

KATARZYNA NOSEK-KOZŁOWSKA

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/000-0001-6435-1545>
katarzyna.nosek@onet.eu

The Role of a Teacher in the Process of Supporting Mental Health of Both Children and Teenagers

Rola nauczyciela w procesie wsparcia zdrowia psychicznego dzieci i młodzieży

Abstract: The predominant goal of this article is to elaborate on the role that a teacher plays in the process of mentally supporting both children and teenagers. The theoretical section of the paper covers definitions pertaining to mental health and resilience, the specificity of functioning of young people in the modern world, the impact of various factors, including those environmental and societal ones on their well-being, as well as everyday life-related problems that such individuals may experience. Examinations strictly related to experiences and methods applied by teachers attempting to take a proper care of the mental health of their students during the pandemic period, as well as in the course of the currently ongoing war in Ukraine have been carried out among teachers working at various levels of education, but all providing their educational services within the borders of Warmia and Mazury Province. The results obtained clearly show that teachers are among individuals who may have a notable impact on the mental condition of minors, especially if such students spend a lot of time with said tutors. Therefore, teachers have to showcase certain competences allowing them to improve the mental resilience of their students.

Keywords: sanity; resistance; student; teacher; support

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest ukazanie roli nauczycieli w procesie wsparcia zdrowia psychicznego dzieci i młodzieży. Teoretyczny namysł obejmuje definicyjne ujęcia zdrowia i odporności psychicznej, specyfikę funkcjonowania młodych ludzi we współczesnym świecie, wpływ różnorodnych czynników, w tym środowiskowych i społecznych, na samopoczucie uczniów oraz doświadczane przez nich problemy życia codziennego. Badania dotyczące doświadczeń i metod pracy nauczycieli wspierających zdrowie psychiczne uczniów w dobie pandemii oraz podczas aktualnego konfliktu zbrojnego na Ukrainie były prowadzone wśród nauczycieli różnych szczebli edukacji pochodzących z województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego. Refleksja nad podjętą problematyką wskazuje, że jedną z osób mających znaczący wpływ na stan zdrowia psychicznego młodego człowieka jest nauczyciel,

gdyż uczeń spędza w szkole dużo czasu. W związku z tym powinien on posiadać odpowiednie kompetencje, aby kształtować odporność psychiczną swoich podopiecznych.

Słowa kluczowe: zdrowie psychiczne; odporność; uczeń; nauczyciel; wsparcie

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Mental health of children and teenagers is an exceptionally popular and vital topic in the modern society. It has to be mentioned at the very beginning that minors have had to experience pandemic, military conflicts, loneliness, as well as the lack of understanding of their needs and issues. In the current global situations, new societal, demographic, political, and health-related problems arise that may have a notable impact on the functioning of not only adult individuals, but on children and teenagers as well. The COVID-19 pandemic became one of the major causes of the deteriorating state of many interpersonal relations maintained by young people. In its initial stages, many students experienced the sense of the lack of control over their own lives. It was predominantly the result of various restrictions, changing the mode of education from the standard to the online-based one, as well as limiting various everyday activities that had been considered to be normal and taken for granted. It can be stated without a shadow of a doubt that minors had to face a factual crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A crisis can be understood as the perceiving or experiencing an event or situation as an obstacle that is impossible to overcome, in the case of which overcoming the challenge faced seems to exceed the capabilities and coping mechanisms of the affected person. Nevertheless, every crisis can be perceived both as an opportunity and a threat simultaneously. Emotions felt play an important role when it comes to motivating a given person to act and to change the situation faced. Without such difficulties, it would likely be remarkably difficult for a given individual to find the energy to change the specificity of the situation and develop. (Pyżalski, 2020, p. 12)

