

# REFLECTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN STATE OF EMERGENCY COUSED BY CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

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# PANDEMIC AS OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGE

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- Opportunity for a natural experiment of self-observation
- Using reflection for the purpose of self-observation and self-awareness
- Opportunity for learning and personal growth
- Connecting with the challenges of social work in the field

# MAIN GOAL

- The goal was to identify but also recognize and consciously observe reactions and pandemic experiences and encourage student introspection
- Research questions:
  - 1) How did SPSW students experience the emergency situation caused by the corona virus?
  - 2) How did they deal with and overcome the stress and uncertainty caused by the global pandemic?
  - 3) What are the lessons learned and gains from this global pandemic crisis?

# METHOD

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Reflective diaries were introduced as homework in frame of two subjects-Counseling and Social work with children and youth for students who inrolled subjects during 2019/2020.

- from March 21 to May 6, they wrote reflections
- A total of 80 students answered the following questions:
- how they feel in relation to the overall condition (physical, mental, social),
- what is their biggest impression / impression of the day,
- what are their plans for the future regarding feelings and impressions? What will he do?

# RESULTS

- Thematic analyses
- Based on grounded theory
- Identified thematic units:
- attitude towards writing diaries,
- consideration of positive aspects of the state of emergence
- Relationships with family members,
- mood swings,
- attitude towards eating and food preparation,
- creating a structure,
- creativity development,
- anxiety,
- depressive states,
- anger and fear



# RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS WRITTING REFLECTIVE DIARIES

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- Different relationship towards writing of reflective diaries
- *First of all, I want to thank you for this task, writing about how I feel and how I spend my days has helped me, and I am especially glad that someone cares to know that*
- *The last time I wrote a diary was when I went to primary school. And I hid it from myself, ... I don't know what this will look like, it's very strange to me, I feel old for this.*

# WORRIES AND FEARES FOR SELF AND OTHERS

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- In all works, the tendency towards care for the most endangered is recognized, as well as the tendency to help all people who are at risk of illness or otherwise endangered by this situation.
- *So my day started with shopping and delivering groceries at the end. I always feel good when I help others.*

# DUALITY IN PANDEMIC PERCEPTION

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- On the beginning of keeping reflective diaries, a duality in the attitude towards the introduction of a state of emergency was noticed, and at that moment there was the greatest reflection of both gains and fears.
- *I'm constantly thinking about how that will unfold, and how this ... In fact, I'm not even sure if I would have an answer to the question of how I would like my most ideal situation to look like.*

# SYMPTOMATHOLOGY OF CORONA VIRUS

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- Given that the described symptoms of shortness of breath and dizziness, similar to the symptoms of panic attacks, a number of students were probably confused due to being overwhelmed with fear.
- *By loading my brain, I sometimes feel like I have symptoms of the corona virus*

# RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY MEMBERS DURING CORONA VIRUS

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- Family relationships have been affected by the awareness that those who have not lived with their parents for the last four years have become accustomed to the family life.
- The initial excitement was accompanied by stress and nervousness from the constant reference to the parents over a long period of time and the inability to direct their energy outside the family system. All unfinished situations were activated and again led to increased tensions and the need for separation.
- *Ram Das once said “If you think you are enlightened, go and spend a week with your family” (If you think you are enlightened, spend a week with your family), there is truth in that.*



# VARIATY OF MOOD

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- The students described feeling that they were suddenly experiencing a "drop in mood" or a drop in energy.
- *It's just amazing how much the mood varies. I didn't pay so much attention to that before, but now I feel those changes far more, probably because we are indoors and there are no regular activities like before.*

# POSITIVE MOOD SVINGS

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- Those students who managed to maintain a predominantly positive mood during the pandemic engaged in self-reflection, introspection, and had a clear structure during daily activities.
- *I spent the rest of the day as usual, with the fact that the morning walk left me with a very pleasant and cheerful feeling.*
- *I admit I was afraid of emotions. I feel stronger now and like I can control my feelings more.*
- Spirituality seems to have had a special influence on the general well-being and stable mood

# SOCIAL CONTACTS, RELATIONSHIP AND STRUCTURE

- Helps them recognize that others are concerned, to exchange strategies for dealing with ~~and overcoming the fears, tensions and helplessness associated with the coronavirus.~~
- The use of information technologies in order to communicate with friends, most of them significantly influenced the increase of optimism.
- The homework and obligations they performed enabled them not to be separated from all obligations and to stay up to date with information and fulfillment of tasks.
- *It meant to me that today I had the opportunity to listen to the professor through Zoom.*



# DEVELOPMENT OF CULINARY ABILITY

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- Some had an aspiration to use the time to learn how to prepare a new dish, some felt the need to help in their household, and some prepared exclusively desserts.
- Everyone reported joy and optimism when preparing food for themselves and their family.
- *While I was cooking, I was happy and I couldn't wait to see if it would work.*



# RELATIONSHIP TOWARD FOOD AND STRESS

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- Those who have experienced more stress and fears also have a higher intake of sweets and snacks.
- *I'm still watching the series. I still eat only. End of April. It is better.*
- *Yesterday I suffered because of my physical transformation and because of the jeans I can't get into, and today I'm thinking all day about which cakes to make. This quarantine is like PMS.*

# CONCETRATION CHALLANGES

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- Tensions were also reflected in the capacity to concentrate, so many students reported that it was extremely difficult for them to concentrate on learning and they needed more time to start learning, as well as to persevere in fulfilling the requirements from the faculty.
- *Today, after studying, I cried for 3 hours for no reason. I had a headache the whole day*

# NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

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Bad mood is often in relationship with evenings, as well as long periods of curfew when it lasted the whole weekend

Increased negative feelings appeared in those students who did not want to engage in introspection and become aware of how they are.

