



An Investigation of Psychological Services of Mental Health of Student's in Uzbekistan: A Critical Evaluation

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Mental health has become an important issue among students throughout the world especially after Covid-19. The present study is an attempt to investigate psychological services among students in higher educational institutions in Uzbekistan. The study also aimed to identify and assess psychological services of mental health in students in Uzbekistan. The study analysed the current state of the activities of psychological services aimed at ensuring the psychological health of students of higher educational institutions, as well as the introduction of the activities of psychological services in the system of higher education. The study also explored and assessed issues and problems of existing psychological services for mental health among students in higher

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education. To eliminate these problems, a model and description of improving the activities of psychological services in higher educational institutions are given, and conclusions and suggestions are presented.

Keywords: *Psychological health; psychological service; model of psychological service; support; psychologist's task.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In globalized world the necessity and importance of mental health of students is increasing. Effective methods of counseling exist that are designed to prevent tragic outcomes, help to cope with crises, and treat certain disorders. Counseling services should be available at every college and every university [1]. For this reason, scientists around the world are developing a number of methods aimed at ensuring the mental health of students. Many of those seek help and student counselling has become an important professional issue throughout the world [2,3]. Nevertheless, this issue still remains a scientific problem at a certain level.

Based on researchers' opinions, university students meet a lot of psychosocial challenges during education. These problems can affect their mental state, physical health, social activity and quality of life [4]. A large body of data shows that a significant number of students meet different mental health difficulties related to their age and psychosocial specificity of student life [5,6,7]. This is a special population group that carries the burden of social and academic challenges as well as the crisis of personal development.

Over the decades scientific researches on the maintenance of mental health of students has been carried out across the world. For instance, in the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia, Russia and Germany demand for mental health services in higher education is rising and increasing numbers of students are disclosing mental health difficulties when they arrive in college [4,8,9]. Whilst increased numbers of students with mental health difficulties attending higher education are reflected in access figures, retention of such students with mental health difficulties is poor and high dropout rates are documented [10].

It is important to note that due to the reforms implemented in Uzbekistan in last years, the normative frameworks for the mechanisms of skill formation are being created to support young people in all aspects, to increase the well-

being of our people by adopting a healthy lifestyle, to solve problems in their daily life, to achieve high economic growth among the population [11]. Therefore, it is a matter of establishing social, practical, scientific and fundamental projects aimed at wide promotion of psychological health. formation of mental health knowledge and skills in young people and adults is defined as a priority direction and task of higher education. It is necessary to deepen scientific research in the direction of determining the psychological and pedagogical factors of ensuring the psychological health of students of educational institutions, introducing the technologies of forming psychological health as a value.

Preventing crisis and stressful situations, developing social and communicative skills, providing psychological support in a conflicting, complex life situation, and forming study skills are components of psychological support in the process of adapting students to the educational environment [12]. Organizing and conducting training sessions on self-organization, and the development of creative abilities for the successful implementation of educational activities in a higher educational institution. In the process of personal and professional formation of students, it is necessary to provide psychological support, initiative, personal and professional positions, professional self-expression, setting life goals, and development of self-awareness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

An important criterion for the effectiveness of any form and method of psychological support of the educational process is the psychological health of students. Therefore, it is important for a psychologist of a higher educational institution to rely on the theoretical rules of health psychology - psychological causes of health, methods and means of ensuring, strengthening and developing it, focusing on the mental development and psychological health of students [13].

As the main methods of creating a pedagogical situation that develops the personality, it is

possible to distinguish communication between the pedagogue and the student in an atmosphere of mutual trust, an individual approach to understanding the problems and personality of the student, motivation for actions that describe the transition to a new stage of personal development, development of reflection and independence [12]. The educational environment of a higher education institution has a number of specific features:

First, the educational environment is characterized by the presence of specific factors related to students' educational workload, and higher education causes significant intellectual, informational, psycho-emotional stress in students (for example, in the case of an exam);

Second, the period of education in a higher educational institution is the stage of active entry into the social environment, and problems arise in interpersonal relations. Social adaptation is accompanied by efforts to gain recognition and a higher position in the group, and attempts to gain a place among peers are often associated with risky behaviour. The diversity of the student body creates additional difficulties in social adaptation. Among the stressful reasons related to group relations, it is possible to observe cases of psychological imbalance between group members;

Third, education at a higher educational institution is considered a decisive period of personal formation, and important events and decision-making are manifested in the years of study, which have a significant impact on the life and professional growth of each student. Therefore, the need for personal self-determination in the future professional environment may be accompanied by a number of negative concerns;

Fourth, students do not pay attention to their health because they believe that their physical and mental capabilities are inexhaustible. The absence of health-oriented education in the educational system, the lack of motivation for a healthy life, and the lack of related knowledge, skills, and qualifications do not allow students to maintain their health. A low level of health care culture causes a person to waste time [14].

