MAINTAINING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FOR WELL-BEING OF POPULATION

MENȚINEREA UNUI STIL DE VIAȚĂ SĂNĂTOS PENTRU BUNĂSTAREA POPULAȚIEI

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Summary. *This paper examines the general well-being from health promotion methods in the Republic of Moldova against global health trends as well as challenges of non-communicable diseases and COVID-19 pandemic. Some 253 respondents were surveyed using quantitative survey method and information about their demographics, lifestyles or where they got their health information from was collected and also well-being assessment about themselves. Our findings indicate links existing among behavioural factors such as lifestyle practices related behaviours that include but not limited to eating or smoking, levels of physical activity at work/home; sleeping patterns; long-standing illnesses like diabetes mellitus etc. (these numbers could be broken down this way). Finally, the connections between non-communicable diseases have been established through a variety of health practices by people including need to increase physical activity and provide support for mind health. In conclusion recommendations are made regarding how public health strategies can be improved targeting physical, emotional as well as spiritual aspects of well-being. With increasing emphasis being placed on such community-based approaches this work also underscores the role played by online platforms disseminating messages encouraging healthy living. The paper is developed in the context of the realization 'Strengthening socio-economic and legal mechanisms to ensure the well-being and security of the citizens' (CONSEJ 01.05.02).*

Keywords: *healthy lifestyle, well-being, public health, health promotion, physical activity, mental health, COVID-19, health information sources.*

Rezumat. *Această lucrare examinează bunăstarea generală prin prisma metodelor de promovare a sănătății în Republica Moldova, în raport cu tendințele globale în sănătate, precum și provocările reprezentate de bolile netransmisibile și pandemia de COVID-19. Un număr de 253 de respondenți au fost chestionați utilizând metoda de sondaj cantitativ, iar informații despre demografia lor, stilurile de viață și sursele de informare despre sănătate au fost colectate, împreună cu o evaluare a bunăstării personale. Rezultatele noastre indică existența unor legături între factorii comportamentali, cum ar fi practicile legate de stilul de viață, care includ, dar nu se limitează la, alimentație sau fumat, nivelurile de activitate fizică la locul de muncă/acasă, tiparele de somn și afecțiunile cronice precum diabetul zaharat. În cele din urmă, au fost stabilite conexiuni între bolile netransmisibile și o varietate de practici de sănătate ale oamenilor, inclusiv nevoia de a crește activitatea fizică și de a oferi suport pentru sănătatea mintală. În concluzie, se fac recomandări cu privire la modul în care strategiile de sănătate publică pot fi îmbunătățite, vizând*

aspectele fizice, emoționale și spirituale ale bunăstării. Odată cu accentul tot mai mare pus pe aceste abordări comunitare, această lucrare subliniază, de asemenea, rolul jucat de platformele online în diseminarea mesajelor care încurajează un stil de viață sănătos. Articolul este elaborat în contextul realizării Proiectului „Consolidarea mecanismelor socio-economice și juridice de asigurare a bunăstării și securității cetățenilor” (CONSEJ 01.05.02).

Cuvinte-cheie: *stil de viață sănătos, bunăstare, sănătate publică, promovarea sănătății, activitate fizică, sănătate mintală, COVID-19, surse de informare despre sănătate.*

INTRODUCTION

World health organization (WHO) in its recent publication of statistics observed a pessimistic trend of low life expectancy at birth despite some increase during the last decade prior to COVID-19 pandemic [4]. Although there has been significant global progress in terms of health care services availability vis-à-vis quality and emergency health care response, it has dawned on clinicians that it is impossible to have a resilient society through improved health care measures only without any other thing even in the face of atypical circumstances which could affect one's physical or mental health. Notably during COVID-19 outbreak period individuals who lived in healthy ways than those who were already sick whenever the crises occurred were found to better resist it. As indicated by WHO report some causes which make public health to deteriorate include life expectancy [2]: 1) non-communicable diseases leading to deaths (such as cancers, heart diseases, strokes among others), and 2) obesity together with malnutrition has been on increase.

