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**PROFESSIONAL WELL-BEING IN CONNECTION WITH  
IMPAIRMENTS OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND  
PERCEPTION OF EVERYDAY STRESS AMONG  
DEFECTOLOGISTS**

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Authors' Contribution:

A – Study design; B – Data collection; C – Statistical analysis; D – Manuscript Preparation; E – Funds Collection.

*Aim. The article examines the results of an empirical study of the professional well-being of defectologists and its relationship with emotional dysregulation and the perception of everyday stress.*

*Methods. An empirical study was conducted on a sample of defectologists (correctional educators and special psychologists) who work with children with autism spectrum disorders. For the study, the following were used: the methodology for assessing professional well-being (further MAPW), the questionnaire of everyday stressors and*

*the questionnaire of emotional dysregulation. Empirical data processing methods: analysis of mean values, analysis of nonparametric criteria, correlation analysis.*

*Results. The study made it possible to establish the characteristics of the professional well-being of defectologists, to describe the subjective perception of their own functioning in the professional sphere and to determine the relationship between the duration of professional activity and the indicators of the components of professional well-being. It was found that there was an inverse statistically significant relationship between the components of professional well-being with the spheres of perception of everyday stressful events and the forms of emotional dysregulation.*

*Conclusions. The results of the analysis led to the conclusion that speech pathologists who work with children with autism spectrum disorders have a low level of professional well-being. Also, statistically significant interrelationships between the components of professional well-being with the perception of everyday stress and forms of impaired emotional regulation were revealed.*

***Keywords:** defectologists, professional well-being, self-regulation, emotional dysregulation, stress, everyday psycho-emotional stress, psychological well-being.*

## **Професійне благополуччя у зв'язку з порушеннями емоційної регуляції та сприйняттям повсякденного стресу у дефектологів**

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Внесок авторів:

А - дизайн дослідження; В - збір даних; С - статистичний аналіз; D - підготовка рукопису; Е - збір коштів.

Мета. У статті розглядаються результати емпіричного дослідження професійного благополуччя дефектологів та його взаємозв'язок із емоційною дисрегуляцією і сприйняттям повсякденного стресу.

Методи. Емпіричне дослідження було проведене на виборці дефектологів (корекційних педагогів та спеціальних психологів), які займаються із дітьми з розладами аутистичного спектру. Для дослідження були використані: методика оцінки професійного благополуччя МОПБ, опитувальник повсякденних стресорів та опитувальник емоційної дисрегуляції. Методи оброблення емпіричних даних: аналіз середніх значень, аналіз непараметричних критеріїв, кореляційний аналіз,

Результати. Проведене дослідження дало змогу встановити особливості професійного благополуччя дефектологів, дати опис суб'єктивного сприйняття власного функціонування у професійній сфері та визначити зв'язок між тривалістю професійної діяльності і показниками компонентів професійного благополуччя. Було встановлено наявність зворотного статистично значущого взаємозв'язку компонентів професійного благополуччя із сферами сприйняття повсякденних стресових подій та формами емоційної дисрегуляції.

Висновки. Результати аналізу дозволили зробити висновок, що дефектологи, які працюють із дітьми з розладами аутистичного спектру, мають низький рівень професійного благополуччя. Також виявлені статистично достовірні взаємозв'язки компонентів професійного благополуччя із сприйняттям повсякденного стресу та формами порушення емоційної регуляції.

***Ключові слова:** дефектологи, професійне благополуччя, саморегуляція емоційна дисрегуляція, стрес, повсякденне психоемоційне навантаження, психологічне благополуччя.*

**Introduction.** Professional well-being and psychological well-being of a working person in scientific works are considered from the standpoint of subjective and objective approaches, which differ both in views on the construct, but also in its measurement (Volynets, 2018, Berezovskaya, 2016) based on the analysis of scientific publications on the topic of professional well-being, comes to the conclusion that the existence of various approaches to the definition of the concept of "professional well-being" indicates the multifaceted problem of studying this psychological phenomenon. The professional well-being of an individual is considered by scientists:

- as a criterion of professional identity and a characteristic that may indicate the degree of acceptability in terms of the motives and attitudes of the individual (Shamionov, 2004, 2008);

- as an integral indicator of the positive functioning of a person in the professional sphere, which includes emotional, cognitive and behavioral components of the attitude to one's professional environment and organizational context (Rut, 2016)

- as a process and state that integrally reflects the life activity of the subject, its conditions and results, as well as the subject's attitude to the results of the activity (Boyarkin et al, 2007);

- as a result of the specialist's focus on positive functioning in the conditions of professional activity and the experience of satisfaction with the results of work (Minyurova, Zausenko, 2013);

- as employee satisfaction with work, their high assessment of their main profession and the feeling of positive emotions associated with work (Warr, Mahwah, 2007).