These characteristics of the educational environment of a higher education institution indicate that teaching at the university has a number of unique characteristics, which together appear to be a strong risk factor for the health of students [15]. Therefore, psychological health

should be the most basic human need. However, the problem of perfect satisfaction of this need is extremely complex, sometimes extremely contradictory, depending on unexpected factors, and the result does not always lead to the expected result. In this place, the developmental environment in the higher education system is of great importance, and the indicator of the perfect formation of such an environment is the psychological and pedagogical conditions that can ensure the student's self-development. Determining educational needs, the position of students and teachers, and developing psychological and pedagogical conditions to meet educational needs is a necessary condition for adapting the educational process to the conditions of the market economy [15].

The issue of adaptation of students admitted to a higher educational institution to a new educational environment has not lost its relevance even today [16,17]. The researchers found that after the entrance exams, most of the students who started studying at a higher education institution had a decrease in productivity, rapid fatigue, and an increase in the level of anxiety, which indicates the influence of stressful factors in the early period of study. have been highlighted.

Students of higher education institutions, especially first-year students, experience a number of difficulties. This includes, first, their inability to adapt to the conditions of change and uncertainty in the fast-paced picture, second, their disconnection from usual support systems, and third, adjustment and developmental problems (a variety of personal problems ranging from scientific, educational, and professional problems to mental illnesses). and the need to overcome psychological problems) can be noted [18]. Problems of this kind, in turn, cause students to be dissatisfied with educational services. The positive side of such dissatisfaction can be seen as a motivating force that makes the student act, to try to satisfy the needs of knowledge through other, more effective methods. On the negative side, the student loses interest in learning, replaces it with another form of motivation, and his interest in studying fades [19].

Today, modern educational standards pay great attention to the issues of psychological and social development of the individual, preservation and strengthening of his mental and psychological health. At this point, it is realized that the education system should be directed to

the manifestation of the intellectual and personal potential, and creative power of the person, which is the main resource of the country and the development of all spheres of society's life [10]. It is from this point of view that the issue of the psychological health of students should be the main goal of psychological services in higher education institutions, I.V. Dubrovina, R.V. Ovcharova, T.N. Klyuyeva is based on the research of scientists [20,21,22]. Additionally, psychologist-scientists, who have conducted many years of research on this issue, L.M. Friedman and E.I. Rogovs expressed their opinion about the purpose and activity of psychological services in educational institutions. In particular, I.V. Dubrovina states that the purpose of psychological service is to psychologically prepare students to find their place in life independently, having a maximum effect on their psychological and personal development [23]. L.M. Friedman states that the purpose of psychological service should be consistent with the purpose of the higher education institution, as well as to educate a socially mature, creatively active person [24]. E.I. Rogov emphasizes that the work of a psychologist should serve the purpose of helping the student's development based on the study of all his qualities [25].

Professor V.M. Karimova emphasizes [26] that the psychologist of an educational institution has a great role in the higher education system, and points out that it is necessary to focus his activities on the following sociopsychological tasks:

1. It is necessary to search for effective psychological services organized in an educational institution, to thoroughly study the conditions and environment, and to determine individual and group work styles, taking into account the age characteristics of each student.
2. The psychologist of the educational institution should fully study some negative situations in the mental development of students, and analyse the factors that cause them and sociopsychological conditions.
3. The psychologist of the educational institution should have a data bank compiled on the basis of specific scientific analyses and test results on the abilities, direction, abilities and professional interests of students of different ages.
4. The psychologist of the educational institution should determine the mental

states of the groups, the psychological environment associated with mutual relations, study in depth the relationship between official and informal leaders, the administration of the educational institution and educational work in this regard it is permissible to recommend the necessary guidelines to the authorities.

