

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE OF STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF DISTANCE LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC COVID-19

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Abstract: The study is devoted to the urgent problem of the psychological state, coping behavior and psychological resources of students during distance learning in 2020. The problem of coping behavior has been studied for more than a decade, however, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this problem attracted the special attention of many researchers. Every resident of the country, and even the world, asked himself questions: how to cope with the variety of emotions that arise in new non-standard situations? How should I behave? How to react? What is the optimal behavior in this particular situation? And no one found an unambiguous answer to the questions posed. The situation during the pandemic developed in different ways, which again caused a diverse range of emotions among residents of cities and countries: those who studied and worked during this period, who were ill, and those who were forced to isolate themselves.

Key words: COVID-19, students, stress, distance learning.

Introduction. According to research conducted during the initial period of the pandemic, it was revealed that at that time there was a lack of communication with peers, and teachers in particular, the volume of work increased, there was a feeling of loneliness and isolation, etc. [2]. If we consider the studied phenomena separately, then they are familiar to us: how coping behavior manifests itself, what features it has, what is the distance learning format, what advantages and disadvantages this format has, has been repeatedly described in the studies of D. V. Novoselova, D. V. Novoselov [3].

However, the phenomena familiar to us appeared in a different light during the pandemic. The remote format was the only possible one during this period. There was no discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of this form of education. Various Internet platforms have been actively used to support the educational process both in schools and universities. For students, as well as for teachers, the transition to distance learning was accompanied by various experiences due to the novelty and lack of clarity of the situation, a general increase in anxiety against the background of the pandemic [4,5]. Feelings and thoughts about mastering the new format were often contradictory: on the one hand, there was denial and confidence that it would not last long, on the other — stress and the need to quickly rebuild and structure their activities and time. The available coping methods and previously acquired skills allowed most students to cope with the tasks set.

The purpose of the study: To determine the characteristics of the psychological state of students in the first four months of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Materials and methods: The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when all universities in the country were switched to a distance learning format. To study the emotional state of students and identify coping strategies, an author's questionnaire was developed, which was presented to students online. The study was conducted from March to July 2020. This period is divided into three stages: stage 1 — the beginning of distance learning (March 2020). The main stage of distance learning took place in April and early May 2020. The third and final stage (June-July 2020) is the session period for students. 372 people took part in the study, including 112 juniors and 160 girls, students of 1-2 courses of the Samarkand State Medical University. The same students were interviewed at each stage of the study.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections, each of which reflected the stages of distance learning (initial, basic and final). Each section included questions about the condition of the students. In

addition, there were general questions about the difficulties that students faced during distance learning, about ways to cope with these difficulties, about resources during distance learning, about the experience that students acquired during these months. In total, the questionnaire included 25 open-ended questions.

The results of the study: The analysis of the results was carried out by the method of content analysis, where the responses of students were analyzed, categories were identified, and a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results was made. Content analysis allows us to obtain unique subjective phenomenological descriptions of the condition of students during the pandemic, which corresponds to the objectives of the study.

During the study of the condition of students and the characteristics of their coping behavior, the answers of students about the difficulties they faced during distance learning were first analyzed. Of the 372 students, 16.2% noted that they did not experience difficulties during distance learning, and 83.8% noted several difficulties they had to face. The presented results show that the most significant difficulties for students were the educational activity itself (33% of respondents) — the volume of tasks, deadlines for their completion and the session. Many students were not ready for the new format of completing assignments, when studying both lectures and seminars involves writing, and not just attending classes themselves. Thus, students were forced to organize themselves to complete assignments on time. The prospect of passing the session was particularly difficult. Based on the results obtained, it is clear that not everyone successfully coped with this task. The need to motivate oneself and engage in self-discipline has become the fourth most important difficulty (17% of respondents noted).

27% of respondents report having technical difficulties. During the period of distance learning, many nonresident students who had such an opportunity went home to relatives, considering the transition to distance learning as an unplanned vacation. Very often, students did not take into account whether they would have the technical opportunity to fully study there (availability of equipment, Internet access) and space for organizing the educational process (quite often, relatives may be in the room at the same time with students, who sometimes interfere in the educational process). But even those students who stayed in the city did not always have the opportunity to fully use a laptop computer, had the necessary Internet quality, a working camera and microphone, etc. Consequently, many students studied remotely, going to classes from a smartphone.

The third most important was the communicative difficulty associated with relationships with teachers (24% of respondents), namely, inaccurate technical instructions, the absence or inaccurately constructed algorithm for completing tasks, the lack of timely responses and comments from teachers.