Recently, there has been an expansion of research on the psychological well-being of a person in various areas of life, including

the professional sphere, also education (Borisova, 2018; Gerasimova 2019, Borodkina, 2012; Minyurova, Zausenko 2013). The importance of studying psychological well-being in the professional sphere is determined by its significant role not only in ensuring life, but also in self-development, self-realization, and self-affirmation of a person. The domestic scientific literature contains a small number of works and studies related to the topic of professional well-being. Also, the aspect of the characteristics of psychological well-being in professions of various types should be attributed to the area of insufficiently studied issues, since professional requirements regarding the characteristics of a person, its personality and psyche in various fields of activity differ significantly.

In the context of the psychological safety of an individual, it has been determined that chronic exposure to everyday stressors can cause a violation of psychological well-being, somatic health and life satisfaction (Kharlamenkova, 2016). For example, it has been shown that stressors of low intensity, but long-term and repetitive ones, can increase the requirements for a person's adaptive capabilities, and the negative effects of everyday stress can be more significant than the consequences of critical life events (Holahan, 1987; DeLongis et al., 1982; Lazarus, 1999). Several studies have found a negative correlation between everyday stress and human psychological health (Flannery, 1986).

In the process of exposure of a stressor to a personality, its primary cognitive assessment takes place, on the basis of which a corresponding emotional reaction to a stressful effect is formed. Emotional regulation, as a system that combines dynamic and structural characteristics, is associated with the modulation of emotions, their identification, assessment and expression, the ability to control them and harmonize with the situation and the goals of the activity, reflects the effectiveness of managing behavior in stressful situations when analyzing various types of activity. In situations of stress, manifestations of emotional dysregulation can be observed

aimed at reducing the negative consequences of the action of destructive emotions by ignoring, suppressing or evading them. According to studies, the connection between emotion regulation characteristics and psychological well-being is systemic (Padun, 2015, 2019). This makes it important to study individual features in the processes of regulation of emotions and its possible violations in the context of professional activity.

Research shows that children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) inherent a complex behavior that is not socially acceptable and has a potential risk of serious traumatization and even death for a child and others (Emerson, 2001; Holden & Gitlesen, 2006; Matson, Mahan, Hess, Fodstad, & Neal, 2010). The prevalence of this complex behavior among children with ASD ranges from 63.4% to 94% (Jang, Dixon, Tarbox, & Granpeesheh 2011; Matson, Wilkins, & Macken 2009; McTiernan, Leader, Healy, & Mannion 2011; Murphy, Healy, & Leader, 2009). The socially unacceptable and dangerous behavior of children with ASD have a significant physical and emotional impact on the child's immediate environment (Bitsika & Sharpley, 2004; Myers, Mackintosh, & Goin-Kochel, 2009). A recent study found that complex behavior of children with ASD contribute to increased parental stress and predict the symptoms of PTSD (Stewart et al., 2019). The specificity of autistic disorder necessitates psychological and pedagogical support on permanent basis and for a long time, implemented by specialists in correctional education, psychologists, and employees of specialized educational institutions. As part of their professional activities, specialists during the period of work with the child face complex child behavior on a daily basis, just like the child's family. This can act as a stress factor that leads to a decrease in emotional regulation, affects a person's adaptive capabilities and negatively affects its professional well-being. At the moment, the issue of personal well-being in the educational sphere has been studied to a greater extent among teachers, instructors and educators of general education. We did not find any studies of

professional well-being among defectologists working with children with complex developmental disabilities.

**Aim.** To identify the interconnections between the parameters of professional wellbeing and the characteristics of stress workload and emotional dysregulation of defectologists working with children with autism spectrum disorders.

**Research methods.** The study involved 58 respondents from different regions of Ukraine (Kharkiv, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Vinnytsia) aged 21 to 59 years (average age 30.7 years), 4 men and 54 women. The respondents are employees of specialized educational institutions (correctional teachers, psychologists, speech therapists) and directly deal with children with autism spectrum disorders. Work experience of respondents with children with ASD from 6 months to 9 years.

