



PSYCHOLOGICAL PREVENTION FOR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

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Abstract

The quality of education provided in high schools, depends on many factors, including the training of trainers, organizational process, excellent communication, feedback, facilities and training tools. Human resources, however, appears to be leading components in the provision of quality education. Behavior of teachers as channels for new knowledge and skills is closely linked with the success of the learning process. To be adequate in all situations and deal a high level with their duties as people and professionals, trainers need adapted and applied psychological treatment.

The present study shows that in the higher schools in Bulgaria are not paying almost no attention to this problem, although there is a serious need for the implementation of psychological treatment. From the conducted survey assistants and professors at the Medical University of Sofia is clear which methods to restore mental and emotional balance are the most preferred.

Key Words: Trainers, psychological treatment, universities.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education offered by the universities depends on a variety of factors like teachers' and trainers' qualification, organization process, excellent communication, feedback, facilities and training tools. The human resources, however, is the leading component in the provision of high-quality education. Teachers' behavior as a channel of new knowledge and skills is closely linked to the success of the teaching process. To be adequate to all situations and cope with their obligations on a high level as personalities and professionals, the teachers need psycho-prevention properly selected and applied.

Generally speaking, psycho-prevention is a system of events which studies the causes of the occurrence of mental disorders and diseases as well as their timely diagnosis and treatment. Its major goal is to prevent them and to rehabilitate the people already suffering from mental diseases (Balkanska:2010; Bontcheva, 2013).

Psycho-prevention can be divided into three types: primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary one includes activities directed to the improvement of the mental health level and prevention of nervous and mental disorders. These activities address the general population and populations at risk. The secondary psycho-prevention aims at early detection of the disease and shortening of its duration. It works also for the prevention of recurrences and complications. The tertiary psycho-prevention envisages activities related to the prevention and reduction of mental and social effects of disability. The efforts here are focused on rehabilitation and resocialization of the patients by means of comprehensive use of medical, social, educational and employment measures for the adaptation of patients to activities consistent with their state (Balkanska:2010).



Some of the most widely used psycho-prevention activities are carried out by family planning, marriage and genetic counseling, during pregnancy, school age, teenage, young age, adulthood and old age (Balkanska:2010). Psycho-prevention is needed by the whole population and by various communities of common interests, activities, professional commitments and working environment. Such is the academic community and training teams in the universities where the risks of mental problems are serious due to big workloads and a variety of activities like research, training and medical treatment, as well as work with big groups of people at the high stress levels these professionals are subjected to.

The primary and secondary types of psycho-prevention are the most applicable to university teaching teams. By suitably selected activities, methods and approaches, the teachers can keep in good mental health and guarantee their adequacy and the high efficiency of the working process. The early detection of risks of mental disorders or diseases and of the disorders themselves is important for the teacher and the university management alike. Timely coping with the problem will avoid the quality deterioration of the training offered.

This study presented herein shows that Bulgarian universities do not pay enough attention to psycho-prevention in spite of the serious need of its provision. The inquiry made among teachers of two Bulgarian higher schools makes clear which the preferred methods of maintenance of the mental and emotional balance are. It also establishes the tools that the teachers would like to be used for the performance of the psycho-prevention and the frequency of psycho-prevention activities.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To establish the need of psycho-prevention in the universities for the protection of the teachers' mental health the quality improvement of their teaching process.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methods used are the survey method and the analysis of normative documents (Higher Education Act, Health Act). The study embraces 75 teachers from two universities – the Medical University Sofia and the “St. Cyril and St. Methodius” University of Veliko Turnovo. The respondents' age is from 36 to 66 years and they teach theory and practice of different subjects. 82.7% of them are female. The study does not include the practical training facilities – the clinic facilities of the medical universities and the kindergartens and schools of the Veliko Turnovo university. They are included in the conceptual design of future studies.

