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KAPITEL 12 / CHAPTER 12¹²

INTEGRATION OF MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES INTO EDUCATION SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

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Introduction

The modern education system operates in an environment of heightened uncertainty, driven by social transformations and the context of war. This brings to the fore the issue of safeguarding and supporting the mental health of those involved in the educational process. The issue of mental health has become particularly pressing in recent years, as the education system has faced the consequences of the pandemic, military events, forced displacement, prolonged stress and the need to adapt to new learning formats. In such conditions, the school emerges not only as a space for acquiring knowledge, but also as an environment for psychological support, safety and the development of resilience in children and adults.

Mental health is a key prerequisite for successful learning, the professional effectiveness of teachers, a positive social climate within the school community and the harmonious development of the student's personality. At the same time, in educational institutions, the integration of relevant approaches is often unsystematic and depends mainly on the individual initiative of individual teachers or psychological service specialists, which reduces their effectiveness. This necessitates a rethinking of the role of the school's educational infrastructure as a resource that ensures the sustainability and effectiveness of such practices.

Integrating mental health practices into the educational infrastructure involves not only the provision of individual programmes or training sessions, but also the development of a comprehensive system of organisational, staffing, spatial and methodological conditions designed to support psychological well-being. This involves creating a safe environment, fostering a culture of mutual respect, enhancing teachers' competence in the area of psycho-emotional support, ensuring access to

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psychological support, and incorporating preventive practices into everyday school life.

12.1 The issue of mental health in education in contemporary research.

An analysis of the current academic literature suggests that the integration of mental health practices into a school's educational infrastructure can be viewed as a multi-level process encompassing the organisational, pedagogical, psychological and political dimensions of the educational environment. Research highlights that mental health is gradually shifting from being a category of supplementary support to a systemic component of quality education, which determines the effectiveness of learning and the professional development of all participants in the educational process.

In their work, K. Weare and M. Nind (2011) conducted a systematic analysis of social and emotional learning programmes implemented in schools across various countries. The authors emphasise that the most effective approaches are comprehensive models (whole-school approaches), which are not limited to individual lessons or training sessions but encompass the entire school system. They argue that the successful integration of mental health requires changes at the level of school culture, administrative leadership and day-to-day teaching practices. Of particular importance is the development of shared values of support, safety and emotional well-being [16].

The research by M. Fazel, K. Hoagwood, S. Stephan and T. Ford (2014) focuses on the role of schools as a key setting for supporting the mental health of children and adolescents. The authors view schools as the most accessible institution for the early identification of psychological difficulties and the prevention of disorders. They emphasise the need for cross-sectoral collaboration between the education system, healthcare and social services. Particular emphasis is placed on the fact that effective support is only possible if school psychological services are integrated into the overall education infrastructure [3].

In their paper, J. Durlak and colleagues (2011) demonstrated the effectiveness of social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes, which are designed to develop



pupils' emotional regulation, social skills and self-control. The authors establish that participation in such programmes has a positive impact not only on psychological well-being, but also on academic achievement and behavioural adjustment. It is particularly important that the effect of SEL programmes is long-lasting and encompasses both the individual and group levels of the student body's functioning [2].

The research by C. Domitrovich, C. Bradshaw and M. Greenberg (2010) examines a model for integrating prevention programmes into the school infrastructure. The authors emphasise that the effectiveness of any psychological interventions depends on their systematic implementation, the training of teaching staff and administrative support. They stress that without institutional embedding, even the most effective programmes have limited impact [1].

A. Reupert and D. Maybery (2010) examine the role of teachers in the system of supporting pupils' mental health. They find that teachers are often the first to identify children's emotional and behavioural difficulties, but do not always have sufficient training to provide appropriate support. The authors emphasise the need to incorporate psychological and pedagogical training into the system of professional development for teachers [13].

The study by J. Kidger and colleagues (2016) analyses school staff's experiences of supporting pupils' emotional well-being. The authors find that teachers recognise the importance of this work, but face systemic constraints, including excessive workloads, lack of time and insufficient resources. This leads to the fragmented nature of mental health practices in schools [6].

OECD report (2019) emphasise that the education systems of the future must focus not only on academic outcomes but also on the well-being of pupils and teachers. The Organisation stresses the need to include mental health within the system of indicators of educational quality. At the same time, it is noted that countries implementing well-being policies demonstrate higher levels of educational effectiveness and social cohesion [9].

Documents from the WHO and UNESCO (2021) develop the concept of health-promoting schools. In these recommendations, the school is viewed as an environment



that not only educates but also actively shapes pupils' physical and mental health. The need to integrate health policies into educational governance, curricula and school infrastructure is emphasised [17].

