



Psychological Features of Aggression of Service Sector Workers in the Conditions of a Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Aims The relevance of the issue under study is conditioned by functional changes in the sphere of both socio-economic functioning of the state and the psychological development of the population in particular. This review was aimed to study the psychoemotional state of the population of Ukraine in connection with changes in the social situation.

Information & Methods The systematic review was done in 2021 and used theoretical methods, namely analysis, synthesis, comparison. For the study, authors investigated articles authored by respected world scientists published since the beginning of the pandemic. As part of a larger ongoing study that monitored various aspects of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, data was collected online using the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) crowdsourcing platform.

Findings The results of this study were demonstrated how destructive social changes were in the sustainable life of the population; in particular, there was a clear increase in the level of physical and verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. Emotional fluctuations affect both professional activity and interpersonal interaction, leading to negative consequences, so there was a need to maintain one's psychological state.

Conclusion The analysis of the theoretical basis of the study makes it possible to see the relationship between changes in the social situation and changes in the emotional sphere of the individual. The research materials will be useful for specialists in psychology, sociology, and political science since the presented materials provide an opportunity for further more detailed practical study of this issue and the development of methods for preventing negative states in crises.

Keywords COVID-19 Pandemic; Aggression; Emotional; Social Changes; Violence

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Introduction

Due to the social changes in society as a result of the pandemic, scientists' attention has been more closely focused on studying its impact on the physical, social, and moral well-being of a person. This study aims to analyze the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, psychoemotional state of the population. Information in the media about the economic crisis in the country due to the difficult epidemic situation appears. Important to understand how the crisis affects people's mental state and how interpersonal interaction functions against the background of an acute crisis in the country and the world. Frequent psychological consequences: tension, anxiety, fear, frustration, irritability, aggression, feelings of emotional exhaustion, grief, and the like. Today, due to the prevalence of COVID-19 infection globally, a situation that gives a strong impetus to increase the emotional tension of the population has developed. Circumstances (Figure 1) have a particularly intense impact on working citizens since both people's physical and mental state suffers, which does not allow them to perform work tasks effectively. An acute crisis can increase stress, which can lead to frustration and anger, and ultimately leads to violence and bullying [1, 2].

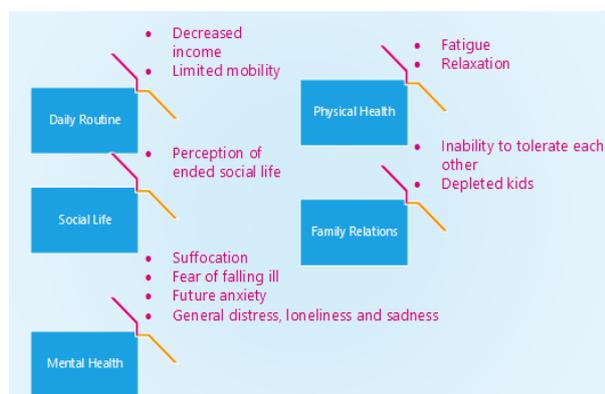


Figure 1) Covid-19 impact on different life domains

Taking into account these factors, the main areas of research can be identified: the impact of the pandemic on the economy (agriculture, manufacturing, medicine, tourism business, trade, etc.), demographic condition of the state; the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the mental state of the population; features of interpersonal interaction in the work environment and the family.

The study's originality consists of the fact that the scientific community does not leave the topic of the emotional sphere development. During this acute crisis period (pandemic), attention is drawn to the manifestations of aggressive behavior among the population. Previously, the occurrence of aggression was studied mainly from a biological point of view. Today, the focus of attention is shifting to the social factors of aggression. As is known, a depressed

