

1 Psychological Conditions for the 2 Development of Stress Resistance in 3 Specialists of Different Age Categories

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8 ABSTRACT

9 The article identifies the psychological conditions of development of social workers
10 of different ages. The peculiarities of the development of stress resistance of social
11 workers of different age groups, its structural components have been empirically stud-
12 died and their relationship with psychological conditions has been established. The
13 effectiveness of the development program of activating the psychological conditions
14 for the development of stress tolerance of social workers of different ages has been
15 experimentally tested.

16 **Keywords:** Stress resistance (stress tolerance), Social worker, Stress, Professional activities,
17 Age group, Early adulthood period, Middle adulthood period, Late adulthood period

18 INTRODUCTION

19 The occurrence of stress in professional activities is an important scienti-
20 fic problem due to its negative impact on the effectiveness of professional
21 tasks, as well as the state of health of the employee. Resistance to stress is an
22 important factor that ensures the efficiency and success of professional acti-
23 vities of specialists in various modern specialties. Social work is an integral
24 part of the society of any country, it is aimed at supporting those segments
25 of the population who in a certain period of time are unable to effectively
26 adapt independently in social interactions. Due to this, the development of
27 the social sphere is one of the highest priorities of the social policy of the
28 state. An extremely important task is the systematic training of highly quali-
29 fied workers able to maintain and develop their own stress resistance, which
30 determines the success of social professionals in their occupational duties.

31 The manifestation of stress resistance as a systemic dynamic personality
32 trait that determines a person's ability to withstand stressful influences and
33 adequately emotionally respond to most stressful situations, actively change
34 them or adapt to them without prejudice to his/her health and maintain the
35 effectiveness of the activities performed, has its own special aspects in each
36 age period, in including at different stages of adulthood.

37 ANALYSIS OF THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

38 Training of highly qualified specialists for social work is becoming an impor-
39 tant task for the current stage of Ukraine's development in connection with
40 the growing social needs for social assistance. Repeated stressful situations
41 that a social worker finds himself in during difficult social interactions with
42 clients, constant penetration into the essence of their problems, personal
43 anxiety, other internal and external factors negatively affect his/her mental
44 and physical health, increase the risk of emotional burnout and professio-
45 nal deformity. Therefore, of course, professional activity in such conditions
46 requires certain qualities of a professional, and stress resistance should be one
47 of them. One of the important competencies of a social worker is the ability
48 to function effectively in complex situations often occurring in the practice
49 of social work. A.M. Lovochkina allows to define this type of competence
50 as stress resistance. The scientist noted that a significant amount of resea-
51 rch has been devoted to the formation and development of stress tolerance
52 both in Ukraine and abroad. At the same time, these studies mainly concern
53 such specialties as the military and high-risk professions representatives. And
54 although social workers do not fall into these categories, they also often face
55 stressful situations (Lovochkina, 2017).

56 The social worker helps not only individuals and families who find them-
57 selves in a difficult life situation, but also indirectly participates in reforming
58 the social policy of the state. He must be able to identify a social problem,
59 establish its cause, and then assist in its solving. The professionally important
60 qualities of a social worker include professional competence, a benevolent
61 attitude towards people, organizational and communicative qualities, a high
62 moral level and neuropsychic endurance (mental tolerance to stress) (Walton,
63 2005). An analysis of foreign and domestic psychological works related to
64 the study of the characteristics of stress resistance of specialists in the social
65 sphere of different age groups made it possible to determine the structure
66 of their stress resistance, the components of which are cognitive-reflexive,
67 emotional-motivational and behavioral-regulatory.

68 The composition of the cognitive-reflexive component includes an opti-
69 mistic style of thinking, adequate self-esteem and internality-externality. The
70 constructs of the emotional-motivational component are low personal anxi-
71 ety, emotional balance and motivation to succeed. The behavioral-regulatory
72 component consists of such constructs as volitional self-regulation, self-
73 control in communication and conflict competence. The main psychological
74 conditions for the development of stress resistance of social workers of dif-
75 ferent age groups are empathy, tolerance, moral norms, the predominance
76 of internal motivation of professional activity, as well as the ability to apply
77 problem-oriented and prosocial strategies of coping behavior.

