



INFORMATION PLATFORM "CENTER FOR INNOVATIVE THINKING"
UKRAINIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENTIFIC STRATEGIES
EUROPEAN UNION RESEARCH DEPARTMENT
SCIENTIFIC AND PUBLISHING CENTER "PROGRESS"

INTEGRATED APPROACHES IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND CULTURE

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AND PRACTICAL CONFERENCE

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The collection of scientific articles is a scientific and practical publication that includes research papers by students, postgraduate students, Candidates and Doctors of Sciences, researchers, and practitioners from Ukraine, Europe, neighboring countries, and beyond. The articles reflect studies of processes and changes in the structure of modern science. This collection is intended for students, postgraduate and doctoral candidates, educators, researchers, practitioners, and all those interested in current trends in the development of modern science.

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PHYSICAL AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

44. *Bilash Oksana Viktorivna, Voitovych Mykola Ivanovych, Kovalchuk Roman Anatoliiovych, Nahorni Maksym Serhiiovych* 286
INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO MATHEMATICAL MODELING IN DATA ENGINEERING

PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORTS AND PHYSICAL THERAPY

45. *Дуб Мар'яна Михайлівна* 290
АНАЛІЗ ЕФЕКТИВНОСТІ РЕАБІЛІТАЦІЙНИХ ВТРУЧАНЬ ДЛЯ ВІЙСЬКОВОСЛУЖБОВЦІВ НА ПРИКЛАДІ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ТА ЗАКОРДОННИХ ДОСЛІДНИКІВ
46. *Єрмаков Олександр Володимирович, Топчій Марія Сергіївна, Борщук Валерія Володимирівна* 296
ПРИЧИНИ ВИНИКНЕННЯ ТРАВМ ТА ПОРУШЕНЬ ФУНКЦІЙ ОПОРНО-РУХОВОГО АПАРАТУ ЮНИХ СПОРТСМЕНІВ
47. *Кондратюк Станіслав Сергійович, Коритко Зоряна Ігорівна* 302
ПІДХОДИ ДО ФІЗИЧНОЇ РЕАБІЛІТАЦІЇ ПРИ ДЕГЕНЕРАТИВНО-ДИСТРОФІЧНИХ УРАЖЕННЯХ ПОПЕРЕКОВОГО ВІДДІЛУ ХРЕБТА
48. *Kvach Olha* 308
FORMATION OF MOTIVATION FOR SPORTS ACTIVITIES IN CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE: THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND COACH
49. *Рядова Ліліана Олегівна, Цигановська Наталія Василівна, Рожков Владислав Олександрович* 318
ВИКОРИСТАННЯ МЕТОДУ МІОФАСЦІАЛЬНОГО РЕЛІЗУ ВИКЛАДАЧАМИ ЗАКЛАДІВ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ ПІД ЧАС ДИСТАНЦІЙНОГО НАВЧАННЯ

POWER ENGINEERING AND POWER MACHINE ENGINEERING

50. *Сербенівський Юрій Костянтинович* 327
ДЕЦЕНТРАЛІЗОВАНІ ЕЛЕКТРОТЕХНІЧНІ КОМПЛЕКСИ ЯК СТРАТЕГІЯ МОДЕРНІЗАЦІЇ СИСТЕМ МІКРОКЛІМАТУ В БЮДЖЕТНІЙ СФЕРІ УКРАЇНИ

PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY

51. *Vasylieva Oksana* 332
PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION CHALLENGES OF FOREIGN MEDICAL STUDENTS DURING HIGHER MEDICAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE (PRE-WAR CONTEXT)