The study took place in the months of May and June of 2014 in the cities of Veliko Turnovo, Vratsa and Sofia. The data was processed by means of the EXCEL program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the information provided by the filled-in questionnaires shows that the greater part of the teachers are well informed about the meaning of the term “psycho-prevention”. The question “Are you familiar with the meaning of the term “psycho-prevention”?” received a positive answer from 68% of the respondents. 32 of them are familiar with this term only partially. None of the respondents gave an answer “no” and “I am not interested” (fig. 1).

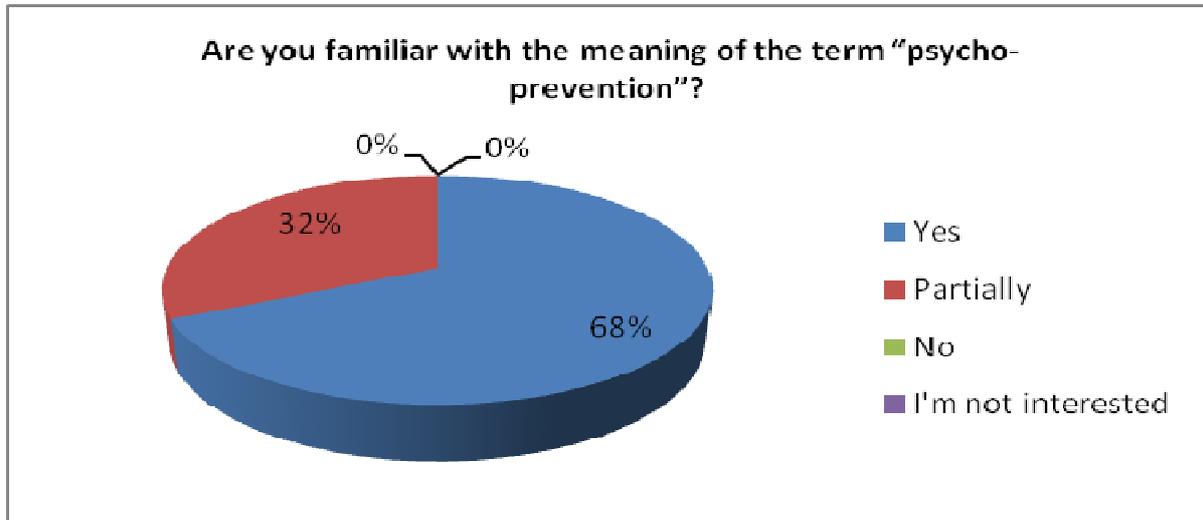


Fig. 1: Awareness of the meaning of the term "psycho-prevention"

Regardless of the awareness previously stated by the teachers, serious ambiguity was observed about the meaning of the term "psycho-prevention". This conclusion was based on the answers to the open question "What do you think is "psycho-prevention"?. 16% of the respondents gave no answer, 16% offered a wrong or ambiguous interpretation of the term. Among the wrong definitions were: easy socialization of the patients, taking of psychological status, meetings with colleagues, etc. The rest of the respondents (68%) gave a true interpretation of the term.

It is noteworthy that all who gave a wrong or ambiguous interpretation of the term answered the previous question with "Partly". At the same time, all who gave no answer to the open question about the meaning of the term gave a positive answer about their awareness of the meaning of "psycho-prevention".

The analysis of the data from the filled-in questionnaires shows that most of the respondents are not informed about any psycho-preventive activities carried out in the universities they work for. 52% of them say that no analysis and control is made of the mental status of the teachers at their place of work. 44% do not know if such activities are performed in their universities. Only 4% think that their universities perform similar analysis and control of the mental state (fig. 2).