78 The mental health of the individual is a prerequisite for effective performa-
79 nce in general and professional performance in particular. Nowadays, there
80 is a revision of ideas about man as a person, his unique value and this requi-
81 res solving new problems. The most important is the problem of maintaining
82 human health, not only physical but also mental (Kravchenko, Mishchenko,
83 Klymenko, Kuzmenko, Potapchuk, 2021).

84 **The purpose of this article** is to experimentally test the effectiveness of
85 the development program to activate the psychological conditions of stress
86 resistance of social workers of different age groups.

87 **RESEARCH METHODS**

88 The experimental study was conducted on the basis of 8 district centers of
89 social services for families, children and youth and 9 district territorial cen-
90 ters of social services in the city of Kyiv, as well as Uman district center of
91 social services for families, children and youth, Uman district territorial cen-
92 ter social services and the Department of Labor and Social Protection of the
93 Uman City Council. The total number of subjects was 177 people.

94 To conduct the experiment, we used a package of complementary tech-
95 niques, which were selected in accordance with the reasonable components
96 of the structure and psychological conditions for the development of stress
97 tolerance of social workers: “Test of self-assessment of stress tolerance” (ada-
98 pted by Yu.V. Shcherbatykh), “Test to determine personality stress tolerance”
99 (V.A. Semichenko), “Scale of activity and optimism” methodology (by I.
100 Schuler and A. Komuniani, adapted by N.E. Vodopyanova), “Diagnosis of
101 the self-esteem level” methodology (by G.M. Kazantseva), “Methods of dia-
102 gnosis of locus control”, “The scale of personal anxiety (by C.D. Spielberger,
103 adapted by Yu.L. Khanin),” “Emotional excitability - balance” methodology
104 (by B.N. Smirnov), “Motivation for success and fear of failure” methodology
105 (by A.A. Rean), “Diagnosis of the volitional potential of the individual” meth-
106 odology (by N.P. Fetiskin, “Assessment of self-control in communication”
107 questionnaire (by M. Snyder, adapted by N.V. Hryshyna), “Behavior in a
108 conflict situation” questionnaire (by K. Thomas, adapted by N.V. Hryshyna).

109 **RESEARCH RESULTS**

110 According to the results of the observational experiment on the development
111 of social workers’ of different ages stress resilience, the vast majority of pro-
112 fessionals in stressful situations that may occur in professional activities can
113 effectively regulate their emotions and control behavior, which enables them
114 to perform professional tasks. There was a tendency to reduce the stress resi-
115 stance of social workers in middle age in comparison with their younger
116 colleagues. Developed stress resistance, characterized by emotional balance,
117 rapid recovery of lost resources, stable adaptability to various stressful situ-
118 ations in professional activities, and as a result - high efficiency, was found
119 in almost half of social workers over 60 years, which can be interpreted as
120 achievement of these professionals’ formation of such a personal quality as
121 professionalism.

122 The correlation analysis provided an opportunity to identify the height
123 and strength of the relationship between the structural components of stress
124 resistance of social professionals and the psychological conditions of its deve-
125 lopment. Thus, we can note that the height of the correlation coefficients is
126 dominated by “empathy” in the correlation matrix, on the second place there
127 is “internal motivation of professional activity”, and the third place take

Table 1. Quantitative indicators (%) of the stress resistance level of social workers before and after the educational experiment.

Levels			High	Average	Low
Experimental group (EG)	20-39	before	33,33	66,67	0,00
		after	58,33	41,67	0,00
	40-59	before	20,00	80,00	0,00
		after	30,00	50,00	0,00
	60+	before	50,00	50,00	0,00
		after	62,50	37,50	0,00
Control group (CG)	20-39	before	44,44	55,56	0,00
		after	55,56	44,44	0,00
	40-59	before	27,27	72,73	0,00
		after	18,18	81,82	0,00
	60+	before	50,00	50,00	0,00
		after	50,00	50,00	0,00

128 “moral norms”. This is followed by two other psychological developmental
 129 conditions that have revealed a significant number of necessary relationships
 130 with the structural components of stress resilience in all age groups: that is
 131 the coping strategy “Problem Solving” and “Tolerance”.