52. ***Ковтун Наталія Володимирівна*** 338
 ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ПОДОЛАННЯ ОСВІТНІХ ВТРАТ В УМОВАХ
 ВОЄННОГО ЧАСУ ТА ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО
 ВИГОРАННЯ ПЕДАГОГІВ
53. ***Петряніна Катерина Григорівна, Наталія Вікторівна Фролова*** 343
 ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ПРОЯВІВ ФЕНОМЕНУ
 САМОТНОСТІ У СУЧАСНІЙ ПСИХОЛОГІЇ
54. ***Шевченко Лариса Вадимівна*** 348
 ПСИХОТИП СУЧАСНОГО ВЧИТЕЛЯ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ:
 ПСИХОЛОГІЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ПРОФЕСІОНАЛІЗАЦІЇ
- SOCIOLOGY AND STATISTICS**
55. ***Дзюбас Вікторія Вікторівна, Рязанцева Валентина Василівна*** 355
 ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ СТАТИСТИЧНИХ МЕТОДІВ В ЕКОЛОГІЧНИХ І
 КЛІМАТИЧНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯХ

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PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY

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PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION CHALLENGES OF FOREIGN MEDICAL STUDENTS DURING HIGHER MEDICAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE (PRE-WAR CONTEXT)

Anotation: Foreign medical students pursuing education in Ukraine encounter a complex interplay of socio-cultural, linguistic, and climatic factors that significantly influence their emotional and psychological well-being. Adapting to new teaching methods, communication patterns, and academic expectations often leads to increased emotional tension and mental stress. A comprehensive survey of 103 international students (52 males and 51 females) studying in English at Kharkiv National Medical University revealed a high prevalence of adaptation difficulties, particularly in the form of depressive, neurasthenic, anxiety, and dissociative symptoms. Emotional strain, irritability, restlessness, decreased concentration, and loss of flexibility in communication were among the most frequent indicators of psychological maladjustment. The findings highlight the need for targeted psychological and educational support aimed at facilitating smoother socio-cultural adaptation and improving the overall academic experience of foreign students in Ukrainian medical universities.

Keywords: foreign medical students, adaptation difficulties, emotional stress, higher education, pre-war Ukraine.

International students adaptation has long been a subject of interdisciplinary academic inquiry, particularly within psychology, sociology, and educational sciences. Studies across the globe have identified that international students commonly experience emotional, cognitive, and behavioral disturbances upon transitioning to new educational and cultural systems [1, 5]. The process of cross-cultural adjustment often involves overcoming language barriers, adapting to new academic expectations, and navigating unfamiliar social norms and support systems.

Medical students represent a particularly vulnerable group due to the high demands of their training. Research by Misra and Castillo shows that academic pressure, performance anxiety, and cultural dissonance significantly contribute to psychological stress among international medical students. In many cases, these stressors are compounded by the absence of family support, feelings of isolation, and a lack of culturally sensitive mental health resources at host universities [3].

In Eastern Europe, and Ukraine in particular, the issue has been relatively underexplored in scholarly literature. Limited studies point to heightened emotional stress among foreign students studying in English-language medical programs, but comprehensive empirical data remain scarce [2, 4]. This study contributes to addressing this research gap by offering a focused examination of the maladaptive psychological responses of foreign students in a Ukrainian medical university context prior to the onset of large-scale armed conflict.

Over the last two decades, Ukraine has become an important destination for international students pursuing medical education, with Kharkiv National Medical University (KhNMU) hosting one of the largest cohorts of English-speaking medical students. The accessibility of medical training in English, the affordability of education, and the presence of globally recognized medical curricula have made Ukraine an attractive choice for thousands of students from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

However, despite the academic opportunities, many foreign students encounter substantial psychological and sociocultural barriers during their studies. These barriers often stem from sudden immersion in an unfamiliar linguistic, climatic, academic, and social environment. As a result, international students are at high risk of psychological maladjustment, which may significantly affect their well-being, academic performance, and long-term professional development.

The problem of psychological adaptation among international students is not new; it has been the subject of numerous studies worldwide. Yet, there remains a lack of focused research in the Ukrainian context, especially in relation to the English-speaking student population in medical education. This article addresses this gap by exploring the types, prevalence, and manifestations of maladaptive psychological states among foreign students at KhNMU in the pre-war educational context.

The objective of this study is to identify the key psychological challenges experienced by international students and to outline the markers of maladaptive states that require timely academic and psychological intervention. This research was conducted using a cross-sectional design and employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of psychological assessment.