In his research, S. Roffey (2012) views well-being at school as the result of social interaction based on trust, support and positive relationships. The author emphasises that it is the quality of interpersonal relationships at school that is the determining factor in the psychological climate and resilience of pupils [14].

M. Greenberg, C. Domitrovich, R. Weissberg and J. Durlak (2017) expand the concept of social and emotional learning, viewing it as an integrated system of personal development. The authors emphasise that SEL is not merely an educational technique, but also a tool for the long-term prevention of psycho-emotional problems [5].

In the domestic academic discourse, the issue of mental health in education has become particularly relevant in the context of martial law. O. Oliinyk and O. Soloshenko (2024) explore the formation of a narrative of mental health in the educational environment, emphasising the role of pedagogical discourse in creating a culture of support and normalising psychological well-being as an educational value [10].

V. Tyschenko, I. Biryukova, I. Kokhan and N. Ivasyuk (2025) propose a concept of an educational ecosystem in which mental health acts as a central structuring component. The authors view the school as a complex psychological system, where the interaction of all elements determines the level of stability and development of the educational environment [15].

The monograph by V. Panok and a team of authors (2024) provides a comprehensive analysis of the mental health challenges facing Ukrainian society in wartime. The authors emphasise the need to establish a national system of psychological support covering the educational, social and medical sectors [12].

L. Lavrinenko (2024) examines the characteristics of schoolchildren's mental health under martial law, identifying elevated levels of anxiety, emotional tension and stress reactions. The author emphasises the importance of creating a psychologically safe educational environment as a prerequisite for stabilising pupils' mental state [8].



O. Kravchenko (2023) summarises practical experience of socio-psychological support for participants in the educational process in crisis conditions. The author emphasises the need for the systematic integration of psychological support into the school infrastructure and the development of teachers' professional competence in the field of crisis response [7].

A study by S. Gozak, O. Elizarova, T. Stankevich and A. Parats (2024) found that the introduction of psychological tools in schools during martial law helps to reduce anxiety and increase pupils' psychological resilience. The authors emphasise the effectiveness of comprehensive approaches that combine individual and group work, as well as the involvement of teachers in supporting mental health. The findings confirm the importance of systematically integrating psychological practices into the school's educational infrastructure [4].

Thus, the issue of mental health in education is being actively researched by academics; however, the question of the infrastructure required to support such practices in schools requires further empirical study. The integration of mental health practices into the school's educational infrastructure is a multi-level, systemic process, and its effectiveness depends on the coordinated interaction of organisational structures, pedagogical practices and psychological support, as well as on the development of a culture of well-being as a core value of modern education. At present, research is needed into the actual state of resource provision, existing experience of implementing such practices, and the identification of barriers and enabling factors on the path to the effective integration of relevant initiatives.

The aim of this study is therefore to analyse the extent to which mental health support practices are integrated into the school's educational infrastructure and to identify the key factors, barriers and prospects for their development.

12.2 Research methodology.

The study utilised a questionnaire developed by the authors, designed to provide a comprehensive examination of the characteristics of integrating mental health



practices into the educational environment. It comprises five sections, which sequentially cover various aspects of the issue – from the level of awareness to the identification of needs and prospects for development.

The first section of the questionnaire concerns educators' understanding of mental health and enables us to ascertain the extent to which they recognise its significance within the structure of the modern educational process, as well as how they assess the level of attention paid to this issue within their own educational institution. This makes it possible to identify basic perceptions and attitudes towards the issue.

The second section aims to identify the actual mental health support practices implemented in schools and the frequency with which they are used. It covers both organised forms of work (training sessions, activities of the psychological support service, support programmes) and individual self-regulation strategies employed by teachers in their professional practice.

The third section allows for an assessment of the state of the educational infrastructure from the perspective of psychological safety. The focus is on the availability of resources and conditions that promote mental health, in particular specialised facilities, support programmes and organisational measures within the educational institution.

The fourth section is devoted to analysing the risk factors and barriers that affect teachers' mental health and hinder the implementation of relevant practices. It helps to identify both external factors (such as wartime conditions and work overload) and internal organisational constraints.

The fifth section aims to identify the needs and prospects for developing a mental health support system in schools. It enables the identification of priority areas for improvement, including the need for teacher training, administrative support, workload optimisation and the expansion of resource provision.

Descriptive statistical methods were used to summarise the results.



12.3 Findings regarding the extent to which mental health practices are integrated into the school's educational infrastructure.

The study was conducted between February and April 2026. The survey mainly involved educational psychologists from educational institutions in Kyiv who were undertaking further training at the Institute of in-Service Training of the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University. The sample comprised 86 individuals.

The empirical study conducted provided a comprehensive overview of the state of mental health support practices in the educational environment, as well as identifying the key organisational, individual and infrastructural factors influencing their effectiveness.