132 The program which was developed by us for activating the psychological
 133 conditions for the formation of stress resistance of social workers of different
 134 age groups is aimed at developing an understanding of the basic theoretical
 135 concepts of “stress” and “stress resistance” among social workers, awareness
 136 of the importance of developing stress tolerance to increase the efficiency of
 137 professional activity and improve life in general, and development of skills
 138 in awareness of states surrounding, teaching techniques of purposeful impact
 139 on these states, expanding the repertoire of skills and strategies of behavior
 140 in stressful situations by practicing them in safe psychological conditions.

141 In order to determine the effectiveness of the author’s program, we con-
 142 ducted a psychological diagnosis using the methods presented in the research
 143 methods. The results of diagnostics by the method of “cross-sections” before
 144 and after the educational experiment provided an opportunity to state the
 145 quantitative and qualitative changes that occurred after its completion.

146 As a result of our development program, the specialists of the social sphere
 147 of the experimental groups have significantly increased the indicators of a
 148 high level of resistance to stress. For the respondents aged 20 to 39 years,
 149 they changed from 33.33% to 58.33%, for those at the age of 40 to 59 years
 150 - from 20.00% to 30.00%, and for those older 60 years - from 50.00 % to
 151 62.50% (Table 1).

152 The subject of research included psychological conditions for the deve-
 153 lopment of stress resistance in social workers of different ages. The total
 154 number of the respondents comprised 177 people. We formed three separate
 155 groups of subjects: 60 people of early adulthood (from 20 to 39 years), 60
 156 people of middle adulthood (from 40 to 59 years old) and 57 people whose
 157 age corresponded to the senior period adulthood (from 60 years).

158 They noted that they became optimistic about their own success in the
159 social sphere, better analyze and assess their strengths and weaknesses, the
160 result of their own professional activities, learned to reflect on the impression
161 they make on others, fully realize that their own decisions and those corre-
162 sponding to their actions. Due to the positive attitude towards people and
163 various circumstances, social workers in stressful situations began to show
164 emotional balance and control their emotional manifestations, as well as their
165 motivation to set appropriate professional tasks and make sufficient efforts
166 to succeed.

167 The implemented development program allowed them to acquire the
168 ability to show endurance and patience in stressful situations, as well as
169 flexibility in conflict situations - in communication, and also to direct in
170 a constructive way to resolve incoordinated interactions with others. Due to
171 their stable adaptability to various stressful situations, they are distinguished
172 by high working capacity, which ensures high efficiency of their professional
173 activities in general.

174 After the teaching experiment, the indicators of the average level of stress
175 resistance in all age groups decreased. The number of respondents who show-
176 ing average level during early adulthood decreased from 66.67% to 41.67%,
177 during average adulthood - from 80.00% to 70.00%, and during late adul-
178 thood - from 50.00% to 37.50%. They admitted that, although in most
179 stressful situations they are optimistic about their solution, but in case of
180 unforeseen difficulties, they may be inclined to a pessimistic forecast. Specia-
181 lists usually gave an adequate assessment of the results of their professional
182 activities, but they were not always fully aware of their own strengths and
183 weaknesses. They tended to take responsibility for their decisions and actions,
184 but in stressful situations they could explain the reasons for their occurrence
185 by external factors independent of them.

186 The subjects were able to regulate their own emotions, perform profession-
187 al tasks at the appropriate level and maintain the optimal level of efficiency,
188 but in new stressful situations they began to worry, and therefore might not
189 focus on their own actions required in a given case, which, in turn, led to
190 a temporary decrease in their productivity. The respondents also noted that
191 they need more time to restore emotional balance and return to working
192 condition.