The lives of minors were characterized by the emergence of a number of stressors that negatively affected their mental condition and sense of security. They had to face the fear for their own health, as well as for the health of their beloved ones. They were also afraid to lose contact with family members, friends, and various acquaintances. The overall situation of children and teenagers being parts of Polish families during the pandemic era is comprehensively showcased by a research report by Markowska-Manista and Zakrzewska-Olędzka (2020). As stated by the authors, the completely new pandemic situation affected predominantly children who – for their own safety and for the safety of their families – were prevented from taking part in events and tasks that had always been a key part of their daily routine. The outcomes of the study entitled *Zdalne nauczanie a adaptacja do*

warunków społecznych w czasie epidemii koronawirusa [Remote education and adaptation to social conditions during the coronavirus epidemic] conducted by Ptaszek et al. (2020a) clearly stated that students had realized that their physical and mental well-being had significantly worsened in comparison to the pre-pandemic period. The conducted analysis also showcased the fact that almost a third of the students participating in the study stated that they had experienced the feelings of sadness (28.9%), loneliness (27.4%) and depression (28.4%) some or all the time (Ptaszek et al., 2020a). When the pandemic situation stopped being so troublesome, the war in Ukraine started. It has also had a negative impact on the mental well-being of both children and teenagers, as it has shattered their notions of safety, freedom, and normalcy. Said statement seems to be confirmed by examination carried out by Daszykowska-Tobiasz and Babicki, pertaining to the quality of life of students in relation to the constantly ongoing war in Ukraine, specifying that

the respondents have not been active participants of the Ukrainian war, but its occurrence close to the Polish border and significant media buzz connected with horrifying mass events, reporting on the number and nature of the victims (being, among others, children), and presenting interviews with war refugees have all negatively affected their psychological experiences and notably lowered their sense of security. (Daszykowska-Tobiasz, Babicki, 2022, p. 188)

Furthermore, modern children and teenagers have a constantly decreasing number of friends in the real world. They tend to engage in more and more relationships online. What is more, there has been also a significantly growing pressure on achieving success and happy life, which may also affect children and teenagers, especially those taking advantage of social media on regular basis. Civilization-specific changes may have a remarkably negative impact on the mental health of children and teenagers. Outcomes of pieces of research conducted in recent years have shown a serious decline in life satisfaction among young people. What is more, they have also proved a notable increase in the experienced sense of loneliness and exclusion. The number of depression and suicide attempts has also increased (Ostaszewski, 2017, pp. 59–63). It is also worth mentioning that an increasing number of minors, especially teenagers, tend to have issues with self-perception and self-acceptance, which is to a remarkable extent connected with operating predominantly in digital world, in which, they constantly meet with idealized and unreal images pertaining to human beings and their ways of life. It has to be pointed out that the processes of self-evaluation and self-acceptance may affect the overall well-being of young people. Minors experiencing various forms of stress may result in the emergence or increase of the severity of a number of mental illnesses in them, such as depression or psychotic disorders (Stavridou et al., 2020, p. 615). Said stress may also cause certain behavioral disorders: prone-

ness to suicide and self-mutilation, eating disorders, sleep disorders, or resorting to violence against other people (Beam, Kim, 2020, p. 58).

“Mental issues have become the greatest health-related challenge to be faced in Europe in the 21st century. As much as half of all mental health problems in adulthood has its roots in adolescence or the period right before it” (Wojtczuk, 2021 p. 104). It is crucial to support the mental health of both children and adolescents, not only in the familial environment, in the school one as well.

The predominant goal of this paper is to showcase the role and experiences of teachers in the process of mentally supporting children and teenagers. The theoretical section of the paper covers definitions pertaining to mental health and resilience, the specificity of functioning of young people in the modern world, the impact of various factors, including those environmental and societal ones on their well-being, as well as everyday life-related problems that such individuals may experience. The results obtained clearly show that teachers are among individuals who may have a notable impact on the mental condition of minors, especially if such students spend a lot of time with said tutors. Therefore, teachers have to showcase certain competences allowing them to improve the mental resilience of their students. The societal awareness pertaining to issues that are strictly connected with mental health and the necessity of taking a proper care of the discussed sphere of human existence is improving. Nevertheless, it should be improved further, mainly by means of societal campaigns and actions organized with individuals experiencing mental and psychological problems, together with their families, in mind. Said undertakings may make it possible for them, as well as for all of us, to live in a more caring and tolerant environment.