The study involved 103 foreign students (52 males and 51 females) studying in English at the International medical faculty of KhNMU. All participants were in their 3rd to 5th year of medical studies. The mean age of the sample was 22.0 ± 1.8 years. The participants represented diverse geographical backgrounds, primarily from South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

The evaluation protocol included standardized psychological assessment tools tailored to detect common forms of maladaptive states: Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) for depressive symptoms, Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale for anxiety indicators, Neuroticism and Extraversion Scales (Eysenck Personality Questionnaire) and clinical interviews for dissociative or neurasthenic features

The assessments were conducted in a confidential setting under the supervision of trained clinical psychologists affiliated with the university. Each participant was informed about the purpose of the study and provided written consent. All procedures

conformed to ethical guidelines of psychological research involving human subjects. The collected data were processed using SPSS (version 22.0). Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were computed. In addition, syndromic patterns of maladaptation were categorized based on the predominant symptom clusters derived from the qualitative and quantitative data.

Results and discussion. The psychological assessment revealed that a substantial proportion of the surveyed international students exhibited symptoms consistent with various maladaptive syndromes. These were grouped into four primary syndromic patterns: depressive, neurasthenic, anxiety, and dissociative. Each of these syndromes was identified based on the convergence of standardized test results and clinical interview data.

Approximately 31% of students displayed moderate to high scores on the BDI, indicating the presence of depressive tendencies. Symptoms included persistent sadness, lack of motivation, diminished interest in academic activities, feelings of hopelessness, and withdrawal from social interaction. Around 26% of students showed signs of neurasthenia, characterized by fatigue, irritability, low frustration tolerance, and cognitive overload. These symptoms were often coupled with somatic complaints such as headaches and muscle tension. Anxiety-related symptoms were among the most prevalent, affecting approximately 38% of participants. High scores on the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale correlated with subjective reports of persistent worry, nervousness, and anticipatory fears. A smaller subset (12%) demonstrated signs of dissociative symptoms, including emotional detachment, depersonalization, and a reduced ability to engage meaningfully with peers or instructors.

Core Indicators of Maladaptation were next: emotional instability and tension, exacerbation of personality traits, impaired adaptability and social plasticity, decline in attention and concentration, behavioral manifestations such as restlessness or irritability

These findings confirm that psychological maladjustment is a widespread issue among international medical students in Ukraine. The presence of four distinct

syndromic patterns illustrates the complex and multifactorial nature of their psychological stress.

Notably, the high prevalence of anxiety and neurasthenia points to systemic shortcomings in academic, social, and psychological support. Factors such as cultural displacement, lack of inclusion, inadequate counseling, and pressure from family expectations all contribute to these conditions. Moreover, language barriers may prevent students from seeking help or expressing their challenges.

The results call attention to the urgent need for culturally competent institutional strategies. Without timely psychological and academic intervention, maladaptive symptoms may worsen over time, leading to dropout, burnout, or long-term mental health issues.

Conclusions. The study demonstrates that a considerable proportion of English-speaking international medical students in Ukraine experienced psychological maladjustment even during the relatively stable pre-war period. The identified manifestations — including depressive, anxiety, neurasthenic, and dissociative symptoms — reveal the multidimensional character of emotional strain associated with the process of socio-cultural and academic adaptation.

The findings emphasize that psychological maladjustment among foreign students is not a temporary reaction but a complex and sustained process shaped by multiple stressors: cultural dissonance, academic overload, linguistic barriers, and the absence of timely support systems. Persistent emotional tension, irritability, and decreased concentration indicate that maladaptive responses may develop into long-term psychological difficulties if left unaddressed.

Therefore, higher medical education institutions in Ukraine must view psychological well-being and adaptation of international students as an essential dimension of educational quality and internationalization. Enhancing institutional capacity for early detection of maladaptive states and integrating continuous psychological support within academic environments remain vital for sustaining the mental health and academic success of future medical professionals

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