Mental health and urbanization: a Russian perspective

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Mental health and urbanization: a Russian perspective

Despite being a pressing problem, the influence of urbanization on mental health is still underestimated in Russia. Although few studies on the topic in recent years were available, viewpoints of the expert community in Russia will be presented.
Intensive urbanization in Russia impacts on:

• the living conditions of the majority of the country’s population;
• mass migration of the population;
• a change in the structure of employment;
• the restructuring of family relations;
• and the need to adapt to unaccustomed living conditions.
The main factors that directly affect mental health in Russia are consequences of urbanization such as:

- alcoholism and tobacco smoking;
- internet-dependence and sleep disturbances;
- anxiety and phobias;
- noise and visual aggressiveness of the environment.
The terms “urbanization” and “ecology”

- The terms “urbanization” (General theory of Urbanization, 1867 Ildefons Cerdà) and “ecology” (Ernst Haeckel, 1866) were coined almost simultaneously in the 1860s with specific technical and strictly scientific meanings.
- Now such terms are widespread and have social and political implications.
MENTAL HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IN RUSSIA AT THE END OF THE 20th CENTURY

- Changes in almost all aspects of life after the collapse of the Soviet Union lead to “ecopsychological” trauma of Russians, a so-called “collective” trauma.

- Social, economic, and ecological factors are national problems of the Russian urban environment with the added threat of terrorism having a further negative influence on public mental health.
MENTAL HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IN RUSSIA AT THE END OF THE 20th CENTURY

There were 10 million people with preclinical and clinical mental disorders due to the stressful impact of societal change at that time [Y.Alexandrovy, 2005].

His studies suggest also that such disorders appeared in 1990s even in 25–30% of the original inhabitants of the country. In most cases, these were borderline mental disorders.
INFLUENCE OF URBANIZATION IN RUSSIA

Information overload and intellectual overwork causes mental fatigue and emotional distress. Social and psychological tension related to social, economic, and ecologic safety is widespread among the urban population [A.Koblova, 2012].

Urbanization has had a negative impact: the growing number of stressful factors and unfavorable events, such as urban congestion, environmental contamination, poverty, high levels of violence, and low levels of social support.

Environmental contamination of modern cities with hard, liquid, and gaseous industrial and household waste products is an important social problem.
Migration is rarely accompanied by an improvement of social well being. Poverty, unemployment, low education level, and homelessness are widespread not only in poor countries, but also in developed ones. The “New poor” emerged as a social group of people, who were negatively affected by political reforms. One of the most vulnerable groups is people with mental disorders.

Poverty can provoke estrangement and tension as well as provide drive toward emotional, behavioral, and mental disorders (A.Koblova, 2012).
Internet addiction in Russia

- Internet addiction is a further problem in contemporary Russia with **82 million people** using the internet in 2017.
- The most important consequences of computer use are:
  - hypokinesia,
  - eye diseases, and visual discomfort,
  - chronic headaches,
  - vertigo,
  - changes in the skeletal, and muscular system;
  - skin diseases,
  - stress, easy irritability and depression,
  - easy fatigability,
  - and sleep disturbances.
**Some other consequences of urbanization in Russia**

Living in a large city leads to:

- **anxiety.** (recent studies have demonstrated that the risk of an anxiety disorder in urbanites is 20% higher than nonurban dwellers; in addition, the risk of chronic mood swings is 40% higher).

- **the risk of schizophrenia** in urban area is twice as high; (longitudinal studies on patients with schizophrenia show that living in cities and urbanization are the most serious epidemiological factors responsible for the increase in this mental disorder (V.Yastrebov, 2011))

- **stress** is a ‘normal’ phenomenon in this environment and **phobias** are widespread. One of them is agoraphobia. The urbanized environment leads to apparent overcrowding (Vokhmintseva, 2012).

- **desynchronosis**, the disturbance of circadian rhythm. The symptoms are poor sleep, absence of appetite; irritability, atony, and reduced working capacity. (Vokhmintseva, 2012).

