



# EATING BEHAVIOR AND PERCEIVED STRESS OF MEDICAL STUDENTS DURING THE FULL-SCALE WAR IN UKRAINE

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## Introduction and Aim

War is an extreme situation, i.e. one that goes beyond ordinary, "normal human experience" and affects the mental health of the population of Ukraine, including modern students.

Because of a full-scale war, there is a negative impact on both the students' emotional state and eating behavior with the formation of stress, anxiety, depression, fear and eating disorders, which have negative consequences for both the educational process and the mental health of students.



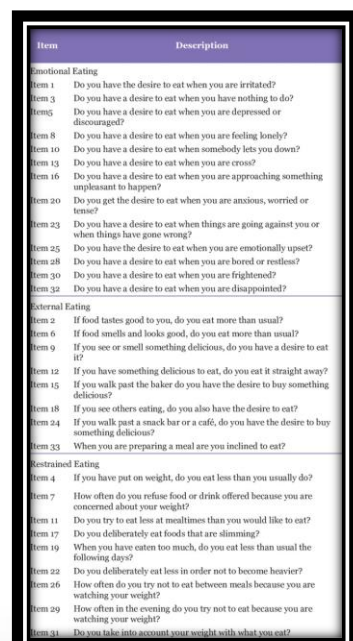
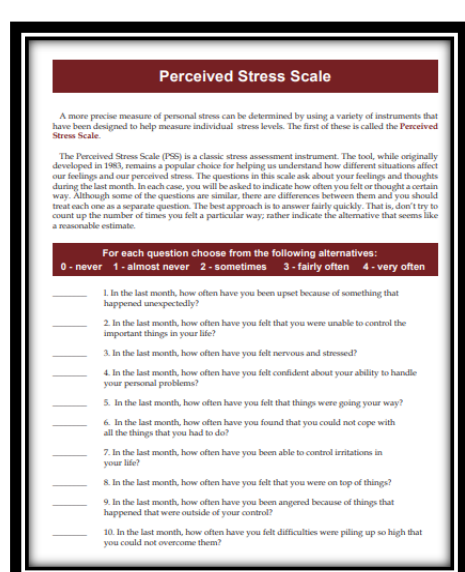
## Methods and Materials

157 students of the first bachelor's level of the Educational and Scientific Medical Institute of the Poltava State Medical University were included in the study. Before starting the study, all students informed about the content of the survey and that participation was voluntary and confidential.



In order to study the peculiarities of the impact of stress on the emotional and psychological state of students during a full-scale war, we conducted a study using the scale of perceived stress PSS-10 (Cohen et al., 1983), to assess students' eating behavior using the Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire (DEBQ, Van Strien et al., 1986).

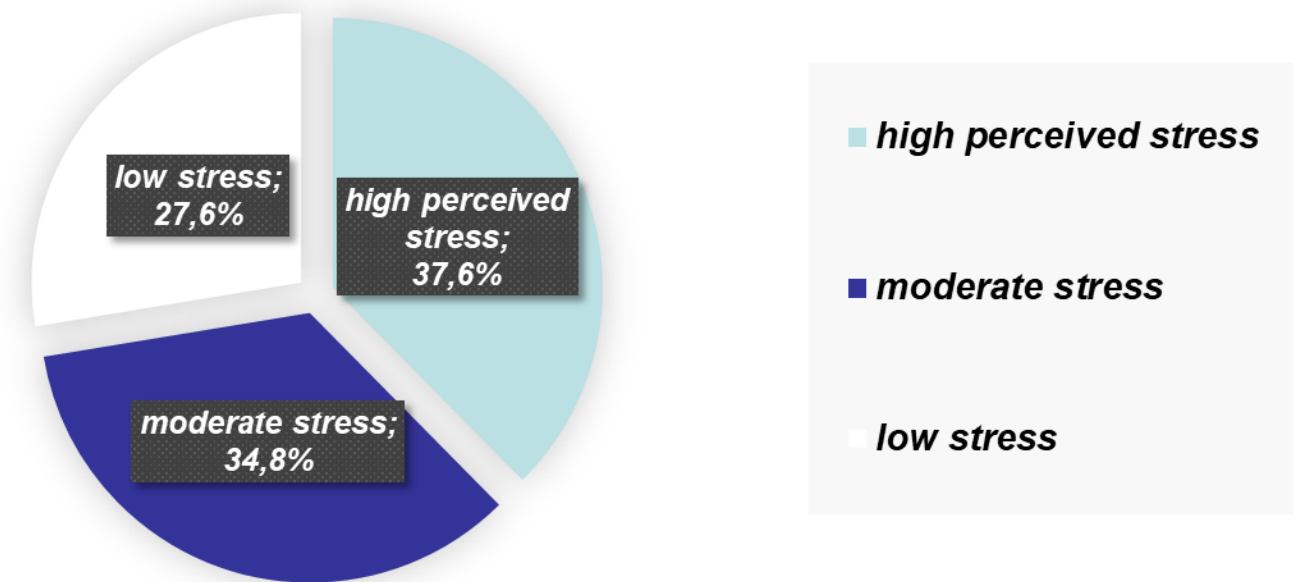
SPSS version 22.0 used for statistical processing of the obtained results.