mental state can cause an unreasonable feeling of fear. One of the most effective methods of displacing fear is aggressiveness. Aggression is organically linked to violence and is its natural basis for generating destructive behaviors. Therefore, aggression is relevant nowadays both within a particular state and the world as a whole and requires a more detailed and in-depth empirical study.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the frequency of family conflicts, cases of domestic violence, outbreaks of aggression, and cruelty within the workplace has increased, indicators of verbal aggression, psychological pressure have increased, and communication difficulties arise due to the need to perform new social behaviors. An unfavorable social situation and forced changes in the usual rhythm of life negatively affect the psychological state of the population. This confirms the increase in the number of criminal cases of domestic violence in Ukraine. During the pandemic, mental health problems became acute, including anxiety disorders, depression, loneliness, and suicidal intentions [3]. Prolonged social isolation and strict travel restrictions contribute to feelings of reduced kinship with others, reduced feeling of autonomy, and self-efficacy, which are the most important components of self-determination [4]. Isolation blocks the achievement of the desired goal (for example, the desire to leave the house and spend time communicating in a favorite place with loved ones), as a result of which a negative affective state predisposes a person to commit aggressive actions, which can be expressed in various ways, including physically aggressive behavior, verbally aggressive reactions, feelings of anger and/or hostility. It is considered that to demonstrate aggressive tendencies; it is enough to experience feelings of frustration [5]. The causes of domestic violence and the means of countering it were actively investigated [6]. Followed procedures were under the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation and with the Helsinki Declaration of 2013.

During a pandemic, the development of the emotional sphere of people is a particularly acute issue, especially in the manifestations of aggression among the population. Currently, in Ukraine, there is a lack of studies on this topic. Therefore, this review was aimed to study the psychoemotional state of the population of Ukraine in connection with changes in the social situation.

Information and Methods

The systematic review was done in 2021 and used theoretical methods, namely analysis, synthesis, comparison. For the study, authors investigated articles authored by respected world scientists published since the beginning of the pandemic. As

part of a larger ongoing study that monitored various aspects of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, data was collected online using the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) crowdsourcing platform.

This study analyzed the manifestations of aggression within different social groups (work environment, family). In addition, to establish common and distinctive features between processes, phenomena, and objects, the studies of both Ukrainian and foreign scientists regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the psychoemotional development of the individual [8-20] were compared. The practical part of the study was the analysis of survey results [10] (a method of collecting information about the object under study during direct or indirect communication between the interviewee and the respondent). The advantage of the survey method is the possibility of an individual approach to each participant. A total of 5,928 English-speaking adults living in the United States of America from all 50 states and the district of Columbia (53.7% of women and 46.3% of men) completed a set of online assessments, including the valid Buss-Perry Aggression (BPA) questionnaire, which was developed in 1992 and adapted in 2002-2004. The questionnaire consists of 24 statements, which study participants need to answer on a 5-point scale, where 1 point is "not similar to me", and 5 - "very similar to me" [10].

Further, the results obtained were processed according to the methodology's key, and indicators of the degree of a particular indicator were displayed [10]. As part of a larger ongoing study that monitored various aspects of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, data was collected online using the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) crowdsourcing platform [10, 11]. The survey included adults who speak English and live in the United States [10]. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 90 years. Participants completed an online questionnaire (based on security considerations during quarantine) that included the BPA questionnaire [7], a widely used indicator of aggressive tendencies having acceptable psychometric properties, and other questions about demographics and personal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The BPA questionnaire technique includes an overall aggression score, as well as four subscales measuring physical aggressiveness (using physical force against another person), verbal aggression (expressing negative feelings through the form (shouting) and content of verbal responses), anger (a violent display of anger directed at the closest person), and hostility (a complex of effects that includes emotions of anger or disgust. hostility does not necessarily lead to aggression).

Findings

Based on the purpose of this paper, the authors will subsequently consider the studies that describe the consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the economic, demographic crisis and changes in the mental state of the population. The quarantine brought down consumer sentiment almost stopped the retail, hotel, restaurant, and air transportation industries. As a result of the quarantine, Ukrainian companies froze investment and production chains. The tourism industry of Ukraine was the first to feel the consequences of the active phase of quarantine. Most of the hotels remained closed and did not have the opportunity to host guests officially. One of the most affected due to quarantine restrictions was tourist, resort-recreational, and health facilities (campsites, sanatoriums, boarding houses, health complexes), which almost completely ceased their activities. In the passenger transportation segment, a drop of 45-50% is expected. The decline in cargo transportation volumes of JSC "Ukrzaliznytsia" in the first half of 2020 amounted to almost 9%.