Mental health of children and teenagers is a very popular topic in the 21st century, being approached by numerous representatives of various fields of science, including pedagogues, psychologists, and medical practitioners. Such interest is predominantly caused by the validity and up-to-date nature of said issue.

MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL RESILIENCE IN MODERN WORLD

Mental health is an inseparable and extremely important aspect of the overall condition of every human being. According to a definition proposed by the WHO, “mental health shall be understood as a state of well-being, in the case of which an individual is capable of realizing his or her own abilities, coping with stressful everyday life situations, working productively, and to contributing to its community. Mental health is therefore much more than just the absence of mental disorders” (WHO, 2022). Mental health covers, among others, the subjective sense of well-being, sense of one’s own efficiency, autonomy, competence, intergenerational rela-

tions, as well as the possibility of self-realizing one's own intellectual and emotional potential (WHO, 2022). Mental resilience is understood as the ability of an individual to develop in a proper manner and to function in a satisfactory societal and psychological fashion, regardless of the occurrence of unfavorable living conditions (Borucka, Ostaszewski, 2012, p. 8). Mental resilience may be understood as inner balance and peace. It is one of personality traits that is to a remarkable extent responsible for the ability of a person to cope with various challenges, regardless of the circumstances, meaning – regardless of whether said person is healthy, full of energy, wealthy, and surrounded by a group of devoted individuals, or lonely, dealing with health issues, and having a difficult financial situation (Clough, Strycharczyk, 2017). In her article, Grzegorzewska (2011, pp. 40–45) states that when it comes to teachers and tutors, knowledge pertaining to the phenomenon of mental resilience is of utmost importance, for it helps them gain a broader perspective on the possibility of changing the environment of students experiencing life-related stress. It, in turn, may notably impact their teaching-oriented undertakings. A teacher may improve the overall well-being of children and their families by teaching them new ways of dealing with unfavorable conditions experienced (Grzegorzewska, 2011, p. 46). A proper relation with a teacher is considered to be one of factors protecting children and teenagers against harm, as well as improving their mental resilience. It has to be noted that modern children spend a lot of their time at school, so a proper relation with a teacher may become the source of support for them and may improve their mental condition, especially when they experience difficulties at home or in school. In the opinion of Wojtczuk (2020, p. 107), one of the tasks of a school is to shape proper self-esteem and the sense of self-worth in a person, offer age-appropriate challenges, respond in a positive manner to his or her successes, as well as to teach constructive ways of dealing with failures. It is especially important for teachers and tutors to recognize the individual needs of students and create proper development-related opportunities for them.

An increasing number of educational units operating in Poland is undertaking actions connected with taking a proper care of mental health of children and teenagers. They include: classes developing emotional and social competences, social therapy classes, meetings with a psychologist, educational classes on the discussed subject, as well as other educational and preventive activities (own research). In his textbook, Pyżalski (2020, p. 12) proposes certain methods of supporting students facing their personal crisis. They include, among others: information-oriented undertakings (aimed at making minors aware of what a crisis is, how it manifests itself, as well as how to deal with it), educational ones (oriented towards equipping students with coping-oriented strategies), and alternative ones (based on encouraging students to react independently while facing a particular crisis). In addition to implementing such strategies, teachers, tutors, and other educators should persistently develop mental

health care-oriented schemes, as it may to a notable extent affect human functioning. Unfortunately, some of them do not have the required knowledge or competences in said regard, as well as cannot properly approach difficult situations experienced by their students. As pointed out by Pyżalski (2020, p. 15), “it is simply impossible to engage in educational work with students while at the same time disregarding their current life situation, emotional state, and resources necessary to deal with the reality they face. There are numerous actions that teachers can opt for in said case, even though they may not be factual experts when it comes to crisis-related support”.

