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TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH: RELEVANCE FOR UKRAINIAN SOCIAL WORK

Abstract. The trauma-informed approach, the concept of «trauma-informed practice» – is relevant to the social sphere of European countries, particularly social work. At the same time, for the Ukrainian social sphere in wartime conditions, concepts such as «trauma», «acute stress reaction» (ASR), «posttraumatic stress disorder» (PTSD), and others have become relevant, which is related to the threats of psychological traumatization of the population. The trauma-informed approach is highly demanded and promising for Ukrainian social work practice. The aim of the publication is to briefly present the results of the study on the essence and main principles of practice based on the trauma-informed approach (trauma-informed practice), the relevance, and projects of trauma-informed social work in Ukraine under wartime conditions.

In the international scientific discourse, there are studies on the trauma-informed approach, trauma-informed practice; conceptual documents from organizations in the medical and social spheres that represent the essence and main principles of this approach. Studies have documented the impact of traumatic events on the disruption of the nervous and immune systems, subsequent behaviors that are dangerous to health, chronic physical or behavioral disorders. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma (USA) is as follows: «Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being».

The results of the analysis regarding trauma-informed social work practice in Ukraine indicate existing experience in trauma-informed youth work (within the framework of the Council of Europe project «Youth for Democracy in Ukraine»); the existence of developed medical protocols, practical resources related to the issue of training courses, particularly in psychosocial support of youth in wartime conditions. However, in our opinion, theoretical foundations and methodological developments of trauma-informed social work are insufficient in Ukrainian social work theories. Nevertheless, such practice responds to social challenges, contributes to the implementation of the «research in action» approach, which allows social workers and other professionals to respond flexibly to social needs.

Keywords: empowerment, support, trauma-informed approach, trauma-informed practice, trauma-informed social work, Ukrainian social work.

INTRODUCTION

Modern research in the field of social work must primarily analyze current approaches that are important and promising for Ukrainian social work practice in wartime conditions. Among such approaches are the trauma-informed approach and the corresponding direction—trauma-informed social work.

Based on the analysis of theoretical sources, normative documents, and social service organizations' portals, we can summarize that the trauma-informed approach and the concept of «trauma-informed practice» are relevant to the social sphere of European countries, particularly in social work practice.

Publications by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the USA (SAMHSA) emphasize that «trauma is a widespread issue». Trauma can result from violence and traumatic experiences, but most people have trauma due to abuse, neglect, loss, disaster, war, etc. (SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 2014).

Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that psychological traumatization is prevalent worldwide, unevenly distributed among the population, with the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder varying significantly depending on the type of trauma (Unified Clinical Protocol for Primary and Specialized Medical Care, 2024). At the same time, for the Ukrainian social sphere in wartime conditions, concepts such as «trauma», «acute stress reaction» (ASR), «posttraumatic stress disorder» (PTSD), and others have become relevant, which is related to the threats of psychological traumatization of the population. Information on the prevalence and incidence of PTSD in Ukraine according to official data from the Ministry of Health of Ukraine as of 2024 is absent. According to the latest published studies in Ukraine, the prevalence of PTSD ranged from 11.1% to 50.8%, depending on the methodology and timing of the study. Medical assistance integrated with comprehensive social rehabilitation of patients, involving family members, is crucial for addressing the issue (Unified Clinical Protocol for Primary and Specialized Medical Care, 2024).

Thus, for the Ukrainian social sphere in wartime conditions, particularly social work, the trauma-informed approach and corresponding practice are relevant and in demand.

ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

In the international scientific discourse, there are studies on the trauma-informed approach and trauma-informed practice; conceptual documents of medical and social organizations (SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 2014) that present the essence and main principles of this approach. Research has documented the impact of traumatic events on the nervous and immune systems, subsequent health-damaging behaviors, and chronic physical or behavioral disorders (Felitti, G., Anda, R., Nordenberg, D., 1998; McLaughlin, K.A., Green, J.G., Kessler, R.C., et al., 2009). Studies among youth confirm the link between traumatic experiences and substance use disorders (Ford, J. and Wilson, C., 2012). Among children and families in the child protection system, high rates of trauma impact associated with behavioral health problems are also present (Wilson, C. and Conradi, L., 2010). Young people bring their trauma experiences into educational systems, which often hinder their academic success. A significant number of primary medical care patients also have traumatic histories that affect their health (SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed

Approach, 2014). Research has also shown that with appropriate interventions, individuals can overcome traumatic experiences.

Ukrainian publications in the field of social work present successful practices, notably the project «Youth for Democracy in Ukraine: Phase III» under the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine for 2023–2026, within which a guide for a trauma-informed youth work educational course was developed and translated (Guide on the Educational Course of Trauma-Informed Youth Work, draft, 2022). The relevance of the corresponding topic necessitates analyzing the essence of the trauma-informed approach and trauma-informed social work projects.

The purpose of the article is to briefly present the results of research on the essence and main principles of practice based on the trauma-informed approach (trauma-informed practice), the relevance, and trauma-informed social work projects in Ukraine under wartime conditions.