Large retail chains and purchasing firms raised prices for agricultural products during the quarantine period. This was due to a decrease in demand from the population and a gradual change in the industry's structure, due to a decrease in the subjects of agricultural production and, especially, its sale. This is why the rise of prices for agricultural products in Ukraine by 20-40% (for different food groups) compared to the EU countries. The lack of working capital among farmers has already negatively affected the related industry - the sale of agricultural machinery. In 2020, tractors were sold by 19% less, combine harvesters - by 60%, self-propelled sprayers - by 17%.

Quarantine restrictions have considerably affected the retail sector. During the period of strict quarantine restrictions, food and household markets completely stopped working. The entrepreneurial activity also suffers since more than 3/4 of individual entrepreneurs have stopped their activities in all industries. Due to the quarantine, book publishers could not release 70% of the planned new publications and were forced to send 58% of employees on vacation at their own expense. 59.4% of publishers rated the drop in book sales as catastrophic and 37.1% as "average". In addition, due to the quarantine in Ukraine, a huge number of concerts and performances had to be canceled or postponed. For each month of quarantine, ticket operators suffer about 300 million UAH in losses. Considering that small rural settlements provide population growth and, accordingly, are donors of labor resources for urban settlements, contributing to their economic growth, problems in agriculture

are an important factor for analyzing the consequences of the pandemic. It is worth noting that small villages have important natural resources without which districts and regions (which depend on them) will not function effectively. The analyzed industries that have suffered considerable losses during the difficult time of the pandemic carry a demographic crisis since, with the increase in the number of unemployed people in Ukraine, labor migration is growing exponentially. For example, during the few months of the quarantine period (from the beginning of April to the beginning of July), the percentage of unemployed increased by more than 48%. Indicators of job loss and low wages are indicators of migration activity of the population of Ukraine. The survey of the geographical structure of migration activity showed that the most attractive countries for migration are Germany – 25.8%, the Czech Republic – 13.3%, and the United States – 12.5%. Thus, the most attractive countries for migration are those with a high-income level, which corresponds to the hierarchy of migration motives, the main of which was economical. Analysis of the structure of labor migrants shows that the social core of labor migration is young people. This generation is much more mobile than its predecessors, as it lives in the era of the information revolution and the knowledge economy, is more aware of various migration risks. Through migration, as a special type of human behavior, it exercises its highest right to freedom of choice of place of residence and work.

There is some evidence that work-related violence and aggression increased during the COVID-19 outbreak. For example, between 2017 and 2019, there was an alarming increase in incidents involving retail employees. The number of workers experiencing verbal abuse increased by two-thirds during this period. The number of physical attacks has also increased. In 2020, Usdaw research data showed that over the past 12 months, service sector workers had been subjected to abusive treatment caused by Diagram 1.

The results of the 2020 survey clearly show that the crisis has had a major impact on the level of violence and abuse experienced by retail workers. People experienced verbal abuse to a greater extent when they reminded visitors to protect themselves by using personal protective equipment and keeping their distance.

It is known that incidents negatively affect the individual, organizational, and social levels. Incidents can affect one's overall well-being and self-esteem. Physical health impacts may include injuries, cuts, or bruises. Mental health impacts may include anxiety, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, and the potential to increase the risk of suicide. People may feel scared, sad, powerless, angry, or helpless, have trouble sleeping, and suffer chronic fatigue. In this regard, a survey was

conducted on what service sector employees would like to see from employers, what behavior, and what changes. The main call to management was a message about more support from them (38%), zero tolerance for violations (24%), and providing more security personnel (14%). Employees also want more involvement of the police service in these cases (5%), more staff (3%), the presence of information signs and posters (4%), increased social control over social distance (1%), the presence of body cameras (1%) and protective screens (3%). Therefore, after analyzing this study, it can be argued that the pandemic causes an increase in aggression and increases anxiety for one's health.

Interesting is the study of American scientists who used the Buss-Perry aggression questionnaire (BPAQ) to study its manifestations in conditions of limited movement. Researchers refer to this condition as "blocking". The study focuses on the overall level of aggression, as well as four subscales that measure physical aggressiveness (the tendency to engage in physical fights), verbal aggression (the tendency to insult verbally), anger, and hostility (Table 1).