The current discourse on these health challenges happening within our locality, nationally and internationally creates an urgent need for key actors advocating for healthy living style that is believed to enhance overall public health. Over the past two decades Republic of Moldova witnessed a positive slope in the rise of its life expectancy till COVID-19 pandemic reversed this gain due to better socio-economic conditions and preventive as well as curative healthcare services. Life expectancy in Moldova was 69.1 years in 2021 – 0.7 years less than the previous year and 11.3 years below the average EU life expectancy at birth recorded in 2020 for all 27 Member States [5, p.3]. The high general mortality rate compared with its European neighbours is attributed to its poor health system performance by not only failing to control and prevent but also ignorance about NCDs including cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease among others; which are crucial death causes [5, p.6].

In addition, medical specialists have observed that understanding disease distribution pattern in a community requires well-thought health determinants that cut across socio-economic status as well behaviour and environment aspects. Thus, it can be concluded that among such general determinants which favourably influence public health status locally and globally are behavioural factors too. A positive view of one's health will serve as an indicator reflecting on how communities have achieved wellbeing beside physical and mental soundness. In this situation, governments and medical association struggle to this end by promoting behavioural changes which in turn help people embrace healthy living styles.

A healthy lifestyle according to Oxford Reference comprises activities and practices promoting both the physical mental spiritual wellbeing while reducing chances of contracting major illnesses. Regular physical exercises balanced diets sleeping enough time every day meditating avoiding drugs that are not prescribed smoking cessation and limited use of alcohol constitute these healthy strategies constituting what it is like being fit [3]. This means leading not to severe diseases prevention or treatment only but also improving different aspects and dimensions' happiness levels within families [6].

It is not strange that numerous sources depict the relationship between health and well-being within the context of societal well-being. Good health is always used as one of the key components of an individual's overall sense of happiness. Well-being, according to OECD, encompasses satisfying the most important needs human beings have that include being healthy, having an opportunity to pursue and achieve dreams, thriving as well as feeling satisfied with life at large [1, p.9]. In other words for any society to be assessed in relation to well-being; parameters like life expectancy or general illness syndromes among its residents have also to be taken into account.

This article seeks to undertake an analysis of the effects of health promotion methods on the general well-being of the population in the Republic of Moldova, by identifying effective community-based interventions and understanding the role played by various sources of information and institutions involved in these initiatives. The study aims at providing recommendations for enhancing the quality of life and public health through adaptation and optimization of the already existing public health strategies.

Our study will be carried out using a quantitative methodology involving surveys, in which information is gathered directly from the primary sources. This survey comprises an online self-administered questionnaire with thirty-four questions that allow access to a heterogeneous sample of respondents, thus achieving wider population representation. It has multiple choice questions and one open ended question that cuts across demographic information of the respondents, their lifestyle, health information sources and eating habits.

Having been collected; the research data will later undergo description statistical analysis to show us trends as well as relationships among different variables in the study population. The choice of the aforementioned methodological design is expected to provide an insight into public perception on matters concerning healthy living styles while also highlighting key areas for intervention aimed at enhancing overall health of the public.

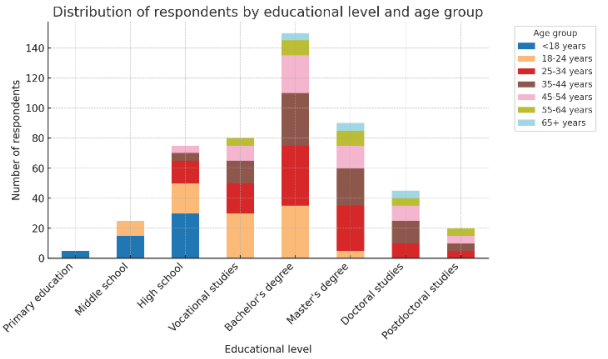


Fig. 1. Distribution of respondents by educational level and age group

Source: Developed by the author based on quantitative research results

The age distribution in the study corresponds with the following percentages; under 18—24.9 %, 18-24—29.6 %, 25-34—26.1 %, 35-44—13.8 % while all other categories represent smaller proportions than (45) years old. The study consisted of 253 participants, who can be categorized into various age groups based on the data given above. Majority were females (77.5%) though males were also interviewed (22.5%).