Research methods include the analysis of foreign and Ukrainian publications, documents, and materials of international organizations (Council of Europe); youth work projects in Ukraine implemented under the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine for 2023–2026.

PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN MATERIAL

Essence and Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice

Analysis of publications and documents indicates that the concept of «trauma-informed social work», and the broader concept of «trauma-informed practice» hold significant positions among the directions of social work and youth work in European countries.

In particular, in 2022, the United Kingdom developed a document aimed at defining the essence of trauma-informed practice, key principles, professional resources, and tools (Working Definition of Trauma-Informed Practice, 2022). «Trauma-informed approaches are increasingly cited in policy and applied in practice as a means to mitigate the negative impact of trauma experiences and support mental and physical health outcomes. They are based on evidence accumulated over decades. However, the health and social care sector lacks consensus on how to define trauma-informed practice, its key principles, and how it can be integrated into services and systems» (Working definition of trauma-informed practice, 2022). The working definition presented in this document takes into account the original internationally recognized definition developed by SAMHSA (SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 2014).

SAMHSA's concept of trauma is as follows: «Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being». (SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 2014). Trauma involves emotionally harmful experiences, significantly increasing the risk of mental disorders based on age, gender, socioeconomic characteristics, and substance use. Factors such as status, race, ethnicity, geographic location, or sexual orientation can influence the experience of trauma (SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 2014). The document's authors emphasize that the

consequences of traumatic events significantly impact individuals, families, and communities, creating challenges for governmental institutions.

The analysis of documents (SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 2014; Working Definition of Trauma-Informed Practice, 2022) indicates that the trauma-informed approach is based on six key principles:

1. Safety: Ensuring the physical, psychological, and emotional safety of service users and staff is a priority (people know they are safe or ask what they need to feel safe, preventing re-traumatization, implementing protective policies, practices, and mechanisms).

2. Reliability and Transparency: Organizational policies and procedures aim to strengthen trust between staff, service users, and the broader community.

3. Support: Service users receive support in collaborative decision-making, choice, and goal-setting to determine action plans necessary for recovery/problem resolution and moving forward.

4. Collaboration: The value of staff and service users' experiences is recognized in overcoming challenges and improving the system as a whole (utilizing formal and informal peer support and mutual aid, focusing on collaboration, and actively involving service users in service provision).

5. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice: Efforts are made to share power and give service users and staff a meaningful voice in decision-making at both individual and organizational levels (taking into account the feelings and issues of staff and service users; recognizing that people who have experienced or are experiencing trauma may feel powerless to control what happens to them, isolated, and have low self-esteem).

6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues: Avoiding cultural stereotypes and biases based on gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, geographic, racial, or ethnic background (providing access to gender-sensitive services, using traditional cultural connections, including policies and protocols that meet the needs of those served) (SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 2014; Working Definition of Trauma-Informed Practice, 2022).

Trauma-Informed Social Work in Ukraine: Project Implementation Experience

«Trauma-informed social work» and «trauma-informed youth work» are relatively new concepts in Ukrainian social work but are necessary practices that meet social needs (Guide on the Educational Course of Trauma-Informed Youth Work, draft, 2022). Thanks to international partnerships, the corresponding direction is being implemented in youth work in Ukraine, notably the project «Youth for Democracy in Ukraine: Phase III» under the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine for 2023–2026.

Within the Council of Europe project «Youth for Democracy in Ukraine: Phase II» in collaboration with the Council of Europe project «Internal Displacement in Ukraine: Developing Durable Solutions. Phase II», and at the request of partners and youth centers from Council of Europe member countries, a guide for a trauma-informed youth work educational course was developed and translated (Guide on the Educational Course of Trauma-Informed Youth Work, draft, 2022). In 2022, a four-month training and practical program «Trauma-Informed Youth Work» was implemented in Ukraine in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine and 12 youth centers. The program includes training for trainers and the implementation of training programs in communities. The course includes the following aspects:

- Team Building. Rules of Work.

- Knowledge about Trauma and How a Person Lives with What Has Happened. Legitimation and Normalization.
- Burnout. Compassion Fatigue..
- The «Do No Harm» Principle in the Work of Youth Workers.
- Stress, Traumatic Event, Traumatic Stress in Youth Work and Beyond. «Four Elements» Protocol.
- Secondary Traumatization and Its Prevention.
- Foreign Practices in Youth Work.
- Approaches in the Context of Working with People Who Have Experienced Traumatic Events in the Activities of Youth Workers.
- Salutogenic Approach in Interaction with a Person Who Has Experienced Traumatic Events.
- Knowledge of the Principles of Legitimation and Normalization When Interacting with People Who Have Experienced Traumatic Events, etc.

Corresponding training is conducted in countries that have provided temporary shelter to young Ukrainian refugees, including training for youth workers «Human Rights Education with Young Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities in Romania» (2023). The educational course is organized by the National Youth Foundation and the Timiș County Youth Foundation with financial support from the European Union. The course aims to develop youth workers' skills in preparing, implementing, and evaluating educational activities and human rights programs based on Compass approaches (2023) – Human Rights Education Guide for Youth.

