

ABSTRACT

Doctoral dissertation in the form of a monograph entitled "Risk factors and frequency of symptoms of depressive disorders in children from primary schools in Leżajsk", authored by Zdzisław Michał Zawilski, MD, is divided into two main parts, the first of which is a theoretical introduction to the topic of broadly understood depression, with a summary of the results and conclusions from previous studies focusing on the issue of depressive disorders, in particular concerning the developmental age population, while the second is a detailed description of the author's study together with its results, their discussion, interpretation and conclusions.

The first three chapters of the work focus on the basic concepts of psychophysiology of the childhood and adolescence period, starting with a general presentation of the issues related to the child and childhood as a biopsychosocial phenomenon, then analyzing the issues of the mental development of a young person, starting from the influence of prenatal factors through all developmental periods until reaching adulthood, as well as describing the basic possibilities and basic mechanisms of its disorders, especially those that are of particular importance in shaping the so-called depressive susceptibility.

Next, there is a broad characterization of depression as a health disorder. Starting from the definition and classification, through clinical characteristics, the author comes to present etiopathogenetic concepts, taking into account psychopathological and pathophysiological mechanisms and explaining their influence on the formation of depression as a disease problem. Dynamic features of the course of depression in its basic clinical forms are presented. Then, epidemiological data are cited linking depression primarily with social, cultural and demographic factors, as well as summarizing its effects on health in the individual and general population dimension.

The content of the next chapter is a detailed analysis of developmental depression. The history of research and changing scientific and clinical approaches to depressive disorders in children and adolescents is presented. The basic concepts characterizing and explaining the development of the disorder in young people, its characteristic course for different age groups and specificity are described. The author presents possible risk factors and analyzes their influence on the formation of depression symptoms in children and adolescents in relation to pathologies related to developmental processes and the environment of raising a child. Next, the research methods used in the diagnosis of developmental depression are described,

followed by therapeutic measures to improve the quality of life and counteract this disorder in young people.

The second – research – part of the work begins with a presentation of the study objectives, dividing them into scientific-research and health-promoting. A plan of the conducted research activities is presented. The demographic analysis of the study group continues, the methodology is described in detail, including both research tools and statistical methods of data processing. The author also provides formal and legal aspects, the fulfillment of which was necessary in order to conduct the research work.

In the course of the research work, it was estimated that the depressive syndrome occurs in the studied population with an average frequency of about 10%, which varies depending on the analyzed demographic variables. The clinically significant risk of depression turns out to be relatively higher in the case of girls compared to boys, as well as in the case of children aged 13-14 compared to children aged 7-12. However, not all data are fully uniform, statistically significant and definitively convincing in this matter. The population group that is certainly most at risk of the occurrence of the depressive syndrome is the group of older girls (13-14 years old). At the same time, it should be emphasized that this risk seems to increase significantly in the case of slightly younger girls, which may be related to the earlier onset of the period of biological, psychological and social maturation. Similarly to the case of the depressive syndrome, the occurrence of most of the individual symptoms of depressive disorders is observed relatively more often in the case of older girls compared to other distinguished groups. This observation concerns primarily emotional features related to negative mood (along with its somatic manifestations) and low self-esteem, the intensity of which is strongly correlated. Emotional problems, especially negative mood, are the most likely of all potential features of depression to generate the occurrence and shape the intensity of a potential depressive syndrome. The confirmed positive correlation between all depressive features encourages treating them as specific mutual risk factors.

The results of assessments of children's condition vary depending on the perspective of the assessor. Two issues that seem to be most important in the context of the significance and potential effects of depression in this case are: the general underestimation by parents/guardians and teachers of the problems reported by children, and the relatively low awareness of the occurrence and intensity of the emotional problems experienced by them. Persons providing care for children primarily notice problems in their functioning, which seem to be an external manifestation of undisclosed or not fully disclosed mental difficulties.

This fact can be associated with certain misinterpretations as to the nature and source of the disorders occurring in the studied population.

Next, a detailed discussion, interpretation and analysis of the significance of the obtained results are made, both in the scientific and health-promoting dimension.

The comparison of the results from the author's study with data obtained in other studies conducted over the past few decades confirms the beliefs about the quality and significance of risk factors for depression in the population of 7-14 year-old children, while at the same time some comparisons indicate a possible increase in the frequency and severity of the depressive syndrome, combined with a probable lowering of the age at which its first symptoms appear in a given age and developmental group.

The author discusses the impact and effects of the study conducted on a local scale, presenting an outline of the prospects for further research work and possible goals, admitting that not only the future, but also the present time brings new challenges in the medical and research fields.

The entire work is summarized with final conclusions. The last part of the work is a broad list of source materials to which the author referred and used during the research and analysis of the data obtained in the course of it.