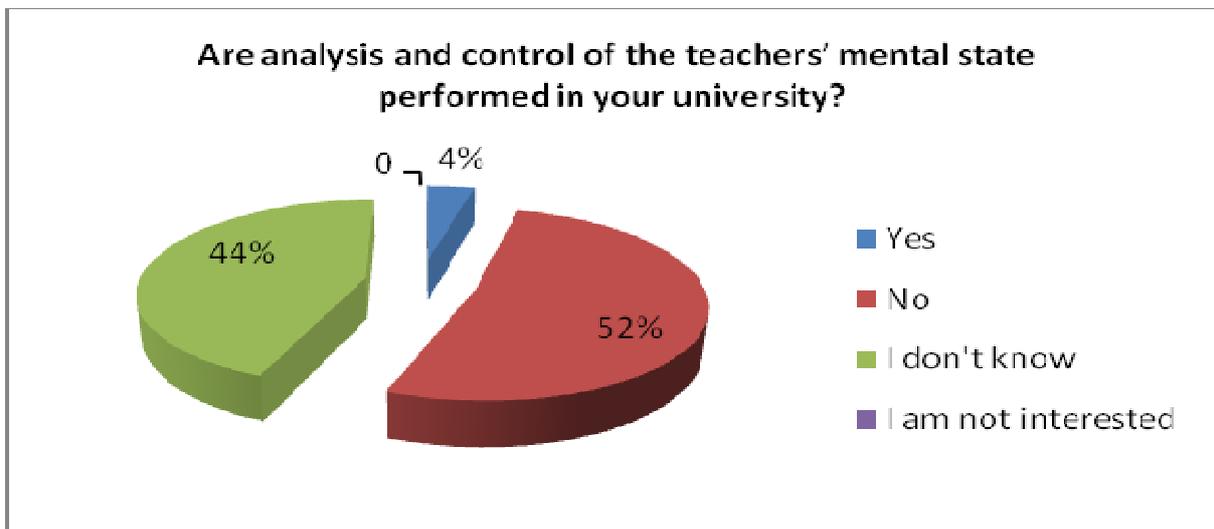


Fig. 2 Awareness of psycho-prevention performed in the universities

All respondents, however, are certain that they need psycho-prevention on their workplace. 100% of them give a positive answer to the question “Do you need any activities that help keeping the good mental status of you and your colleague teachers on your workplace?”. The respondents show different degrees of need. 40% of them answer “Yes, very much.”, while 60% say “Yes, partly.” No negative answers are given (fig. 3).

