e.g., shock, loss, forced displacement) and impairments in cognitive functioning, social adaptation, and the need for targeted psychosocial support programs.

The study identified key stressors directly affecting students. It confirmed the primary hypothesis: there is a significant correlation between students' psychological resilience under conditions of military aggression and their subjective well-being and mental health.

To comprehensively address the preservation of students' mental health during their professional training, it is necessary to modernize the institutional environment by: (1) expanding psychological support centers at higher education institutions and involving specialists from various fields to provide confidential, free consultations; (2) conducting regular informational and educational activities to promote a culture of mental health care; and (3) encouraging open communication among all participants in the educational process and creating peer support groups to strengthen social bonds and resilience to stress; (4) organizing extracurricular activities and volunteer initiatives to help students shift focus away from traumatic events; and (5) creating an electronic library of psychological resources or developing a university mobile app with self-regulation exercises, meditation practices, and mood-tracking features to ensure continuous access to mental health tools.

Thus, the ongoing four-year war in Ukraine has caused complex, cumulative psychological trauma, manifested as chronic stress, heightened anxiety, and an increased risk of post-traumatic stress disorder. Among students, this trauma is reflected in impaired concentration, lower academic performance, social isolation, and existential uncertainty, as the constant background of fear and danger undermines feelings of security and long-term planning. The role of the rural community as a setting with significant natural and interpersonal resources, which could serve as an alternative to pharmacological rehabilitation for young people's mental health, is specifically highlighted. Based on a qualitative analysis of feedback from Ukrainian students (2025) who are temporarily residing in Poland and Italy as part of international programmes and projects, this study characterises the specific features of their mental health recovery following the trauma of war. Particular attention is paid to the determinants of psychological and emotional recovery, specifically factors such as distance from major cities and the integration of young people into the outdoor environment.

Future research avenues should focus on developing pedagogical, medical, and psychological strategies to support individuals with disabilities. To enhance the internal validity of future studies, adopting mixed-methods approaches is recommended; this will facilitate the collection of qualitative data to provide a deeper contextual understanding, alongside the potential integration of objective behavioral indicators.

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Сільва Рауль Аугусто С. Л., Шоловій Марія-Тереза, Денисяк Юлія, Панченко Оксана, Кушнірук Світлана, Палагнюк Михайло. Педагогічна підтримка психічного здоров'я студентів: мінімізація травми війни за допомогою ресурсів сільських громад. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, **13** (3) (2026), 110-124.

Це дослідження пов'язане з кількома Цілями сталого розвитку ООН, а саме: «Здоров'я та благополуччя» (з акцентом на психічне здоров'я студентів), «Якісна освіта» (з акцентом на вплив травматичного досвіду на навчальний процес та створення безпечного освітнього середовища) та «Мир, справедливість і ефективні інститути» (з висвітленням шляхів подолання наслідків війни для стабільного розвитку суспільства). Мета статті: дослідити вплив воєнної травми на психічне здоров'я українських студентів та обґрунтувати потенціал сільської громади у розробці ефективних стратегій забезпечення добробуту та покращенні їхнього ставлення до навчання. Матеріали та методи: теоретичний аналіз наукової літератури з теми, доповнений опитуванням студентів, проведеним у березні-квітні 2025 року в Україні. Результати дослідження: 31,6 % здобувачів закладів вищої освіти повідомили про посилення тривожності протягом останніх місяців, що пов'язано з нестабільною безпековою ситуацією, супутнім занепокоєнням і стресом; майже половина респондентів (43 %) виявляла симптоми емоційного вигорання, тоді як 21,7 % повідомили про втрату інтересу до навчання та загальну апатію. З'ясовано, що лише 9 % учасників продемонстрували стійкість і здатність до адаптації в умовах воєнного стану та академічних вимог, що відобразилося в їхній здатності мобілізувати особисті ресурси. Стратегії, які застосовували студенти та викладачі для збереження психічного здоров'я, включали: участь у волонтерській і благодійній діяльності (66,4 %), забезпечення достатнього сну й відпочинку (60,2 %), підтримання зв'язку з родиною та друзями, особливо в сільській місцевості (35,7 %), заняття фізичною активністю (29,5 %) і дотримання «цифрової гігієни» (36,5 %), а також інші механізми подолання стресу. Висновки: за результатами дослідження сформульовано практичні рекомендації щодо створення безпечного та сприятливого середовища у закладах вищої освіти, зміцнення психологічної стійкості студентів у кризових ситуаціях, зокрема під час війни. Наголошено на необхідності залучення ресурсів сільської освітньої спільноти для сприяння відновлення психічного здоров'я молоді.

Ключові слова: педагогічна підтримка, психічне здоров'я, воєнна травма, ресурси сільської громади, студенти університетів, інклюзивна освіта, психологія.