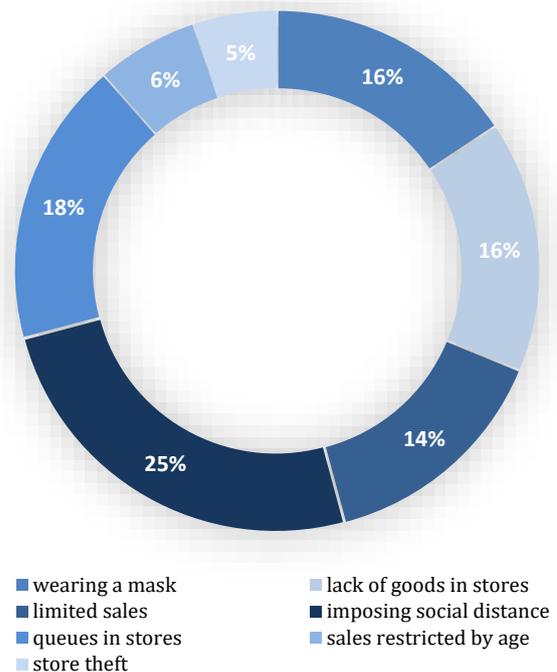


Diagram 1) Causes of abusive treatment

As for the results, it was identified that scores on all scales were higher among those who were isolated than those who were not. However, the indicators varied depending on the possibility of free movement. This study demonstrates how changes in the social environment affect the psychoemotional state of the population. Therefore, it is not surprising that rates of domestic violence and aggressiveness in the workplace have increased during the pandemic.

Table 1) Results of the BPA questionnaire

Variable	Description
Total aggression	The results on this scale show that for those who reported being blocked, the overall aggression score was significantly lower in May compared to April and significantly higher in June compared to May and July compared to June. In contrast, for those who reported that they were not blocked, the only difference between the months was June and July. In addition, there was a comparable overall assessment of aggression between those who reported being locked up and those who were not locked up every month. The overall aggression score was significantly higher for those blocked in June, July, August, and September than those who were not.
Physical aggression	The results on this scale show that physical aggressiveness rates were significantly higher in June than in May for those under lockdown. In contrast, no significant differences were found among those who were not blocked between the consecutive months. Group comparisons showed that physical aggression scores were higher for those who were blocked than those who were not.
Verbal aggression	The results on this scale show that for those in a state of lockdown, verbal aggression rates were significantly lower in May compared to April, significantly higher in June compared to May, and in July compared to June. However, for those who reported that they were not blocked, there was no significant difference between the estimates of verbal aggression over the following months.
Anger	The results on this scale show that for those under lockdown, anger scores were significantly higher in June compared to May and July compared to June. In contrast, for those who reported that they were not blocked, anger was significantly lower in May than April and significantly higher in July than June.
Hostility	The results on this scale show that for those in a state of lockdown, hostility rates were significantly higher in June compared to May and in July compared to June. However, for those who reported that they were not blocked, there was no significant difference between the rates of hostility in the following months.

Experience and post-epidemic scientific studies show that during epidemics and catastrophes, economic crises worsen, and violence increases. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. According to the ILO, the level of violence and harassment (both physical and psychological) can increase during a health crisis (such as the COVID-19 pandemic). In addition, organizational changes, especially where work had to be reorganized, or the physical work environment changed (as happened during the pandemic), can be factors that increase this risk. According to CSEW, the scale of violence (threats and injuries) at work was estimated at 688,000 incidents in the twelve months to March 2020 (389,000 threats and 299,000 attacks). An estimated 307,000 workers were involved in these incidents, and some victims suffered more than one incident. An estimated 1.4% of working adults were victims of one or more cases of industrial violence in March 2020. Unfortunately, this evidence is limited and is

not considered to demonstrate the full extent of work-related violence and aggression. The European Union has already announced an increase in domestic violence due to quarantine, while in Ukraine, the increase in domestic violence cases increased by about 30% during the quarantine period. Domestic violence itself, in the face of restrictions and prohibitions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has become a pandemic itself. Thus, in May 2020, the number of criminal cases of domestic violence in Ukraine amounted to 1,511, while a year earlier, their number was 795. The number of calls to the hotline for victims of violence and shelters for domestic violence victims increased significantly by 37%.