In terms of education, 44.3 per cent obtained professional qualifications which included degree programmes like Bachelors' degrees as well as Masters and Doctorate.

Moreover,21 per cent had only attended primary school little above one third (34 per cent) has reached college level studies, with an equal proportion (12 per cent) between post-secondary education dropout rates and vocational training institutions respectively. The sample distribution is across different ages, gender disparities and educational backgrounds that allow exploring healthy lifestyle beliefs and practices for overall well-being.

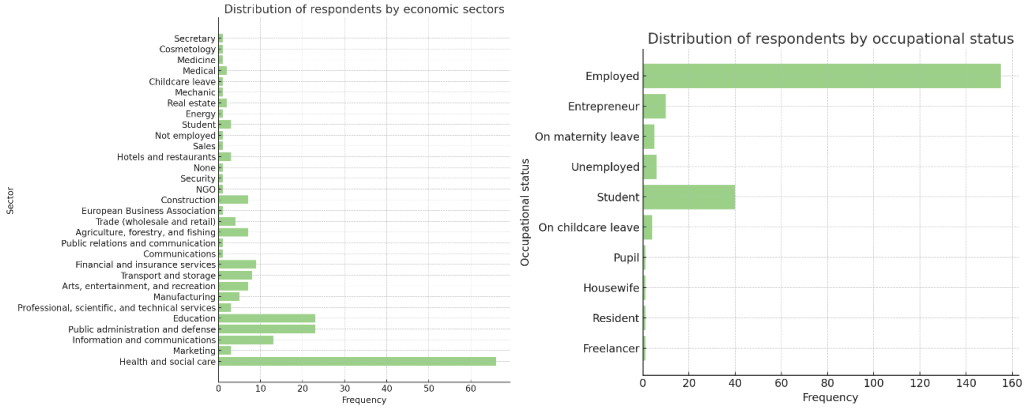


Fig. 2. Distribution of respondents by economic sector and occupational status
Source: Developed by the author based on quantitative research results

From the standpoint of Minus development and sophomore status in addition to -Nurse & Allied Health Personnel sections hook their eyeballs a larger populace taking care of their health in the health related (nursing).As the prevalence of this category is high, the line of professionals in health sector should be a focus for a study since that is where they are working for ministries of public health besides offering a lot more information relating to how healthy lifestyle changes affect national prosperity.

Furthermore, there were also considerable number of people in Education who responded this survey thus underscoring role played by schools when it comes down changing people mindsets about diseases that are lifestyle-related while trying to ensure that everyone knows how they can live without getting sick or rather what constitutes good living.

However, low representation of marketing and ICT sectors among the respondents implies that even though these fields are not directly related to public health; they play a

significant role in promotion of healthy behaviours especially through media; advertisement or public relations strategies.

It bridges the gap between other businesses to meet broader societal needs while concentrating on the health care and education sectors.

The data indicate that 68.7% are employed, 17.2% are students: 4.3% - entrepreneurs' distant women on maternity leave (p.41). Since these demographic groups are primary targets for health promotion, workplace health promotion strategies can help working individuals benefit from better health outcomes whereas students may find it possible by receiving health education from school; as for that, they specifically have great need for maternal health initiatives in their work life beforehand. The specifics in this enterprise include designing special tactics for those who are involved in other types of business or social activities rather than working with big corporations.