The study used the following techniques:

1. To study the professional wellbeing of the respondents, the Occupational Well-Being Questionnaire (OWBQ) was used, which was approved in the study of E.I. Rut (2016). This technique is a modification of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS) in adaptation by L.V. Zhukovskaya, E.G. Troshikhina. The OWBQ questionnaire passed the test of criterion validity and synchronous reliability for compliance with the 6th component model of psychological well-being by C. Ryff. The OWBQ questionnaire includes 6 scales: "Autonomy in professional activity", "Satisfaction with the level of competence", "Satisfaction with professional achievements", "Professional growth", "Professional goals", "Positive relationships in the team", as well as the general (total) indicator of professional well-being.

2. To assess daily stress a questionnaire of everyday stressors was used (Petrash et al., 2018). Respondents are invited to note the events that occurred with them during the last 2 weeks, as well as the strength of experiencing the event using a scale of 1 to 10 points (1 point - corresponds to the minimum level, 10 - to the maximum level).

The methodology provides for the distribution in the following spheres of life: 1) professional activity; 2) interpersonal communication; 3) external stressors; 4) stressors associated with leisure; 5) financial stressors; 6) stressors associated with services (medical, social, household); 7) stressors of the household sphere; 8) personality stressors.

3. The Emotion Dysregulation questionnaire was used to study the dominant forms of emotional dysregulation disorder (Polskaya, Razvalyaeva, 2017). The questionnaire provides self-report of the respondent and allows to determine the predominant form of emotional regulation: rumination, avoidance and mentalization difficulties. Thus, the questionnaire makes it possible to identify violations at the level of: a) dynamics of emotional reactions; b) the ability to understand and manage emotions; c) ideas (beliefs, attitudes, skills) associated with emotional experience.

Statistical processing of empirical data was carried out using methods of primary descriptive statistics, frequency analysis using the Pearson  $\chi^2$  coefficient to determine the characteristics of the distribution of subjects, nonparametric comparison for independent samples according to Mann-Whitney U test and correlation analysis to assess the strength of the connection between indicators.

**Results.** The analysis of the results obtained showed that the defectologists working with children with ASD, in general, demonstrate a low level of professional well-being ( $22.3 \pm 2.45$ ). A high level of professional well-being was not found in any of the respondents.

The frequency distribution of indicators of professional well-being by components, depending on the length of service, shows that with an increase in the length of service among defectologists, the level of professional well-being decreases ( $\chi^2 = 7.96339$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ).

When analyzing the differences in indicators according to the Mann-Whitney U test between groups of defectologists with different experience of professional activity, statistically significant differences



were found on the scales of professional development ( $U = 246.00$ ,  $Z = 2.39$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ) and positive relations in the team ( $U = 244.00$ ,  $Z = 2.42$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ).

According to the research, in the group of defectologists who have been working for more than 3 years, a low level of professional well-being ( $20.97 \pm 2.32$ ) was identified among 91.7% of the respondents, the average - in 8.3%. Among defectologists with experience of working with children with ASD and up to 3 years of experience, 70.6% of respondents have a low level of professional well-being ( $21.82 \pm 1.32$ ), an average - 29.4%.

So, the long-term professional activity of defectologists, the content of which involves working with children with ASD, negatively affects the self-development of professionally important qualities, correct performance of professional duties, self-realization in the professional sphere and satisfaction from relationships with colleagues.

Among 79.3% of respondents (46 people), a low level of professional well-being was revealed ( $21.4 \pm 1.9$ ). In terms of the components of professional well-being, low indicators are observed in the areas of professional self-perception ( $3.6 \pm 0.4$ ) and autonomy in professional activity ( $3.4 \pm 0.4$ ). So, defectologists working with children with autism spectrum disorders predominantly demonstrate feelings of lack of meaning in professional activity, stagnation in the field of professional development, low personal motivation to perform professional duties. This indicates dissatisfaction with one's own professionalism, a sense of inadequacy to the influence of the circumstances of the work process, a lack of a sense of control and management of the working environment. Assessment of their professional behavior is carried out depending on the expectations and requirements of the environment, reflected in the inability to act in accordance with their own professional beliefs, conformity in decision-making and work process. The value of the indicator of relations in the team indicates that the respondents experience

frustration and isolation in interpersonal relationships in the framework of professional activities.