Thus, study analyses made it possible to make sure of the importance of studying aggression. The questionnaires indicate that the level of aggression has increased since the beginning of the pandemic. In addition, the areas of application of aggression were quite different, namely the service sector, where employees felt the deterioration of the psychoemotional state of the population. Verbal threats, threats of physical harm, etc., were applied to them. The restriction of mobility also had consequences. According to research, during the month of acute epidemiological threat, the population needed to be isolated from the outside world. This led to increased levels of physical and verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. According to Ukrainian and foreign data, these are threatening indicators since the facts of violent actions both in the professional environment and domestic violence have also increased.

Discussion

Ukrainian and foreign scientists actively studied the topic of aggression, aggressiveness, and any other emotional manifestation. The term "aggression" is defined as a form of behavior aimed at causing physical or psychological harm, damage to living beings up to physical destruction or destruction of inanimate objects. And "aggressiveness" is understood as a "property" of the individual, expressed in the internal readiness of the individual for aggressive actions.

The scientific union studied the issue of aggression, analyzing the biological, genetic, and social causes of its occurrence. Moreover, today in psychology, there is a steady trend towards a multi-factor understanding of human aggression, which considers various aspects of its consideration. Among the researchers, there was a rejection of biologist interpretations of the phenomenon of aggression, which reduced it to manifestations of an innate instinct is inherent in human nature. The social context of many studies has become more clearly traced, which means direct access to the range of topical issues that concern all of humanity

today. Laboratory experiments were conducted to study the negative impact of aggression on interpersonal interaction. The study of the relationship of personal characteristics (social anxiety, self-control, etc.) with aggressiveness and the relationship of aggressiveness with hostility and with various situational variables had started. Modern researchers associate increased aggressiveness, an important motivator of behavior, with internal conflicts and the poor development of the "self-image". Scientists also put forward the idea that aggression never occurs in a vacuum, that its existence is largely due to certain aspects of the environment.

An important aspect of studying the problem of aggression is the analysis of its manifestations in the work environment. Since studying this issue in Ukraine and the former Soviet Union has been conducted much less than in Western science, it is logical to analyze foreign research. Workplace aggression in foreign jobs is defined by two terms: workplace aggression and workplace violence. Western researchers define the first term as attempts of an individual(s) to harm other people with whom they work or have worked. This usually includes cases of verbal aggression, psychological pressure, and demonstrative impoliteness. The second term refers to extreme acts of aggression, which usually take the form of a direct physical attack. Violence in work is mainly caused by social factors, including psychosocial risks, workplace culture, and work situations. Examples of possible psychosocial risks that contribute to workplace violence include the following: job requirements; job performance control; monotonous work; clear distribution of roles; lack of communication between colleagues; managerial styles [13, 21-25].

Interestingly, a system of factors that directly or indirectly affect the commission of violent crimes by employees in the workplace was identified. In general, they belong to two main groups – personal and situational, concerning the social or material environment. Having analyzed all these factors in more detail, they can be divided into four groups: individual and psychological, socio-psychological, socio-economic, and physical (ergonomic). The first group includes such personal traits of employees as a high level of hostility and aggressiveness, intemperance, weak self-control, low tolerance, a tendency to impulsive behavior, alcohol and drug abuse. Researchers also point to the important role of factors such as stressful conditions in employees and the experience of anger and rage. Socio-psychological factors include the presence of interpersonal conflicts among employees, family problems, norms and values of a particular work team, authoritarian leadership style in the organization, or management's inattention to the

employee's problems. Low wages or job loss are examples of socio-economic causes. Among the physical environment factors, the influence of temperature, noise effects, large crowds, air pollution, etc., are distinguished.

Regarding the manifestations of aggression in conditions of limited movement, it is worth noting that more social and political unrest occurred with its growth. The study results show that increased aggressiveness was primarily evident among people who reported being blocked, compared to those who reported not being subject to such restrictions. This suggests that as the pandemic raged month after month, people under lockdown showed a greater tendency to feel suspicious and mistreated, verbally attack others, and even engage in physical aggression [11, 26-30].