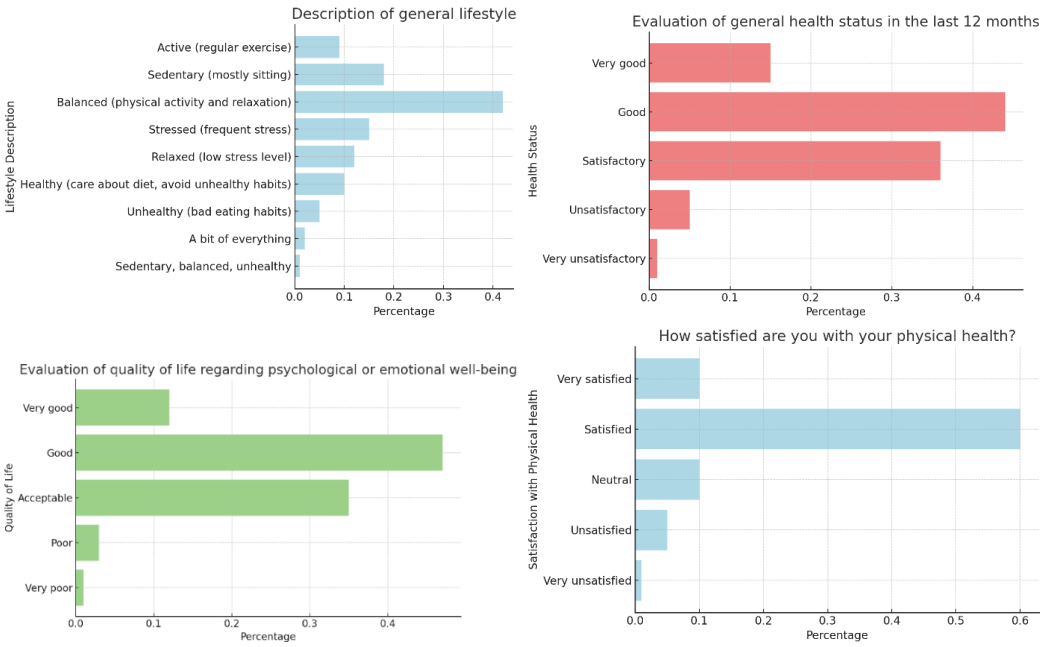


Fig. 3. Assessment of lifestyle, health status, and well-being of respondents
Source: Developed by the author based on quantitative research results

The group of charts is being analysed here to give critical insights into the health and well-being of the population which are essential for guiding programs in promoting healthy living and improving population wellness overall.

Statistics reveal that the majority of the participants (44.7%) considered themselves as "Good" when asked about their general health whereas a substantial percent (36.4%) described theirs as "Fair". This however means that most people feel contented with how they feel as far health is concerned though there is room for more improvements. Only a

few of them reported (14.6%) they are “Very Good” hence implying it could be having good habits in terms of living healthily. Less than one in twenty respondents (3.7%) said they were unsatisfied with the state of their health showing there exist a vulnerable group for whom specific interventions focused at changing lifestyle practices including food consumption behaviour have not been developed yet.

About half of the participants feel “Good” emotionally and mentally well while about one third are “Fair”. In summary this shows that many still struggle with their emotions despite having average scores due to strains experienced in everyday life among other reasons hence leading to emotional problems or stress in more than one tenth of them. Besides over five percent gave themselves an indication of either “Poor” or “Very Poor” which necessitate an integration of mental health services into holistic health promotion measures. For instance, addressing mental illnesses tends to enhance the efficacy of physical treatments meant for patients of long-standing diabetes.

A good number of them (42.3%) perceived it as ‘Balanced’ which implies engaging in physical activities alongside spending time for leisure. In contrast 18.6 % of them led sedentary lives considered detrimental health wise since they cause obesity cardiac problems among others including diabetes. However, only fourteen-point six percent (14.6%) led relaxed lives characterized by low tension physically but only slightly lesser proportions identified themselves as performing “Active” with regard to regular engagement in exercises. From these findings we can deduce that there is potential to increase levels of physical activities among the population. Further according to this study eight point seven percent (8.7%) admitted living a ‘stressful’ life while others said their way of life was unhealthy implying that there should be stress management programs besides educating people about healthy practices.