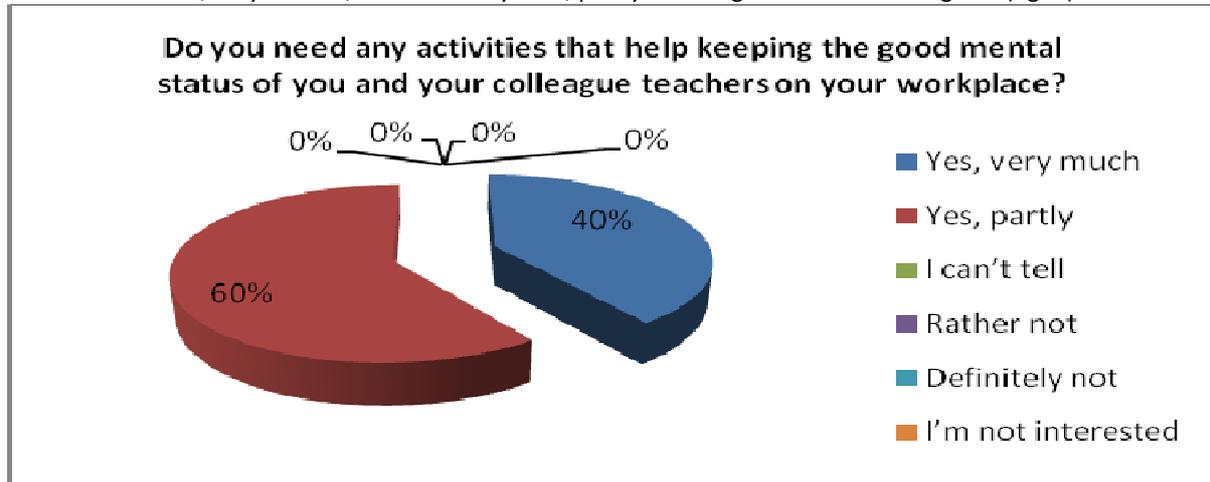


Fig. 3: Assessment of psycho-prevention needs

The teachers’ answers about their preferences of the types of psycho-preventive activities arouse certain interest. Least liked are the art therapy activities like painting and work with art materials, as well as talking to a psychologist. Only 8% of the respondents chose art therapy and talks with a psychologist. The most preferred activity is the stay in a specially equipped place offering isolation and relaxation – 57.3%. There is a great interest in music and dance therapy: both activities were selected by 32% of the participants. Two other activities – sports and short walks – also received identical percentages (28%) and were generally liked by the respondents. Laughter therapy is not much preferred – it was chosen by 21.4%. The total sum exceeds 100% because the participants were allowed to give several answers to these questions (fig. 4).

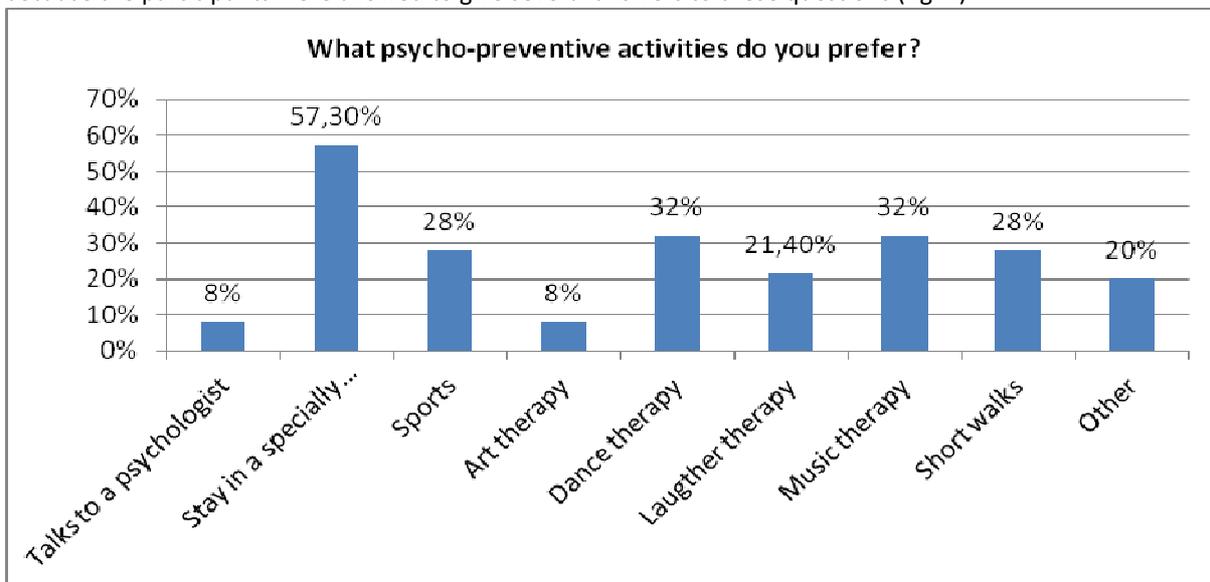


Fig.4: Preferred psycho-prevention

At the same time, 20% of the participants choose “Other” to answer the same question and mention activities different from the above. 33.33% of them indicate the activity of yoga, 40% - teambuilding, and 6.67% choose recreation room, trainings, talks with colleagues over a cup of tea, aroma therapy and drum therapy (fig. 5).