Trauma-oriented social work and corresponding practices in the Ukrainian social sphere respond to the challenges posed by the Russo-Ukrainian war. Among trauma-informed social practices for youth in Ukraine, for example, a joint course by three universities — the Ukrainian Catholic University, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, and the University of Freiburg «Trauma-Informed Primary Psychosocial Assistance» — was initiated in 2024 for students in «Psychology» and «Social Work» specialties. The course covers many aspects of the trauma-informed approach, various types of disorders from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression to various dependencies.

Trauma-informed practices encompass various social spheres. In Ukraine, for example, the «Trauma-Informed Media Industry Policy» (2022), have been developed to draw the media industry's attention to the need to develop a trauma-informed organizational culture in response to the challenges of war. Overall, it is worth noting that the Ukrainian socio-humanitarian space has created a significant number of practical tools focused on trauma work, psychological/psychosocial support, PTSD prevention, and the prevention of secondary traumatization, etc.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Summarizing the results of the analysis of the trauma-informed approach in the social sphere, particularly in social work, it is necessary to emphasize the significant attention at the Council of Europe and in the USA to the theoretical and practical aspects of the approach. The internationally recognized definition of trauma in the context of the trauma-informed approach was developed by SAMHSA (SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, 2014). In 2022, the United Kingdom developed a document aimed at defining the essence of trauma-informed practice, key

principles, professional resources, and tools (Working Definition of Trauma-Informed Practice, 2022). Various aspects of the trauma-informed approach are widely covered in scientific publications from European countries and the USA.

The analysis of sources regarding trauma-informed social work under war conditions in Ukraine indicates significant attention and existing experience in trauma-informed youth work (within the Council of Europe project «Youth for Democracy in Ukraine: Phase II»); the availability of developed medical protocols, practical resources, and related educational course issues, particularly in psychosocial support for youth under wartime conditions. However, theoretical foundations and methodological developments in trauma-informed social work, in our opinion, are insufficient in Ukrainian social work theories. Such practice responds to social challenges and facilitates the implementation of the «research in action» approach (Semigina, Yaroshenko, 2018), allowing social workers and other professionals to respond flexibly to social needs. Thus, there is a need to develop modern theoretical and methodological materials that take into account the specifics of Ukrainian social work under war conditions.

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ТРАВМА-ІНФОРМОВАНИЙ ПІДХІД: АКТУАЛЬНІСТЬ ДЛЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ РОБОТИ

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Анотація. Травмоінформований підхід, концепція «травмоінформованої практики» – актуальна для соціальної сфери європейських країн, зокрема соціальної роботи. Водночас, для української соціальної сфери в умовах воєнного часу актуальними стали такі поняття, як «травма», «гостра стресова реакція» (ГСР), «посттравматичний стресовий розлад» (ПТСР) та інші, що пов'язано із загрозами психологічної травматизації населення. Травмоінформований підхід є дуже затребуваним та перспективним для української практики соціальної роботи. Метою публікації є стисло викласти результати дослідження сутності та основних принципів практики, що базується на травмоінформованому підході (травмоінформованій практиці), актуальності та проєктів травмоінформованої соціальної роботи в Україні в умовах воєнного часу. У міжнародному науковому дискурсі існують дослідження травмоінформованого підходу, травмоінформованої практики; концептуальні документи організацій медичної та соціальної сфер, що відображають сутність та основні принципи цього підходу. Дослідження задокументували вплив травматичних подій на порушення нервової та імунної систем, подальшу поведінку, що є небезпечною для здоров'я, хронічні фізичні або поведінкові розлади. Концепція травми SAMHSA (США) така: «Індивідуальна травма є результатом події, серії подій або сукупності обставин, які переживаються людиною як фізично або емоційно шкідливі або такі, що загрожують життю, і які мають тривалий негативний вплив на функціонування людини та її психічне, фізичне, соціальне, емоційне або духовне благополуччя». Результати аналізу щодо практики травмоорієнтованої соціальної роботи в Україні свідчать про наявний досвід травмоорієнтованої молодіжної роботи (в рамках проєкту Ради Європи «Молодь за демократію в Україні»); існування розроблених медичних протоколів, практичних ресурсів, пов'язаних з питанням навчальних курсів, зокрема з психосоціальної підтримки молоді в умовах воєнного часу. Однак, на нашу думку, теоретичних основ та методологічних розробок травмоорієнтованої соціальної роботи недостатньо в українських теоріях соціальної роботи. Тим не менш, така практика реагує на соціальні виклики, сприяє впровадженню підходу «дослідження в дії», який дозволяє соціальним працівникам та іншим фахівцям гнучко реагувати на соціальні потреби.

Ключові слова: розширення можливостей, підтримка, травмоорієнтований підхід, травмоорієнтована практика, травмоорієнтована соціальна робота, українська соціальна робота.

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