Regarding satisfaction with physical health status sixty-point one percent 60.1% asserted; they are satisfied; though very tiny minority declared themselves, 10.7% with a “Very Satisfied” status”. There was an additional nineteen percent 19%, however who held neutral opinions on this matter concerning their own wellness which could be attributed either to indifference or because such personal matters remained unattended by attention-givers. Noteworthy among them were ten-point three percent dissatisfied individuals showing necessity intervention aimed at improvement physical health outcomes specifically those at higher risks of deteriorating health.

An analysis of the survey results has identified a number of key areas where health promotion efforts could have a significant effect on the populace. First and foremost, this article is meant to emphasize the importance of increasing physical activity among the population sine a few people have an “active” lifestyle. In order to mitigate against these chronic ailments, more so must health programs which advocate for regular exercise be targeted at people who do not engage in any form of physical activity. It also highlights the need for mental health support in society. The high number of people having ‘Acceptable” emotional well-being or below average one implies that there is need for integration of mental health care services with physical interventions thro-

ugh counselling sessions if possible at workplaces as well as community workshops on mindfulness meditation alongside stress management training programs designed specifically for secondary education students too since time immemorial emotional wellness has been considered integral part of overall health thus dealing with mental illness can contribute to higher efficiency in somatic therapies used for each individual illness cycle.

Low percentage (42.3%) of respondents' lifestyles could be described as being 'Balanced', involving some minimal exercises may be walking for few distances. However sixteen point four per cent 16.4% said they were living a sedentary way life known risk for chronic diseases such as hypertension; high cholesterol levels leading stroke among other heart-related conditions like coronary artery disease plus type 2 diabetes mellitus that require physical inactivity management strategies based on avoiding lifelong deprivation undergone during recovery periods from these illnesses/ surgery operations whilst also living healthier than before being hospitalized in order to suffer less psychological pain during this process without worsening physical discomfort An additional seven percent mentioned having stressful lives while another five percent confessed engaging into unhealthy practices thereby suggesting introduction of stress-reducing activities or campaign for proper lifestyle choice like diets rich in fruits vegetables instead westernized meals with high rates of sugar intake resulting into other problems such as alignment of weight which affect all organs on one's wellbeing more than just looks in general since prevention still remains better than cure even when talking about mental diseases themselves which are not treatable at 100 per cent because there is always a probability of recurrence after an acute treatment terminates.

In relation to how they feel about their health, sixty-point one percent felt satisfied with it; only ten point seven percent however reported very satisfied. On top of that nineteen percent neither agreed nor disagreed concerning their own wellbeing indicating that there might exist some form or forms of unresolved crisis within such individuals hence jeopardizing further steps aimed at ensuring better physical health conditions in future for more vulnerable categories of the population.

Several key target areas can be identified for health promotion programs. Author emphasize the importance of encouraging physical activities as only a few people lead "Active" lifestyles. Thus it is important to ensure regular exercises based on fitness programs used during periods of no movement across the state by the public health professionals charged with promoting good health through exercise intervention aimed at reducing chances of getting diabetes type 2 mellitus which may result from being idle all day long despite sedentary lifestyle that many students lead from school till home and from home back again without engaging themselves in any extracurricular activity as required by law generally resulting into entire inactivity of both body parts and brain thereby causing negative body metabolism.