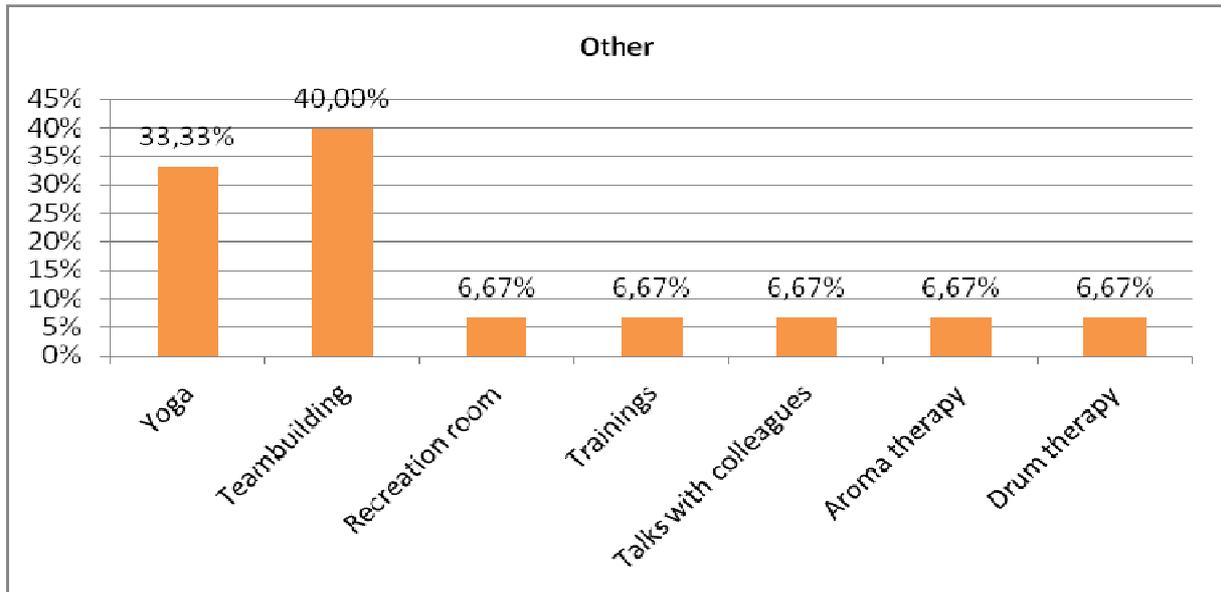


Fig.5: Alternative methods

The inquiry by means of open questions shows that most of the respondents would like the psycho-preventive activities to happen on the workplace. 60% of them give this answer, and 50% of those explain that they would prefer to have a special room for such activities. 16% of the participants prefer to perform the activities outside the workplace and 25% of those would like it to happen in specialized centers. 8% of the respondents answered “in the university area”, another 8% - “out of the city” and still another 8% did not give any answer (fig. 6).

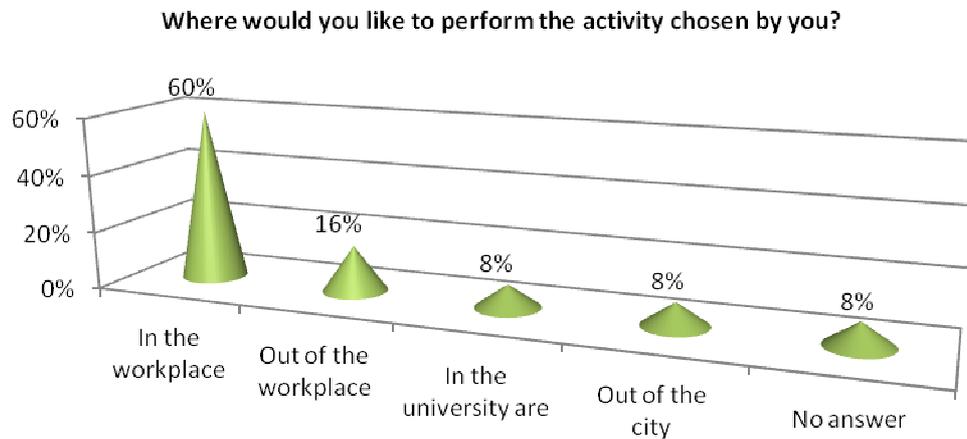


Fig. 6: preferred place of mental relax

The answer to the question “Who would you like to be responsible for the performance of the activity?” arouses interest. Although only 8% of the respondents prefer to talk to a psychologist, 56% of them say they would prefer a psychologist to manage this activity. 16% of the participants answer “a colleague”, 4% indicate “a teacher” and three groups of 8% choose “a manager” or “I don’t know” or “other” (fig. 7).