5. Another aspect of the activity of a practical psychologist is to provide psychological support to the team of teachers-pedagogues on various issues.

Based on the above tasks, it is possible to determine the main directions of the psychological service of the educational institution.

These opinions make urgent the need to develop mechanisms that coordinate the activities of psychologists working in higher education institutions and help them methodically. This requires the organization of a goal-oriented psychological service.

The concept of psychological service was introduced by Sh. R. Barotov [27]. The following definition of can be given: "Psychological service is psychological support of various social spheres: healthcare, education, production, etc., creating a special field of psychological services. It is a system of practical use of psychology to solve complex tasks in psychological expertise, diagnostics, production, transport, education, healthcare, law enforcement and other fields. In other words, the term "psychological service" refers to the entire field of applied psychology. Second, psychological service includes a system of special institutions created in various social institutions and organizations, designed to provide qualified psychological assistance to people who need it".

At this point, in the organization of this service, one of the important tasks is to create an emotionally comfortable environment for students during their professional education, and to provide psychological and pedagogical conditions aimed at ensuring their spiritual development. In performing this task, ensuring students' adaptation to the educational environment of the higher education institution should be one of the most urgent issues.

It should be noted here that, unlike the directions of psychological activity in other fields, the activity in a higher educational institution has its own characteristics: first, in higher educational

institutions, not child psychologists, but age 17 to 60, a specialist is needed who has the ability to work with a variety of adults up to; second, because the main goal is to direct young people to a profession, there are certain characteristics of psychological and pedagogical activity in higher education institutions; third, students are one of the most sensitive categories of the population of our society. Marginal status (no longer a schoolboy, not yet an adult), financial instability, and crisis stage of life affect the whole life of students; Fourth, the priority directions of psychological services in higher education institutions are "indirect" services, in which psychologists work with mentors, teachers and other employees and, through them, influence students and young people [28].

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In higher education, psychological services should not only help students adapt, develop and support their education, but also prevent self-destructive behaviours that are likely to manifest in them. In fact, the service solves the tasks of providing all-round conditions for the effective passage of the educational process and the formation of the personality of the graduate. However, the mechanisms used by higher education institutions to achieve this goal do not differ greatly depending on the philosophy or purpose of the organization. For example, although psychological services appeared in the higher education system in Russia a long time ago, they did not become a necessary department in universities and were created only on the initiative of university administrators or psychologists [18].

The participants of the All-Russian Congress of Educational Psychologists (April 3, 2018) concluded that there is no single generally accepted model of psychological services in Russia today. It should be noted here that there is no universally accepted model. Even in Russia itself, there are various differences between its subjects (territories). We can see this situation in almost all CIS countries. Therefore, the model of psychological service must be determined based on its object and formed based on the specific characteristics of each field (education, health care, production, law enforcement, etc.).

The activities of psychologists in higher education institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan have been introduced since 2017, based on the order of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education No. 600 dated

August 23, 2017, the purpose of which is to train personnel. It is defined as the improvement of quality and efficiency, education of a well-rounded personality and creation of optimal conditions that ensure all-round harmonious and complete psychological development of the student. The duty of a higher education psychologist is to draw up an educational work plan, develop educational activities, and take an active part in creating a curriculum and manuals, and the main goal is to develop the student's intellectual ability, universal virtue, knowledge, and education. It is noted that it is to add one's due share to the holy work of forming skills and professional qualities.

Another important aspect that needs to be taken into account is the issue of determining the number of psychologists in accordance with the total number of students in the provision of psychological services in the higher education system. In paragraph 1.2 of this regulation, "Higher education psychologist is considered an important component of the general educational and educational process in a higher education institution", and in paragraph 1.4, "The position of a higher education psychologist is according to the decision of the Council of a higher education institution" to be established by order of the rector" [20]. However, given the responsibility of higher education psychologists, their number indicators cannot be considered satisfactory at all. For example, when considering the total number of students in the 2022-2023 academic year through the official websites of higher education institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan, at Tashkent State Pedagogical University – 28,689, at Samarkand State University – 25,805, at Karshi State University – 20,346, at Termez State University – 26,395, at Namangan State University – 26,504, at Bukhara State University – 24,825 it was determined that students are studying. However, at present, the position of psychologist in higher education institutions is defined in one state unit in each institution, which does not take into account the number of students.