- **noise** is also a key factor impacting on health. Automobile transport is one of the main sources of noise. On arterial streets, noise levels can reach 95 dB. In apartments with windows opening onto the street, the level of noise is only 10–15 dB lower.
Some steps to reduce the negative impact of urbanization

Within the last decade, both civil society and the Government took certain meaningful steps to reduce the negative impact of urbanization. Among them are, notably, laws and regulations aiming to restrict alcohol sales (age, time of permitted sales, and location restrictions) as well as smoking bans. Pricing and age policies in tobacco sales were also stiffened.

In the Moscow region, 14 out of 39 spoil disposals or dumps were closed.

Only in Moscow, about a million trees and bushes are being planted every year (in Moscow over the last 5 years 5 million trees were planted and in 2017 50 new parks were opened). Noise after 11 p.m. was forbidden in cites.
Some positive trends

The average life expectancy in the first half of 2018 was at a record high of 72.7 years.

Recent years are characterized by a reduction in the level of alcoholism. Per capita alcohol use, taking into account untraceable alcohol-containing production in Russia, in 2008 was 18 l and in 2018–10.3 l.

In Russia, there is a steady decline in the suicide rate: by the end of the 1990s, this level reached almost 40 cases per 100 thousand population, and in 2017–13 (4 –in Moscow). The rate of 8-10 suicides is considered the level of prosperous countries.
Dynamics of alcohol consumption in Russia (2008-2016)
## Tobacco Smoking in Europe

### Current Tobacco Smoking in Europe

No room for complacency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO Region</th>
<th>Male prevalence</th>
<th>Female prevalence</th>
<th>Both sexes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Pacific</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Mediterranean</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dynamics of the share of smokers in Russia in %
The standardized death rate from suicide in Russia (blue line) and the Astrakhan region, the entire population, per 100 thousand population, 1989-2017
Conclusion

Mental disorders are factors that provoke increasing mortality and decreasing life expectancy in Russia. Contemporary urbanization has a negative impact on mental health, taking into account the growing number of stressful factors and unfavorable events, such as urban congestion, environmental contamination, poverty, high level of violence, and low social support level.

The main factors that impact mental health of people in Russia are such consequences of urbanization as: alcoholism and smoking; internet-addiction, desynchronosis, anxiety, phobias, noises and a visually aggressive environment. The society and the Government have taken some meaningful steps to reduce the negative impact of urbanization (restriction of alcohol, tobacco sales, planting of trees and bushes, evening noise ban, and closing of spoil disposals). Such steps need to continue and address a range of other implicated, putative factors.
# Mental Health Budget and Human Resources in Russia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health Budget: Annual budget or percentage from the total health budget</th>
<th>4.1%</th>
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## Human Resources: Number

- Psychiatrists: 12,913
- Nurse practitioners providing mental healthcare: 36,200
- Psychologists: 3,899
- Social Workers: 2,350
- Other mental healthcare providers: 1,386
- Primary Care Doctors (PCPs): 2,710
## Mental Health Care facilities

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION-2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number:</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health outpatient facility</td>
<td>2095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health inpatient facility</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health day treatment facility</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other mental health facility</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Russia are more than 3 million patients with drug and alcohol abuse problems.

The outrunning growth among women - by 8,3% during last 5 years.

82,2% of patients with alcohol abuse, 16,6% of patients with drug abuse (among them 87,5% of patients with opioid addiction).
Russian psychiatrists’ quality level lowering factors

**Socioeconomic:**
- Low salary and with intensity of work;
- Low economic motivation in high quality work;
- Changing in system of value: there is no place for such concepts as “medical duty”, “self-sacrificing attitude” and etc;
- In this regard we have to state the lowering of the medical profession prestige

**Pedagogical:**
- Insufficient attention to postgraduate education;
- Old-fashioned educational forms and programs;
- Low motivation of higher-education teaching stuff;
- Formal approach to education (especially in so-called certification cycles) and doctors’ attestation;
- Unsatisfactory material and technical basis of the institutions providing postgraduate education