A school should be considered by children and teenagers attending it to be a safe space, creating proper development-oriented conditions, as well as allowing them to develop their fields of interest, skills, and interpersonal abilities. It should be a place where young people can take advantage of unlimited support capabilities pertaining to every part of their everyday functioning, with the main focus being put on mental health. Reliance on naturally occurring social resources available in the student’s immediate environment is the most effective and economical solution when it comes to dealing with mental crises of various kinds (Grzelak, Żyro, 2021, p. 88).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

For the purpose of the examination, the case study method was taken advantage of (Jemielniak, 2012, p. 116) together with the interview technique. It was a narration-based interview focusing on a specific issue (Chase, 2009, p. 25). The examination oriented towards the analysis of experiences and methods utilized by teachers engaged in supporting mental health of their students during the pandemic era and the period of war in Ukraine was conducted from December 2022 to March 2023 among tutors working in various educational units (primary schools and secondary schools) within the borders of the Warmia and Mazury Province. The said examination was embedded in the concept of symbolic interactionism in the interpretative paradigm. The inclusion of a given teacher in the sample was governed by cognitive aspects. The purposeful selection of examined individuals basing on the specificity of the research problems was opted for. The results obtained are presented within the scope of this paper in a selective manner and constitute a cohesive narrative. The author is determined to interpret the reality faced by the examined individuals by analyzing their statements (and comparing them with each other) by using a descriptive method of text interpretation (Nosek, 2018, p. 199). In total, 8 teachers were interviewed during the course of examination carried out (some of their utterances and opinions are included in this text), whose statements were coded from N1 to N8 (teacher 1, teacher 2, etc.). Either K or M was added to the code, specifying the gender of the respondent (K – female, M – male).

SPECIFICITY OF THE EXAMINED TEACHERS

The examination was carried out among teachers working in primary schools (years 4 to 8) and secondary schools (high school) within the borders of the Warmia and Mazury Province. The author decided to examine teachers working in the specified province predominantly due the fact that the epidemic situation in said region had been particularly difficult. In the case of Warmia and Mazury, pandemic-related restrictions had been in place for a long time, whereas infections had accounted for 4% of all confirmed coronavirus cases in Poland (Lewiński, Piedziewicz, 2021). The situation in the province could have had a significant impact on the mental health of its inhabitants in the opinion of the author. Furthermore, in 2016 in the Warmia and Mazury Province, there were 0.21 thousand hospitalizations caused by diagnosed behavioral disorders or mixed behavioral and emotional disorders. During the said year, there also were 0.09 thousand hospitalizations caused by diagnosed stress-related neurotic disorders and somatoform disorders, as well as 0.02 thousand hospitalizations being the result of diagnosed emotional disorders of minors that were classified as mental illnesses (*Mapa potrzeb zdrowotnych...*, 2016, pp. 199–215). The pandemic situation could have significantly increased the percentage of minors hospitalized with various mental disorders. In total, 8 professionally active teachers took part in the study. They had been constantly improving their capabilities, predominantly by participating in various training sessions designed in such a way to equip teachers with a number of efficient methods and techniques, as well as to allow them to apply an individualized approach to each and every student. The examined teachers were characterized by various levels of professional development (among them, there was 1 contract teacher, 3 appointed teachers, as well as 2 certified teachers). The examined tutors were between 34 and 48. The examination included 5 women and 3 men. The sample included 6 women and 2 men. The statements of the teachers quoted in the empirical part of the paper were coded.

MENTAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO STUDENTS IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA AND DURING WAR IN UKRAINE – TEACHERS' STATEMENTS

A teacher is a specific profession, which can be seen in general perception and articles pertaining to the topic published. In such publications, said profession is sometimes referred to as a mission, art, or calling. Its specificity is discussed in pedeutological literature, which clearly states that it is a profession that requires certain unique personal predispositions. It is also connected with some degree

of ambivalence, exceptionality, and communication-oriented nature. Teacher's actions should be constantly connected with the interpretation of contexts and the search of hidden meanings. Brzezińska notes that

regardless of the age and experience, (...) – a teacher is expected to guide students through the ever-changing world basing on his or her competences. He or she is required to focus on key competences (whatever they may refer to), prepare students to deal with everyday life that is increasingly more open, mobile, and difficult to predict. What is also important – children and teenagers have to be guided through a world, in the case of which physical reality is as important as virtual one. (Brzezińska, 2011, p. 36)

Current schools require specific teachers who can deal with difficult and unexpected situations, including the most recent COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

It is not easy to be a teacher in the current world, being full of traps and threats that may affect young people. Students have to create strong relations with teachers and tutors. They want such professionals to know and understand their needs, interests, as well as strong and weak points.

Young people require understanding and acceptance, as well as the sense of security, which they lack on everyday basis. Pandemic, wars, and everything else makes students more and more afraid of the world, which results in them isolating themselves from the society, seeking refuge in the online world, and falling victims to various addictions. They require wise teachers and adults around them, who will support and teach how to deal with everyday life. N1

The above utterance was the statement of a history teacher having 15 years of professional experience in a primary school (classes IV–VIII), who had additionally been a class tutor for seven years. Both the examined woman and other teachers stated that serving the role of both teacher and educator was a remarkable challenge, especially in the modern world. Teenagers often have certain difficulties with understanding their own identity, have to deal with numerous difficult situations, and matters that may threaten their health condition or the sense of security, which in turn may affect their well-being, both physical and mental one. It frequently makes them seek refuge in the digital world of friendships, games, and dreams. It is to serve as a safe haven, protecting them against illnesses, difficulties, and conflicts. During the interview being a part of the examination, the examined woman emphasized that she had tried her best to get to know all her students. She also pointed out that it had not been a simple task to achieve. As a class tutor, she had had to deal with various issues involving her students. She stated that she had often talked to them, tried to react to their mood changes accordingly, and attempted to understand reasons behind them. During her classes, she had been discussing numerous topics being closely connected to emotions, feelings, mental

well-being, and interpersonal relations. She stated that she perceived them as especially important in the modern world.

Examinations carried out by the We Empower Children Foundation have shown that one of factors that may cause a remarkable harm to mental health of children and teenagers is stress, especially the one experienced while at school (Szredzińska, 2017, p. 98). It may be connected with the excessive amount of educational material to master, strict principles to follow, parental pressure, or strong focus on satisfactory grades. The examined teachers also pointed out that excessive aspirations of parents towards their children and teenagers had been identified. Parents had expected them to achieve remarkable educational successes, to win the organized contests, to engage in extra activities, as well as to excel in as many fields as possible. The pandemic period also increased the school-related stress, as in the course of remote learning, teachers did not have the possibility of communicating with students in real time or had no knowledge or access to tools that would have allowed them for such a contact. Due to the said fact, teachers resorted to providing students with certain topics, exercises, and notes for students to focus on at home. What is more, they assigned homework to be done and sent in a digital form or in the form of a photo to be checked. Such a system undoubtedly was a burden for both teachers and students. The latter had to spend a lot of time to do exercises and make notes on their own (Nosek-Kozłowska, 2022, pp. 99–100).

Pandemic and remote learning overburdened children and teenagers physically, especially when it comes to the necessity of dealing with exercises, tasks, and notes on their own or exercising during PE classes individually, but the mental burden cannot be underestimated as well. Young people who need to spend time outside of their homes, to meet with their peers and with other adults in various places, were required to stay at home in order not to put their health and lives at risk. N3

After the end of the remote learning period, it turned out that many students were behind with the material or were unable to understand it fully, which translated into the decrease of overall well-being of both children and teenagers. The cause of school-related stress may also be the inability to focus on one's own fields of interest, school-related conflicts, or learning difficulties mentioned above.