According to research carried out in the Republic of Belarus, when 25 higher education institutions were studied, the average number of full-time students was 2,720 for 1 psychologist, and the average was 1,500. This norm was observed only in 12% of higher education institutions. Belarusian State Technological University (7,750), Gomel State University named after F. Skarina (7,218), A.A. Higher education institutions such as Kuleshov Mogilev State

University (4,294) and Belarusian State Transport University (4,268) have a large ratio of students to one psychologist. As a result, experts have noted that it is absolutely impossible for a psychologist to conduct quality work with a large number of students [28].

A psychologist (psychological service) is not a necessary department in higher educational institutions of our country, but a department of working with young people, spirituality and enlightenment under the authority of the vice-rector for youth issues and spiritual and educational affairs of the institution. It is implemented through the position of psychologist, which is part of the Ministry of Education. Psychologists of all higher education institutions are accountable to the "Centre for Spirituality and Enlightenment" under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation. Such a situation leads to problems in coordinating the activities of psychologists and supporting them methodologically. Today, the introduction of psychological services in higher education institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan should be considered an urgent problem, and the development of a specific mechanism for the activity of this service is of great importance. The introduction of the post of psychologists in the higher education system demonstrates the need to establish psychological services in the higher education system.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis carried out in the framework of scientific research, a model of psychological service improvement aimed at ensuring the psychological health of students of a higher educational institution was developed (Fig. 1), and psychologist-scientists G.B. Shoumarov, V.M. Karimova, Sh.R.Barotov, I.V.Dubrovina, M.Kh.Karamyan, Z.T.Nishonova, L.M.Friedman, V.E.Pakhalyan, I.A.Tregubenko's Theoretical and practical results of scientific research and approved by the order of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education No. 600 dated August 23, 2017, are presented in the "Regulation on the activities of the position of psychologist of the higher education system" clauses [29].

I. Centre for coordination of psychological service activities and scientific-methodological support under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:

It is appropriate for this centre to carry out the following tasks to coordinate the activities of

psychological services of higher educational institutions and provide scientific and methodological support:

- 1) Development of a series of lectures and training sessions to be held with professors and teachers of the institution and students to increase psychological culture in the environment of higher education.
- 2) preparation of scientifically based psychodiagnostic instruments for methodical support of psychological service specialists.
- 3) Establishing a unified methodology for researching the mental and psychological health of students of higher education institutions.
- 4) Development of psychoprophylactic, psychological promotion and enlightenment, psychodiagnostic, psychocorrective programs for use in the activities of psychological services in the higher education system.
- 5) Formation of a comprehensive concept of the organization of psychological services in higher education institutions.
- 6) Coordinating the activities of psychological services in the higher education system, determining the criteria for evaluating its effectiveness.
- 7) Organization of a system of improving the qualifications of psychological service specialists of higher educational institutions.

1. Field of activity:

The methodological direction is to ensure the activity of the psychological service of higher educational institutions in a scientific and methodical way.

The direction of coordination is to coordinate the activities of the psychological services of higher educational institutions.

The direction of professional development is to ensure the procedure, duration, form and implementation of professional development of psychological service specialists of higher educational institutions.

Summarizing-analytical direction - summarizing the results of the psychological service of higher educational institutions, evaluating its effectiveness, and determining development prospects.