Any epidemic, and especially the situation that humanity is experiencing now, leads to stress of the population, regardless of whether a person has been ill or not. One of the most important consequences of any stress is a decrease in the body's physiological reserves, accompanied by some psychological effects: feelings of anxiety, fear, depression, fatigue, and other symptoms. This leads to chronic overexertion and chronic fatigue [14-16, 31], one of the external manifestations of which is emotional burnout [17, 32-37]. Emotional burnout manifests itself through the fear of mistakes, especially in uncertain and uncontrolled situations, which leads to emotional closeness, which reduces emotional stability. As is known, stress and other adverse conditions do not develop separately from the external environment. Emotional stress is only one aspect of this process. It matures in the interaction of the human psyche and harmful environmental factors when a person evaluates stressful collisions as excessive and exceeds the psychophysiological resources available to him. Therefore, prolonged exposure to a complex of stressful factors, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, leads to a number of adverse consequences for the psyche of a working person, particularly to the development of chronic stress. Psychosocial risks and stress at work are associated with unhealthy behaviors, including active alcohol consumption, increased cigarette smoking, poor eating habits, reduced physical activity, and sleep disorders. All of these behaviors affect both physical and mental health and negatively affect working performance. For example, sleep problems pose a serious risk to workers who have to take care of others (emergency and health workers). Therefore, it is important to analyze how psychological support is provided to employees directly at the workplace. During the COVID-19 crisis, psychological support programs can help employees respond and deal with specific cases of stress, including grief and loss (Table 2).

Table 2) Psychological support programs during Covid-19
General actions included in the support programs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating the mental health support initiative into the daily work schedule of companies' employees. • Create employee cooperations to track stress and burnout conditions, as well as to provide psychological support. • Keep under control the condition of employees who have already had psychological or psychosocial problems since it will be much more difficult for them to live through the crisis period, so they need additional attention and support. • Make stress management tools available. These can be relaxation and meditation zones, systematic pieces of training, seminars, and so on. • Inform managers and employees of the company about the availability of psychological support services and encourage employees to use them. • Maintain confidentiality regarding the services provided to employees on an individual basis.
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The level of aggression is growing due to the deterioration of the social situation (the COVID-19 pandemic). People's mental condition is unstable, which worsens their physical health. The question of maintaining mental balance remains open. In psychology, there is a concept of a "trigger model" that can balance the impact of social factors on the population's mental health. Trigger modeling helps in the development of psychological properties. For example, in the issue of deterioration of the emotional state, the development of reflection, that is, the ability of a person to arbitrarily manipulate images in the inner plane and direct the bundle of awareness to those objects and mechanisms that, as a rule, remain unconscious, will help. Professional reflection (that is, the focus of consciousness on oneself as a specialist, on the content of one's professional actions, when performing professional tasks) is an important factor of professionalism, competence, professional maturity, as it increases the effectiveness of solving a wide range of everyday tasks. Professional reflection is an important mechanism of self-regulation both at the operational-technical and motivational levels since it allows a person to take an external position concerning themselves and their actions, which makes their conscious regulation possible. Thus, it is possible to correct their impact on the mental state by identifying trigger points (stimuli that trigger a particular behavior or reaction) [18, 37-40].

Conclusion

The global growth rate of violence and destructiveness has attracted the attention of specialists and the general public to the theoretical study of the essence and causes of aggression. According to most scientists, the cause of violence in society in recent years is many social factors. In particular, the features of the society in which violence manifests itself: the nature of the socio-economic structure of the country, the level of unemployment, poverty, the presence of local military operations, the crime rate, the weakness of laws, the lack of a holistic and effective system for

protecting children. Globalization processes in the socio-cultural sphere have influenced the crisis of personal identity, which has led to the emergence of several neurotic factors that create internal discomfort, stress, provoke the emergence of various neuroses that often manifest themselves in aggressive forms. Therefore, it is critically important that the negative consequences of stressful events are corrected in time with the help of relaxation techniques, meditation, and other psychological exercises since aggressive behaviors can actively spread to different areas of a person's life, often leading to fatal consequences. Distant psychological consequences of the pandemic for Ukrainian society may be an increase in cases of prolonged depression, anxiety states, phobias, panic attacks, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, negative psychoemotional states, unconstructive behavior strategies. All these negative consequences should focus on managers, scientists, and practitioners to develop and implement effective organizational, psychiatric, and psychological measures to maintain the mental health and psychological well-being of the population during the epidemic and after its extinction. This study covers the prerequisites for changing the emotional state of the individual and opens up new opportunities for studying the influence of crisis conditions in society on the features of the psychoemotional state of the population.

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