The students noted two more difficulties: the lack of communication (due to the situation of self-isolation, which affected almost all residents of our country), as well as the lack of free time (probably due to the difficulty of distributing efforts to complete educational tasks, difficulties of self-organization).

The presented difficulties are reflected in the condition of the students. Let's look at the characteristics that were studied by students in dynamics. Let's present a description of the psychological state of students (136 subjects) according to three components (cognitive, emotional, behavioral) at different stages of inclusion in distance learning at a university.

In the cognitive component, students' knowledge, thoughts, and ideas about distance learning during the pandemic were noted.

The emotional component of the students' condition is represented by emotions, feelings, and sensations that students experienced during distance learning during the pandemic.

The behavioral component is represented by actions, deeds, and the performance of various types of activities by students during distance learning. We show the most common responses of students regarding how their thoughts changed during distance learning during the pandemic, how the

emotional state manifested itself, and what behavioral reactions accompanied the thoughts and emotions of students.

At the initial stage of distance learning, students' attitude to what is happening can be considered from several sides. 110 students (40.4%) linked the transition to distance learning with the opportunity to relax, considering the situation as an unplanned vacation, expecting easy studies (full of optimism and joy). Some students noted for themselves thoughts about studying (29.4%) — for some (17.6%) these were very disturbing thoughts and expectations, probably related to assessing the quality of their knowledge in the distance learning format. Students greeted the beginning of distance learning with a state of misunderstanding, confusion, denial of the reality of what is happening (31.8% of respondents). The situation of distance learning seemed to be a temporary, incomprehensible situation for which there were no ready-made strategies yet.

The condition of students at the main stage of distance learning can be characterized by a lack of expectation of easy study. 49.7% of respondents note a strong resistance to the current situation. Students are very much waiting for this format of training to end soon, their thoughts are filled with anxiety about the outcome of the session, thoughts about the number of tasks. 21.3% of respondents say that they are successfully adapting to new conditions. 20.5% often think about studying at the university, think about their relatives and report a lack of communication.

At the final stage, students' thoughts are connected with the expectation of completing the distance learning format. 36.7% of students are already "looking forward to the holidays", studying for them during this period turned out to be easy, 36.8% are in an anxious state, thinking about the session, 6% continue to solve organizational learning processes. Thus, the cognitive component of the state of students in dynamics is characterized by a frivolous attitude towards distance learning among students: the forecast of easy study and rest, the discrepancy between this expectation and reality, which led at the final stage to an increase in the number of students noting disturbing thoughts (more than twice as compared with the first stage). The results show an increase in the number of students experiencing negative emotions (first stage — 30.5%; second stage — 61.7%; third stage — 61.4%). Anxiety and sadness are most vividly represented at all stages. This is probably related to the situation of uncertainty that has arisen, accompanying the entire period of distance learning and the pandemic period as a whole. It should be noted that at the first stage, students note shock and surprise. From the second stage, irritation and anger are present in the state of students, which made it possible to smooth out the tension caused by anxiety.

At the same time, we note that some of the students experienced positive emotions, such as joy and pleasure. The high rates (44.9%) at the first stage are probably related to the frivolity of the perception of the transfer to distance learning. At the second stage, a sharp decrease in the indicator is seen by more than two times (16.2%), this can be attributed to organizational and educational difficulties encountered by students. At the third stage, positive emotions are associated with a feeling of "joy, relief" (28.7%). This condition is probably typical for those students who are confident in a positive outcome of the session.

In addition to the vividly presented positive and negative emotions, the students had mixed emotions that they could not clearly differentiate. This condition can be called an "emotional swing", when students simultaneously experienced a feeling of "joy-anger", "relief-tension". Perhaps this condition is due not only to the uncertainty of the external situation (distance learning, pandemic), but also to the lack of intrapersonal stability. It manifests itself as a reliance on one's inner strength, a sense of control and subjectivity. It can be seen that some students noted a feeling of "indifference and apathy" to what was happening (the first stage — 6%; the second stage — 17%; the third stage — 13% of respondents). These feelings can be assessed as the refusal of students to realize and accept the events taking place, a new situation for themselves. Perhaps this is the work of the protective mechanisms of the psyche: repression and denial.

Conclusions: Thus, during the planning and organization of distance learning activities, it is necessary to take into account the peculiarities of the condition of students, systematically introduce students into

the distance format. Tutors and teachers who have already had experience working remotely with students will be able to provide such support to students. The data obtained will help to plan and develop recommendations to support students who may face various difficulties during distance learning, as well as to prevent the occurrence of these difficulties in the course of working with students.

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