I sometimes think that we expect too much from children and teenagers. Being teachers, we want them to be as good as possible in the field that we teach. What is more, parents also expect excellent grades and satisfactory behavior. There may sometimes not be enough time or space for developing passions and making mistakes. Both of those can help us truly grow, am I right? How to learn while being a perfectionist in every field imaginable? N5

It was a statement of a teacher working in a high school for 8 years. It is worth mentioning that aside from teaching biology, she had also been working as a school educator. The woman stated that teachers often would like students to

devote most time and attention to learning the subject they teach, which is simply impossible for young students. The number of subjects taught and the range of material covered is typically so remarkable that children and adolescents have not enough free time to properly study. What is more, school-related stress and stress connected with the concern about one's health or safety that are both inseparable elements of everyday functioning of modern young people negatively affect their physical well-being. The results of the Polish survey conducted by Ptaszek et al. (2020b) clearly show that the majority of adolescent students felt much worse or worse after three months from the moment of school closing than they had felt before the outbreak of the pandemic. The said study also points to an increase in the experienced depressive mood – it affected 23% of girl and 8% of boy students after the closure of schools. The girls were more eager than boys to declare that they had regularly experienced sadness, loneliness, and anxiety (Ptaszek et al., 2020b). It can be, therefore, concluded that teachers have a remarkable impact on the mental state of both children and teenagers. Aside for setting challenges and preparing a young person to properly function in the society, a modern teacher has to be able to identify life-related situations of students and be capable of supporting them in difficult times. What can a teacher do after noticing bad mood, societal withdrawal, the lack of interest in normally performed activities or general neglect of a particular student?

A professional, supportive teacher should be, above all else, an excellent observer, as he or she can notice changes in behavioral patterns of his or her students. He or she should also be able to create and then maintain close relations with the individuals he or she has been teaching. Young people find it easier to ask a person they trust and know to help them in a difficult situation.

I always try to get to know the students I am to work with better. The initial three or four classes are in my case devoted to integration-oriented exercises that allow me to gather as much information about them as I can. We can start working on the material a bit later. Thanks to my approach, students tend to visit me during breaks to ask about a piece of advice on the school life. Quite frequently, they also want to tell me about a personal issue, ask for help, or talk about peer-related problems. It is very motivating for me as a teacher.
N2

A supportive teacher should talk to the students, but also be able to listen to them respectfully and with a proper understanding. Showing children that we want to know more about their feelings and thoughts encourages them to create meaningful relations with adults. A professional teacher has an enormous knowledge about his or her students and thanks to that he or she can positively affect their self-esteem, allowing them to show their strong personality traits during classes and gain respect of their peers, which may also directly translate into their boosted self-esteem.

I am of the opinion that I do my best to get to know my students better. I know that many of them take part in sports-related activities after school. When they ask me to postpone tests or exams, I try to always do that because I know that relations established outside of the school environment are also very important for their proper development and that they are highly needed, especially after the pandemic and in the era of ongoing war. N8

The statement presented above was provided by a mathematics teacher having 20 years' professional experience in a general high school. While dealing with young people, the man had been paying a lot of attention to their needs, including the need to be active, to relieve tension, and to have regular contact with their peers. During the interview, the teacher also pointed out difficult experiences of children and adolescents related to the pandemic and the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine. Media coverage of the war, especially constant mentions about it in the press and on the Internet, had been lowering the sense of security of young people being afraid that the conflict taking place near the border of their country might have also spread to its territory. Furthermore, the need to provide psychological support to young people coming to Polish schools from the territory of Ukraine was mentioned as yet another notable challenge for teachers and education experts, as such children and adolescents had witnessed the factual war. A similar opinion was also expressed by a female Polish teacher working in a primary school and having 12 years' professional experience (NK6). She stated that Polish students had been increasingly affected by mental health problems. She added that students coming to Polish schools from Ukraine also required professional care. A modern teacher should act as a companion of a young person, leading him or her through the constantly changing world. Isio-Kurpińska (2022) points out that the examinations carried out in July 2022 among the students of final years of primary schools and high schools showed that 75% liked their teachers, whereas 70% of them were of the opinion that teachers had a good contact with their students and knew how to talk to them. 54% of the surveyed students were ready to tell teachers about their problems, including those that were not strictly connected with their education-oriented endeavors. The ability to speak to students and to gain their trust turns out to be a remarkable advantage of Polish teachers, which may serve as a basis for establishing deeper and more meaningful relations with students (Isio-Krupińska, 2022). The examined teachers pointed that out as well:

I simply talk to young people. I let them speak and I listen to them. During classes, I frequently tell jokes, especially when I can sense some tension. Such simple tricks result in the improved well-being of my students on everyday basis. N4

The statement above was provided by an IT teacher with 8 years of professional experience. It shows that, apart from a proper preparation for work in the field of education, interpersonal competences, such as the ability to establish relationships

or having a sense of humor, are also important when it comes to establishing and then maintaining relations with students.

I am of the opinion that the basis of working with young people is establishing a sensible relationship based on trust. In my work, I have encountered a number of colleagues who have been trying to control their pupils at every step. It means that they are unable to establish strong bonds with their students. Sometimes it is even worth forgetting about the topic of a given lesson and devoting the available time to matters that are important to children at the given moment. NK7

It can be stated that in the face of global challenges, the skills and abilities of a modern teacher should be connected not only with technical skills pertaining to designing and managing the teaching process, but also with communication-oriented and interpersonal abilities, allowing to establish deep and meaningful relations with young people that will surely protect them, at least to some extent, against problematic or risky decisions. Regular talks, positive approach to young people, careful listening, and the willingness to learn more about their views and opinions are very important tasks of a teacher, as well as a key to properly supporting a young person and allowing him or her to develop properly in the world full of threats and dangers.

CONCLUSIONS

The modern world offers young people numerous development capabilities, but is also a place where they may have to encounter numerous dangers. Some of them may be detrimental to their mental health. Research data available within the scope of the Warmia and Mazury Province seems to suggest that young people living in said area have to deal with mental problems. Therefore, it is important to prepare teachers for supporting both children and adolescents. Despite a relatively high level of societal development, there are still dysfunctional families, in the case of which the lack of proper care and support can be identified that leads to various emotional problems and may cause trauma to children being parts of such social units. The modern world is not only the colorful and vibrant one known to teenagers from the media, but also the one in which pandemics, illnesses, wars, poverty, misery, and numerous difficult situations can be identified as well. Therefore, it is important to teach both children and teenagers that mental health is as important as its physical counterpart and that it is worth taking care of. Preventive actions are of exceptional importance. It is worth organizing classes or meetings connected with the topic of mental health of children and teenagers, as well as to educate parents. Teachers, tutors, and various professionals should establish relations with children that would be based on the sense of security, mutual respect,

and care. They are of exceptional importance for young people and may help them get along with teachers better. The experiences of the examined and interviewed teachers showed that children and adolescents had had an increasing number of issues with finding their own way in the modern world. It can be seen that such individuals had been unable to cope with emotions, could not have recognized them, had found it problematic to establish interpersonal relations, had been overloaded with school-related and extracurricular tasks, as well as had been living in constant stress caused by the willingness to meet the expectations of adults. Educating contemporary children and adolescents is a notable challenge for teachers and educators. Therefore, they should constantly develop, as well as acquire new knowledge and skills in order to properly teach minors and support their development.

It may be that the modern school requires changes, especially those connected with the issue of mental care and mental well-being of students. The matter that is still to be explored and may serve as the field for further research is the issue of mental health of young people, together with ways of supporting them by teachers and experts working in schools. Such examinations could be carried out by means of using quantitative research methods, allowing to draw certain conclusions basing on the analysis of a wider population.

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