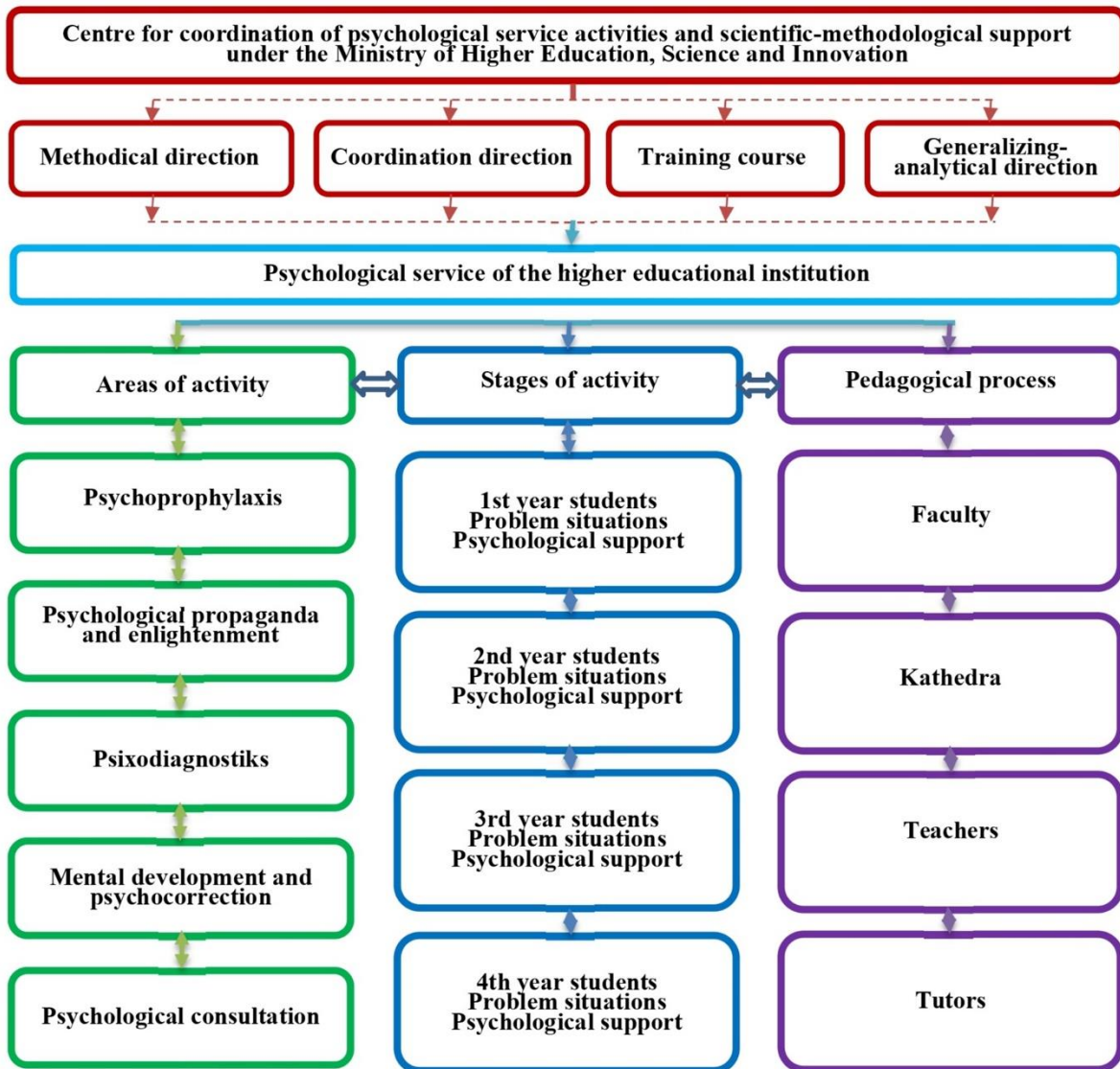


Fig. 1. Model of improvement of psychological service activities in high education Description of the model for improving psychological services in higher education institutions

II. Psychological service of the higher educational institution

1. Field of activity:

Psychoprophylaxis is the creation of a healthy psychological environment for students and professors of a higher education institution and providing positive conditions for their personal development.

Psychological promotion and enlightenment - conducting special psychological activities to create the most favourable psychological

environment in the teams of students and pedagogues, improving the culture of interaction in the pedagogical team, helping to improve the process of interaction between students and professors, personal, professional providing advice on problems in pedagogical teams on a large scale, helping to create measures to eliminate, reduce and prevent psychological stress and fatigue among members of the pedagogical team.

Psychodiagnosics is the psychological-pedagogical in-depth study of students during their studies, identification of their individual-

psychological characteristics, and causes of defects in education.

Mental development and psychocorrection - actively influencing the process of personality and intellectual development of students, professors and teachers.

Psychological consultation (counselling) - providing specific advice to all persons involved in the education and upbringing of students, including administration, professors, teachers, parents, and employees of social and public organizations.

2. Stages of activity:

In the process of working with 1st year students:

Problematic situations - hesitancy in choosing a profession, a feeling of loneliness (the need to communicate with former comrades, relatives, relatives), shyness, isolation, in connection with the educational environment anxiety due to the lack of necessary information, manifestation of anxiety, fear, emotional tension, stress related to the sessions.