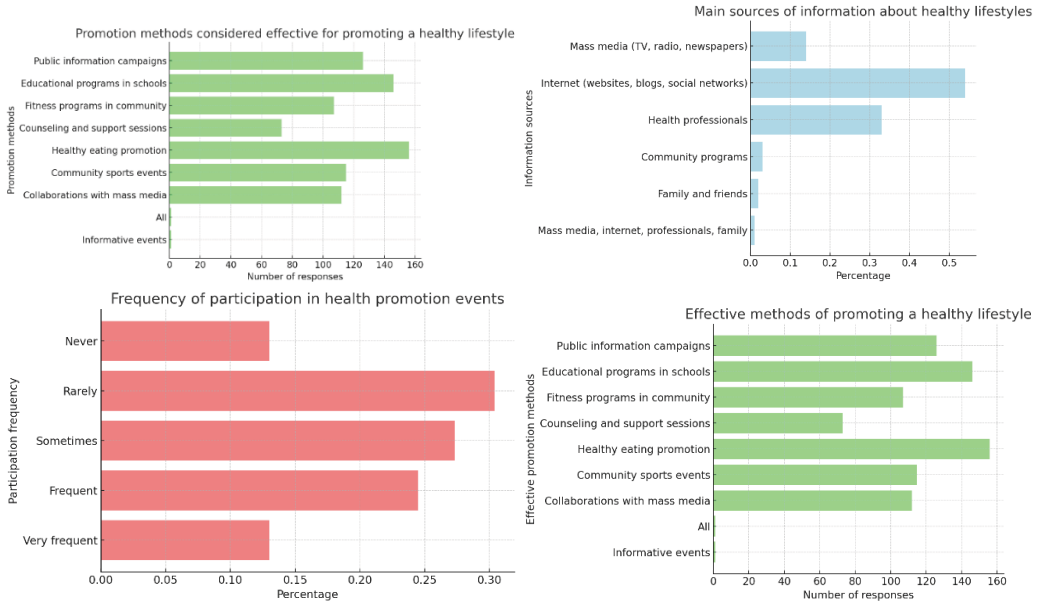


Fig. 4. Methods and sources of health promotion and participation in health promotion events
Source: Developed by the author based on quantitative research results

Most people said that they get health information from individual blogs rather than any other form of media. 54.2% stated that they accessed information about healthy living online through sites owned by either individuals or organizations in contrast to websites and social networks with 3.4%. Therefore, this gives more reasons as to why there ought to be a paradigm shift towards using online platforms when giving out public health messages. In addition, 34.8% mentioned that they used doctors and dieticians for answers on issues relating to their bodies representing a trust level on specialists in health matters. It is strikingly only 9.9% who watched TV programs or listened on radio station while reading newspapers so that most people now visit internet instead which is interactive and provides quick answers. These statistics show that tomorrow's health policies have to involve digital means of education as well as information dissemination through web.

For organized community events aimed at promoting health, participation rate seems to be average at best. They found that only around 30.4% rarely attended any such events while 27.3% sometimes attended some too. Moreover, another 24.5% have indicated that they do not hold any health related events at all, which is a fact that there are large sections of the society that don't engage in sanctioned health promotions events.

CONCLUSIONS

An examination of community initiatives aimed at promoting healthy life choices reveals certain patterns. A lot of those who were surveyed underscored the importance of

awareness campaigns and education as a way of increasing public understanding concerning the benefits that come with maintaining good health through consumption patterns as well as physical activity patterns. Many of them also put emphasis on the need for improved or expanded health promotion programmes that would use traditional methods besides more sophisticated strategies which involve such things like social media and influencers. Moreover, it is believed that well-being process should begin from the kinder garden and school levels for a good while.

Provision of facilities meant for sporting issues should be made easy such as places including but not limited to gyms, stadia, swimming pools ports ground just among others occasionally for recreation. This especially happens in non-urban areas where such amenities are rare yet they can discourage healthy way of life and in so doing therefore need more resources being injected in them.

Many participants expressed concerns about affordability of leading a healthy life. Healthy foods, gym memberships and workout clothes also seem expensive according to some feedback. Some remarks suggest that health insurance companies could subsidize part of their clients' subscriptions to gyms, physical exercises or diet consultations in order for them not only stay fit but be healthy throughout their lives.

The suggestions made were pointing towards a joint policy implementation among the government, schools and the local communities when it comes to investment on sports and health programs. However, this is not the case in areas such as the Ministry of Health where solutions to solve issues relating to access information and resources are minimal.

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