One of the six who choose the answer “other” would like “someone who would enjoy such activity” and five prefer “a yoga instructor”. Those five prefer yoga as a psycho-preventive activity.

Who would you like to be responsible for the performance of the activity?

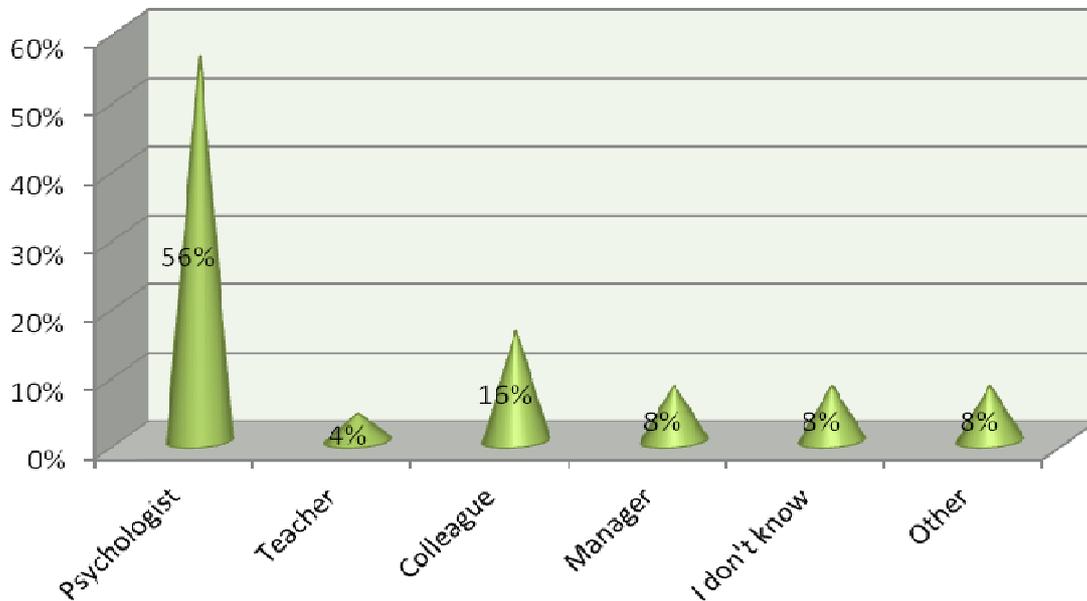


Fig.7: Preferred choice of a professional

Regarding the time of the day that the teachers prefer, the study shows that most convenient to the respondents is the period after the end of the workday (49.33%) and during the break between the lectures (28%). 10.67% of the respondents think that the most convenient time is in the afternoon and 4% choose answers “before the start of the workday” or “in the morning” and before lectures. No one chooses the activities to be performed “at noon”.