According to the level of the general indicator of professional well-being, 20.7% of the respondents (12 people) belong to the average level ( $25.6 \pm 0.6$ ) of professional well-being. Defectologists with an average level of well-being are characterized by a rather comfortable feeling of themselves in the professional sphere, to some extent there are situational dissatisfaction with their own professional activities and a decrease in positive emotions during the working day. Professional activity is filled with personal meaning, which is based on beliefs that have professional goals. The respondents strive to gain new experience, improve their own efficiency in work, develop themselves as a professional, but they do not fully realize and accept their professional achievements, have difficulties in managing the professional environment, and do not sufficiently fulfill their professional needs. They are ready to make decisions in professional matters, take responsibility, while simultaneously carrying out professional activities, taking into account the expectations of colleagues, management, are exposed to social pressure, since evaluations of performance from others and positive satisfactory relationships are important for them.

To determine the interconnection between the components of psychological well-being and indicators of everyday stress, a correlation analysis was carried out (Table 1).

Significant negative relationships were revealed between the general indicator of professional well-being and the total indicator of perception of everyday stress ( $-0.29$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), stress loads in the sphere of general well-being ( $-0.31$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and the sphere of experience of loneliness ( $-0.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The obtained correlations characterize the interdependence of a low level of professional well-being and the intensity of chronic stressors, primarily those that include physical indisposition, a feeling of lack of time for health and rest, and a lack of interpersonal relationships. A more detailed analysis

of the correlations obtained between the components of professional well-being and stressful spheres of life showed an interdependence between autonomy in professional activity and stressors in relationships with others (-0.30,  $p < 0.05$ ), feelings of loneliness (-0.26,  $p < 0.05$ ) and stress in the sphere of general well-being (-0.33,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 1

**Significant interconnections between components of occupational well-being and parameters of everyday stressors**

Scales of professional well-being	Parameters of daily stress				
	Work -	Relation-ships with others	Family	General well-being	Subjective perception of stressor intensity
Autonomy in professional activity	-	- 0,30**	-	-0,33**	-
Professional self-perception	- 0,28**	-	- 0,26**	-0,39*	- 0,27**
Professional development	-	-	-	-	-
Professional well-being	-	-	-	-0,31**	- 0,29**

Note: "\*" -  $p < 0,01$ ; "\*\*" -  $p < 0.05$

The largest number of correlations of components of professional well-being were determined for professional self-perception, which is interconnected with workload in the field of work (-0.28,  $p < 0.05$ ), stressors in the family sphere (-0.26,  $p < 0.05$ ), state of health (-0.39,  $p < 0.01$ ) and feelings of loneliness (-0.27,  $p < 0.05$ ). The strongest was the connection between the attitude towards oneself as a professional and the connection between one's personal qualities in professional activity and the ability to organize one's space in such a way with a view to find strength for recovery.

Development, as a component of professional well-being, has a negative relationship with the perception of stressors in the sphere of general well-being (-0.29,  $p < 0.05$ ). This characterizes a decrease in the orientation of the individual towards constant professional improvement and an increase in efficiency in connection with an increase in stress load due to a lack of opportunities to restore psychophysiological potential.

Professional activity in the field of correctional psychological and pedagogical support provides for the requirements for the ability to regulate emotions, to be emotionally involved in professional activities, to express and induce certain emotions in the implementation of professional tasks. The low level of professional well-being established in the scope of this study may be accompanied by disorders in the sphere of emotional regulation. (Warr, 1990; van Horn et al., 2004).

According to our previous study (Zhukova, 2019), a tendency towards emotional burnout and the formation of symptoms of emotional alienation were determined among defectologists working with children with ASD. This led to the next stage of our research - the determination of the dominant forms of emotional regulation disorders among respondents.

The predominant form of emotional dysregulation among defectologists working with children with ASD is the difficulty of mentalization ( $M = 19.03 \pm 3.93$ ). Emotional regulation disorders by

the type of rumination ranks second place ( $M = 16.59 \pm 3.17$ ), the lowest values are reached by the avoidance indicator ( $M = 11.38 \pm 2.53$ ). Thus, the respondents are more characterized by a violation of emotional regulation at the level of representations (beliefs, attitudes, skills) associated with emotional experience, which manifests itself in limiting the identification of emotions, understanding both their own experiences and actions, and the emotions and behavior of other people.

The conducted correlation analysis between the general indicator of professional well-being and the forms of emotional regulation (Table 2) found a relationship with rumination ( $-0.573$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), avoidance ( $-0.572$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and mentalization difficulties ( $-0.627$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The data obtained characterize the mutual influence of a decrease in the level of professional functioning with a slowdown in the dynamics of emotional reactions, a violation of the ability to understand and control emotions, and a distortion of ideas associated with emotional experience.