193 They conscientiously performed their professional duties and were moti-
194 vated to solve problems of moderate complexity, however, they tried to avoid
195 difficult ones, did not show initiative in performing new or additional tasks.
196 In case of conflict, they tended to give up their interests in order to keep good
197 relations with others. However, after the training, they were determined to
198 develop their level of stress resistance in the future, to acquire new skills to
199 cope with stress.

200 Before and after the teaching experiment, no respondents with a low level
201 of stress resistance were identified, which can only indicate the absence of
202 negative dynamics. Social workers became less pessimistic about their future,
203 learned to better carry out a reflective analysis of themselves and others,
204 which reduced the likelihood of unjustified overestimation of themselves and
205 those around them or significant underestimation of their own strengths.

206 They became less inclined to blame others or external circumstances for their
207 own failures, learned to be aware of the flow of their own emotions, and
208 took less time to restore emotional balance.

209 The specialists in the social sphere noted that they began to worry less often
210 for various reasons and try to avoid most professional tasks, so as not to feel
211 defeated in case of failure to complete them. The respondents realized the
212 need to keep their own promises and try to resolve conflicts in a constructive
213 way.

214 At a time when as a result of the teaching experiment there was a signi-
215 ficant increase in the level of stress resistance among social workers from
216 the experimental groups, the quantitative indicators of the control groups
217 have slight changes, which indicates the effectiveness of the proposed pro-
218 gram. Thus, after the teaching experiment, there was an increase in indicators
219 of high levels of stress resistance and a decrease in the average level of
220 the studied personality trait. Social workers of all age groups have acqui-
221 red new skills to cope with stress, learned to effectively restore emotional
222 balance, plan their activities so as to reduce the likelihood of new stressors
223 occurrence (Kravchenko, Mishchenko, Klymenko, Kuzmenko, Potapchuk,
224 2021).

225 Thus, the teaching experiment had a positive effect on the development
226 of all components of social workers stress tolerance. Positive changes are
227 observed in all subcomponents of the cognitive-reflexive component, such
228 as optimistic style of thinking, self-esteem, internality-externality. There was
229 a decrease in the number of respondents with pronounced pessimism and
230 passivity, as well as an increase in the number of specialists with a pre-
231 dominance of optimism and activity as a character trait. The growth of
232 indicators of high level of self-esteem of social specialists of all age groups
233 and simultaneous decrease of indicators on average and low levels of the
234 studied property have been revealed. Thanks to the implemented training,
235 the number of social workers with predominant internality increased and
236 decreased the number of those with externality. In our opinion, there is a posi-
237 tive dynamics of emotional and motivational components (personal anxiety,
238 emotional balance, motivation to succeed) after the teaching experiment. We
239 found a decrease in the number of respondents with a high level of perso-
240 nal anxiety and a simultaneous increase with medium and low levels of this
241 personal personality trait. There was a significant increase in the number of
242 specialists who are characterized by a high level of emotional balance and
243 a decrease in the number of those with a low level. It is also important to
244 note the increased motivation of social workers to succeed. The constructors
245 (voluntary self-regulation, communicative control, conflict competence) of
246 the behavioral-regulatory component of resistance to stress show an increase
247 in high-level indicators and a decrease in the number of social workers with
248 average and low levels. In our opinion, such dynamics indicate that social
249 sphere specialists have acquired skills of constructive resolution of various
250 conflicts. They learned to assess the stressful situation adequately and show
251 appropriate activity for solving it, use social support as an effective resource
252 for stress tolerance.

CONCLUSION

253
254 Thus, activating such psychological conditions as the development of empa-
255 thy, tolerance, moral normativity, intrinsic motivation of professional activity
256 and the predominance of the use of problem-oriented and prosocial coping
257 strategies, we had the opportunity to influence the components of stress resi-
258 stance of social workers of different ages positively, thereby achieving a high
259 level its development, and this, in turn, positively influenced the effectiveness
260 of their professional activities. Based on the results of ascertaining and tea-
261 ching experiments, we have developed guidelines for practical psychologists
262 and social workers on the development of their stress tolerance.

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