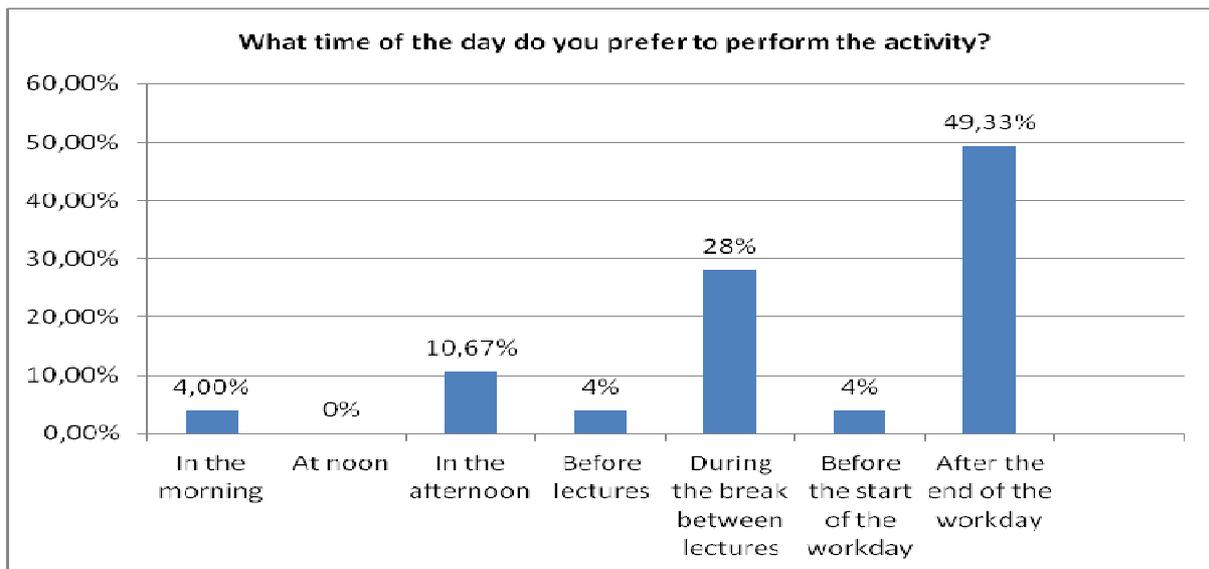


Fig. 8: Choice of time of the day

Regarding the frequency of the psycho-preventive activities, there is a big percentage of the respondents whose answer is “once a week” - 62.67% of the respondents. The next preferences of the participants are “three times a week” (16%) and “every day” (8%). Another 8% of them answer they would like to take part in

psycho-prevention only once a month, and 4% do not know. Only 1.33% of the respondents give the answer of "other" and specify that the frequency is to be consistent with the person's state at the respective moment (fig. 9).

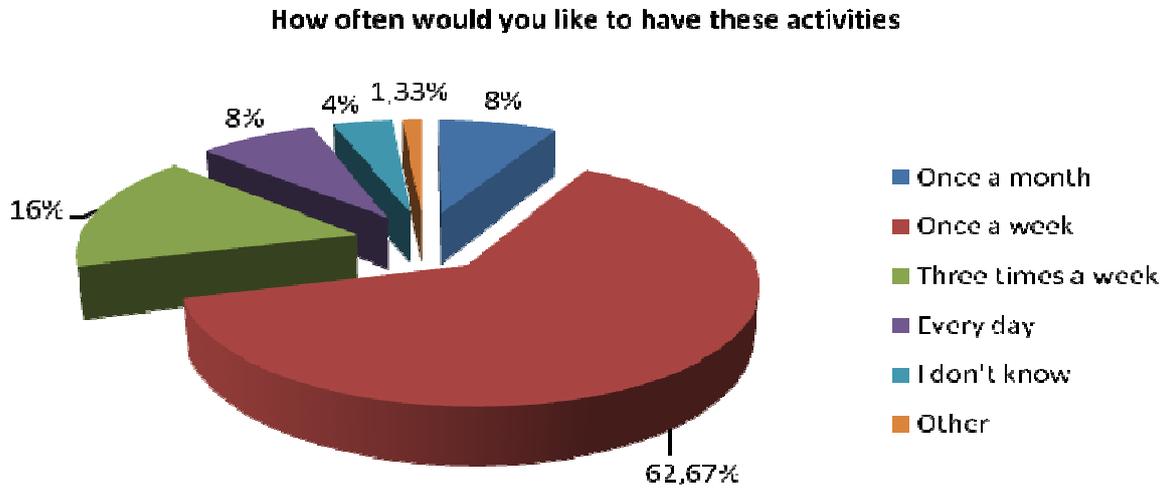


Fig.9: Choice of frequency

Although certain of the usefulness of psych-prevention in general and the need of it, a big part of the teachers cannot decide if the university management would allow the introduction of similar activities – 62.67%. The greater number of teachers, however, are firmly convinced that the management would allow the introduction of psycho-prevention. 56% of the respondents answer "Yes", and only 1.33% is the share of those who answer "No".