A detailed analysis of the data obtained has shown that typical forms of emotional regulation disorders have a negative relationship with many components of professional well-being.

An inverse correlation was established between the indicators "positive relationships in the team" and rumination ( $-0.288$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), in other words, the ability to constructive relationships in a team in order to solve professional problems is associated with the rigidity of emotional reactions.

The interdependence of autonomy in professional activity and rumination ( $-0.419$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), avoidance ( $-0.500$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and metallization difficulties ( $-0.642$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) was established. So, the strengthening of the conformism and externality of subjective control in professional activity is associated with a decrease in the ability to relevantly interpret one's own experience and the behavior of other people, a feeling of helplessness in front of emotions.

Table 2

**Significant interconnections between components of occupational well-being and forms of emotional dysregulation**

Scales of professional well-being	Forms of emotional dysregulation		
	Rumination	Avoidance	Difficulties of mentalization
Autonomy in professional activity	-0,419*	-0,500*	-0,642*
Professional self-perception	-0,498*	-0,444*	-0,588*
Satisfaction with the level of competence	-0,426*	-0,437*	-0,646*
Satisfaction with professional achievements	-0,475*	-0,374*	-
Professional development	-0,535*	-0,574*	-0,583*
Professional growth	-0,508*	-0,648*	-0,503*
Positive relations in the team	-0,288**	-	-
Professional well-being	-0,573*	-0,572*	-0,627*

Note: "\*" -  $p < 0,01$ ; "\*\*" -  $p < 0,05$

A negative interconnection between professional self-perception and rumination (-0.419,  $p < 0.01$ ), avoidance (-0.444,  $p < 0.01$ ) and mentalization difficulties (-0.588,  $p < 0.01$ ) was determined, which characterizes the mutual dependence of emotional regulation and attitude towards oneself as a professional.

A negative interconnection between “professional development” and rumination ( $-0.535$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), prevention  $-0.574$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and mentalization difficulties ( $-0.583$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) was determined, which characterizes the mutual influence of a decrease in internal interest and self-development in professional activity with the growth of non-adaptive forms of emotional regulation.

**Discussion.** These studies have shown that defectologists who work with children with autism spectrum disorders have low levels of professional well-being, which, as a result, decrease with increasing length of service. The results obtained do not correspond to the study of S.I Bilozerska and S.O. Mashchak. (2018), which established the preference for medium and high levels of well-being among teachers. In our opinion, this is due to the possible negative influence of the content of work when working with children with ASD on the subjective attitude of defectologists to their own professional activities. This assumption is consistent with studies that show that, compared with colleagues from general education institutions teachers of special (correctional) educational institutions are more inherent in signs of psychological well-being disorders (Gnedova 2007; Kovaleva, 2007).

According to our research, the functioning of a personality in a professional environment, a person's attitude to the organizational context and to oneself as a professional, are interconnected with the perception of everyday stressors. A decrease in the level of professional well-being is accompanied by an increase in the subjective significance of the perception of stressors, primarily in the field of professional activity, interpersonal communication, as well as discomfort from lack of rest and physical ailments. The decrease in the positivity of the attitude towards oneself as a professional, one's professional qualities and achievements is interdependent with the depletion of the psychophysical potential. There is a mutual influence of a decrease in professional well-being and feelings about the sphere of relationships with family and loved ones, characterized by the

expansion of the zone of professional stress to other areas of life. These results are consistent with the research data of L.A. Golovey et al. (2018), which emphasizes the positive role of job satisfaction in reducing stressors.

**Conclusions.** The professional well-being of defectologists working with children with autism spectrum disorders is characterized by a predominantly low level. The subjective perception of one's own professional functioning is characterized by dissatisfaction, a feeling of irritation, apathy in the process of work, which can negatively affect the results of professional activity.

The professional well-being of defectologists is interconnected with the perception of everyday psycho-emotional stress. The subjective experience of stressors negatively affects professional well-being, in particular, it is reflected by a deterioration in well-being, and can be a source of somatization of psycho-emotional stress.

Difficulties in mentalization, which is manifested in emotional regression, are the predominant form of violation of emotional regulation among studied defectologists; the predominance of undifferentiated emotions that are poorly amenable to objectification; lack of emotional competence, which affects the quality of recognition and control of emotions. The emotional dysregulation of defectologists who work with children with autism spectrum disorder is inversely related to their professional well-being.

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