The lack of freedom and inability to move caused fatigue and lack of energy to move.

*I didn't feel well today. Fatigue accompanied me from waking up.*

*What I notice is that I am much more tired during the whole period, although I do not have any special obligations and I am constantly at home*

# NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

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- Especially sad and melancholic feelings were reported by students in the lack of contacts and people with whom they were used to spending time.
- Students showed the set during all the rituals that could not be performed due to the new situation, and which concern visits to places, people and festivals.
- *I miss my friends, it's been a few weeks since I last saw them. Despite that, I try to be satisfied with the fact that they are well, that they are healthy and that we will see each other at the first opportunity and make up for everything we missed with each other.*

# RELATIONSHIP TO THE MEASURES OF THE CRISIS STAFF

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- Most of the students reported that they do not intend to leave the protection measures after the end of the state of emergency, believing that the corona virus is still present and feeling insecurity and fear about the sudden easing of all measures.
- I still don't understand how people don't understand the seriousness of the situation. They tell me that the city is full of people, parks and playgrounds are full, people walk as if it is a regular situation, not an emergency. I think about where their discipline is, do we really have to have such strict measures because we don't want to stay at home.

# RELATIONSHIP TOWARD MEDIA

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- The students recognized that negative feelings are also caused by following the regular reporting of the crisis headquarters, because they bring stress, nervousness and cause a feeling of inability to change anything. As a result, many reported not following the news and current media events
- *Whenever I tear up or cough, I get scared of all that story. I know it sounds silly but I really can't wait for 14 days to pass since I've been in self-isolation.*
- *I don't follow the news about the corona virus at all anymore. The only thing that matters to me is that they abolish this more.*

# RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS FUTRE

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- According to the student diaries, the attitude towards the future is accompanied more by fear and anticipation of negative consequences, and to a lesser extent by the hope that things will return to their regular course and that the virus will stabilize.
- *I have uncertainty and the question is when will everything return to normal? When will everything be as before, when will the fear of infection disappear completely? I wonder that every day.*
- *I see hope, I see freedom that will come again tomorrow, but also the fear that people will behave irresponsibly after the lifting of the state of emergency.*

# CONCLUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

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- The virus has in some way equated people with impotence so that all people, regardless of their position, status or place they occupy in society, could be infected
- The pandemic has inevitably led to a change in human interactions, including self-isolation and physical distance that can have consequences for mental health.
- These include fear, boredom, anxiety, helplessness, mood swings and insomnia

# CONCLUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

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- Research has shown that negative conditions such as anxiety and depression occur very easily in people due to the fact that they are in quarantine.
- Symptoms of anxiety and depression include insomnia, loss of appetite, lack of focus, overthinking, and excessive worry.

# CONCLUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

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- Given that this situation occurred for the first time on a global level in the modern age, there are no built-in mechanisms of overcoming either personal or collective or organizational, so mapping reactions to the new situation is the first step in understanding and co-constructing new mechanisms

# CONCLUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

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- A great insight from this task was the chance to look at yourself every day and to get in touch with all the non-integrated aspects of the self ..
- Although there was enough time, only a small number of students, 7 out of 80, stated that they had learned a new skill, language, or developed some potential.
- The overcoming of depressive and anxiety states is favorably influenced by the structure and activity which, if carried out consciously and with focus, contribute to creativity and inspiration. We can conclude that adaptation is necessary, but not a sufficient condition for growth and development.

# CONCLUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

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- The results of the analysis of reflective diaries showed that social contacts and exchange have a great merit for the general well-being and improvement of mood.
- Although it is not news that a person is *homo sociologicus*, he seems to be in a situation of fear of the virus and misinterpreted recommendations on physical distancing as social, the healing effect of social exchange and support for calm and well-being of people has been confirmed.

# CONCLUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

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- The results point to the importance of nurturing and preserving mental health for the well-being of people in crisis situations, but also raise the question of what educational institutions can do to help both students and employees maintain their well-being and capacity for work and development?



# RECOMMENDATIONS

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- The results indicated that one of the lessons learned during the pandemic was the need for Universities to empower students and employees to connect through social networks and online platforms with an emphasis on mental health.
- Health preservation guidelines should be published regularly on official faculty platforms, and employees (who are experts in these fields) should have regular online meetings and lectures on stress coping strategies during a pandemic.
- It is important to provide students with alternatives in performing pre-examination obligations, practical classes and projects by having employees develop these alternative models in consultation with students.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Another lesson learned is the importance of directing activities during a crisis caused by a pandemic to two groups of interventions:
- Interventions due to fear of the disease and its consequences, which would be led by doctors and psychological counselors
- Interventions due to difficulties in adaptation, which would be led by social workers.

# LIMITATIONS

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- Sample
- Introduction of the obligation of reflection after one week from the beginning of the state of emergency
- the analysis did not include the feelings and reactions of students in relation to their previous experience with diseases and with overcoming crisis situations
- no reactions to media coverage of the deterioration or improvement of the epidemiological situation were considered
- Challenges of neutrality
- Researchers and participants

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