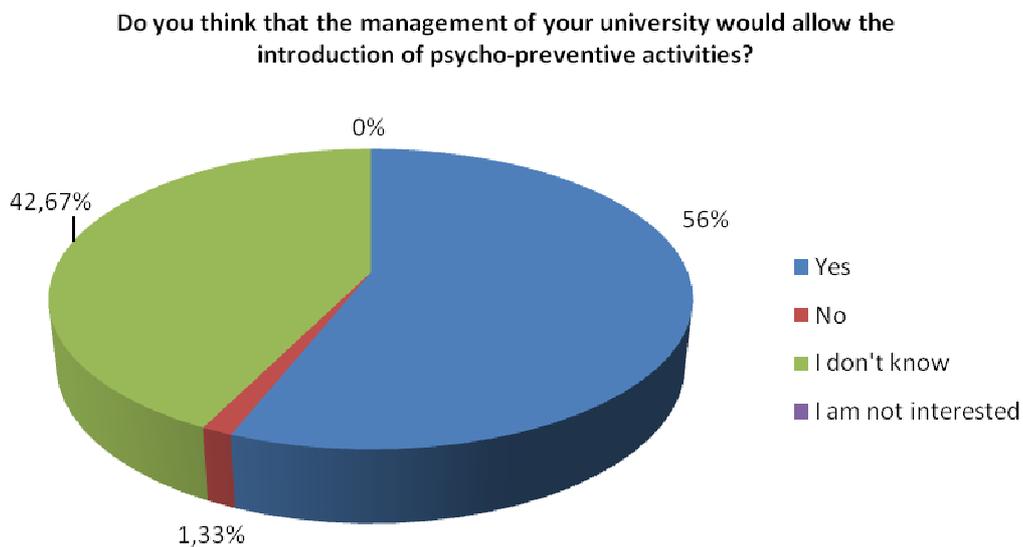


Fig. 10: Respondents' assessment of the university management

The participants who give positive answers also specify that the managements of their universities would agree to introduce psycho-prevention because they are open to innovation and new ideas, take care of their employers, understand the problems of the people in the teams and the need of a good microclimate. They realize that such activities would increase performance efficiency.



CONCLUSIONS

This study leads to the following conclusions:

1. The university teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness of the meaning of the term "psycho-prevention. This means that the subject attracts interest and is important for the teachers of the two universities. The fact that none of them has chosen the answer "I'm not interested" from the possible answers to the questions asked shows 100% interest in the problem. The teachers have an enormous need of psycho-preventive activities. Such activities are not performed at the moment, so it is not possible to evaluate the mental and emotional state of the team members.
2. Most of the teachers do not prefer to talk to a psychologist as a part of psycho-preventive activity, although this is one of the basic methods of psycho-prevention. Most of the respondents would prefer activities closely related to their personal interests and hobbies and traditional psycho-preventive events. Nonetheless, the respondents would like to have a professional present to manage the activities.
3. To perform successful psycho-prevention, the universities should provide a specially equipped place with the necessary conditions for the various activities. It will be most suitable to locate this place in the buildings of the institutions.
4. The most suitable time of the day for the psycho-preventive activities is after the end of the workday and the best frequency is once a week. The desire for such activities shows the great need of psycho-prevention of the university lecturers and their assistants.
5. The managers of the two universities are open to innovative proposals and understand the need of psycho-preventive activities for the improvement of their teams' performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the above conclusions, the following recommendations can be made:

1. To equip a special place for psycho-prevention
2. To hire a professional to manage the psycho-preventive activities
3. To prepare a weekly program of different types of preventive activities.

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