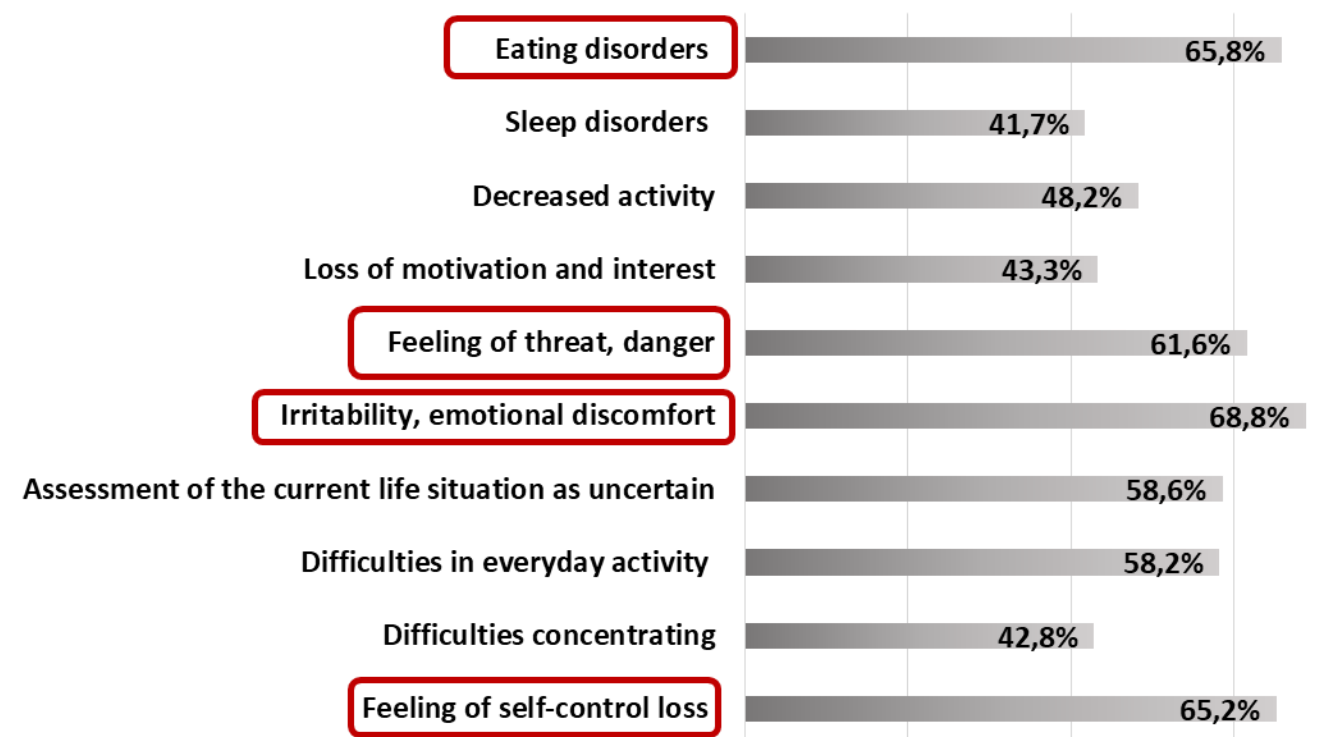
Research presented at the International scientific conference EATING DISORDERS IN TIMES OF GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY on 28-30 10 2023 in Krakow, Poland

## Results

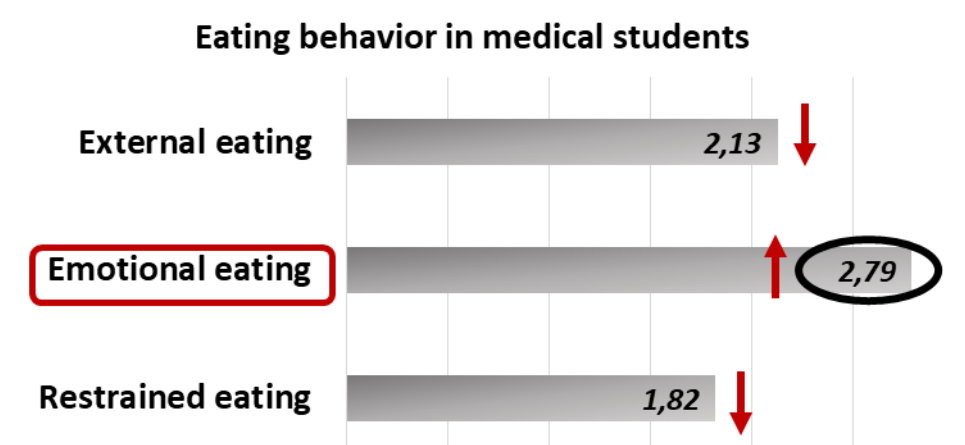
A high perceived stress level was found in 37,6±3,9% students.



The most significant stressogenic factors was wartime stress: feeling control loss (65,2±1,7%); emotional discomfort (68,8±1,7%); difficulties in everyday activity (58,2±1,7%); assessment of the current life situation as uncertain 958,6±1,7%); feeling of threat, danger (61,6±1,7%), sleep disorders (41,7±2,7%) and eating disorders (65,8±1,7%).



The majority of students with a high and moderate perceived stress levels` were dominated high scores by DEBQ-emotional eating subscale (78,3±1,4%)



## Discussion

Students in a state of stress do not eat when they are hungry, but under the influence of negative emotions and experiences: anxiety, uncertainty, fear, longing, sadness.

They "eat" negative emotions to improve the emotional state. In addition, people with emotional eating behaviors often can't differentiate between emotions and physiological stomach signals (feeling of hunger).

Thus, individuals with eating disorders are unable to correctly assess and recognize their own emotions.

## Conclusions

As a result of the research, a high and limit levels of perceived stress was found in the vast majority of first bachelor level higher medical education graduates, which reflected the extremely negative impact of multicomponent stress on the success of studies in general, physical and psychological well-being of students.

Additionally these students demonstrated high scores by DEBQ-emotional eating subscale, which shows hyperphagic response to stress.

## Keywords

Eating behavior, perceived stress, medical students, the full-scale war in Ukraine



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