The form of psychological support - in order to develop the personality of students and self-activation, to determine their individual-psychological characteristics and potential, to support the psychological adjustment of students, to provide them with an emotionally comfortable educational environment, to reduce stress and anxiety. to overcome, to carry out activities aimed at restoring performance.

In the process of working with 2nd year students:

Problematic situations - complications in relationships with fellow students, group members, changes in the group position, establishment of friendly or conflictual relations with group members, bullying in the student group (one person against another or a group occurrence of aggressive pressure, intimidation, etc.), motivation to achieve success, decrease in the development of the "I" image.

The form of psychological support is the study of mutual relations in groups of students, the formation of an emotionally healthy environment, the provision of advice on the problems encountered by students, psychological support,

psychoprophylaxis of destructive forms of behavior and stressogenic factors.

In the process of working with 3rd year students:

Problematic situations - student learning, decreased motivation to achieve success in educational activities, indifference to studies, events organized at the university, faculty or department, low self-esteem in the professional field, rather than theoretical knowledge priority of the desire to acquire practical skills.

The form of psychological support is to psychologically monitor the process of development of students in the professional direction, to carry out individual and group consultations with them on this issue, and activities aimed at improving their emotional state.

In the process of working with 4th year students:

Problematic situations - anxiety related to the completion of education, defense of graduate work, passing the final state certification exams, fear of public speaking, nervousness, reduced stability to stress, spending most of personal time ineffectively transferring, the increase of conflict situations in the student group, showing a negative attitude to backwards group members, reprimands from the faculty management, deterioration of health, emotional state, violation of the agenda.

The form of psychological support - providing an emotionally comfortable educational environment for students, completion of education, defense of graduation qualification work, psychological preparation for passing the final state certification exams, training in self-management methods, creating a comfortable environment in the student group, correcting the psycho-emotional state, developing students' communication skills, providing psychological counselling within the scope of professional activity (job search, professional interests, development prospects).

III. Pedagogical process

Under the conditions of the educational environment of higher education institutions, implementation of activities in the fields of psychological activity with the faculty, department, department, professors and teachers, tutors:

- implementation of activities for the development of communicative and self-presentation skills;
- providing psychological recommendations on issues of interaction with students;
- implementation of development activities on the consolidation of student groups, collective organization;
- giving recommendations on eliminating personal difficulties arising in interactions with students and colleagues;
- giving advice on the implementation of prevention of bullying situations that may occur in the environment of higher education;
- help to develop empathic communication and active listening skills;
- self-management in the educational environment, elimination of emotional exhaustion;
- drawing up an educational work plan based on the age and individual-psychological characteristics of students, providing advice and recommendations from a psychological point of view in the development of educational activities, curriculum, and manuals.

5. CONCLUSION

Today, in modern education, great attention is given to the issues of psychological and social development of a person, ensuring his mental and psychological health. This makes the issue of improving psychological services in the higher education system more urgent. However, in the system of higher education of our country, the psychologist (psychological service) is not a necessary structural unit, but is implemented through the position of the department under the authority of the vice-rector for youth issues and spiritual and educational affairs of the institution. This situation leads to problems in coordinating the activities of psychologists and supporting them methodologically.

6. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study on the experience of introducing psychological services in the higher education system made it possible to determine the existence of a number of problems in this direction:

1. The psychological service operates not as a separate structural unit but within the framework of educational departments,

which in practice is because pedagogues-psychologists work in a more educational direction than psychological. showing that it is coming.

2. Because the number of psychologists in higher education institutions does not correspond to the number of students, specialists cannot perform their functional tasks due to overload, and as a result, the idea of psychological support is violated.
3. As a result of the nonexistence of a single methodical centre coordinating the activities of psychological services of higher education institutions, it is not possible to fully provide the opportunity to exchange experience, gather a base of activities and methodical developments.

Based on the conclusions stated above, we can recognize the following suggestions: to improve the activities of psychological services in the higher education system, a special methodical centre should be formed that coordinates the activities of psychological services in institutions and implements scientific and methodological support, taking into account the experience of psychological services in the public education system of foreign countries and our republic, to ensure that the number of psychologists in the psychological service system of higher education institutions is proportional to the number of students.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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