The results showed that respondents were in complete agreement regarding the importance of mental health in the educational process: 100% of those surveyed fully agreed with the statement in question. This indicates a high level of awareness of the significance of mental health as an integral part of modern education. At the same time, the lack of variation in responses may also reflect the normative or socially desirable nature of the assessment, as the statement has a universally recognised value and does not allow for significant differences in attitude.

The majority of respondents (33%) rate the level of attention paid to mental health issues in their schools as average, which indicates a partial awareness of its importance in educational institutions. At the same time, the combined proportion of high and adequate levels stands at 44%, whilst 22% of respondents rate the level of attention as low. This suggests that attention to mental health is inconsistent and fragmented and has not been established as a systematic educational practice (Figure 1).

Analysis of the second set of questions revealed that the implementation of mental health support practices is rated by the majority of respondents (44%) as 'partial' or 'occasional' (28%), whilst systematic implementation is characteristic of only 28% of schools. These findings indicate the prevalence of non-systematic approaches and the absence of a unified organisational model for mental health support in the educational environment (Figure 2).

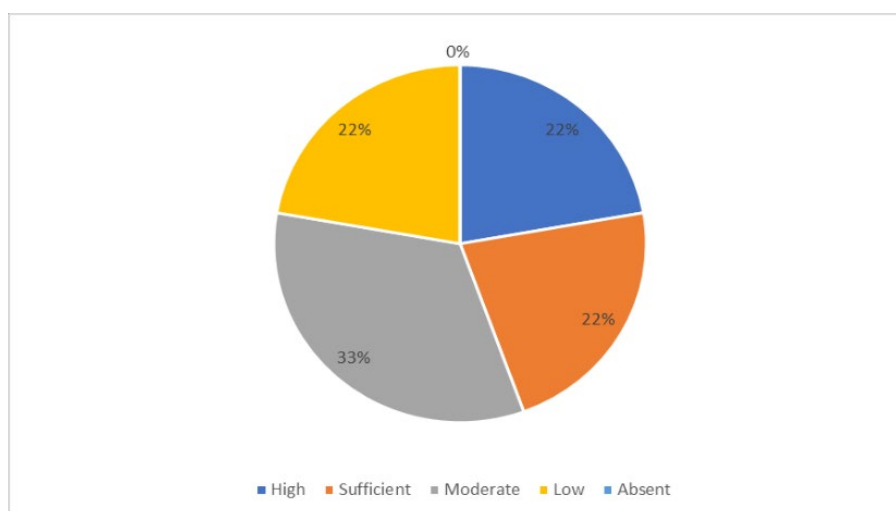


Figure 1 - Overall assessment of attention to mental health in schools.

Source: compiled by the authors.

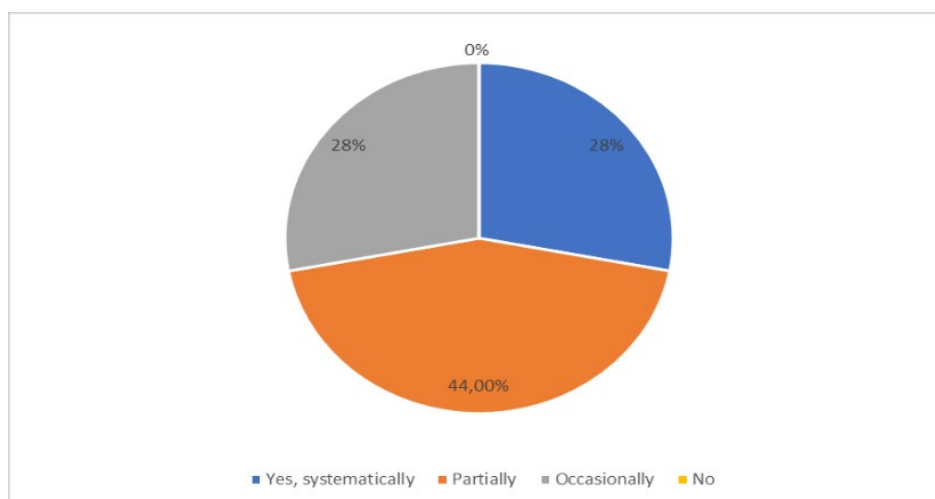


Figure 2 - Nature of the implementation of support practices.

Source: compiled by the authors.

The most common mental health support practices include: the work of school psychologists (78%), psychological training sessions (78%) and brief psychological interventions (67%). In contrast, programmes to support teachers (28%) and measures aimed at balancing the teaching workload (22%) are significantly less prevalent. This indicates that reactive and individually oriented approaches predominate over preventive and systemic ones (Figure 3).

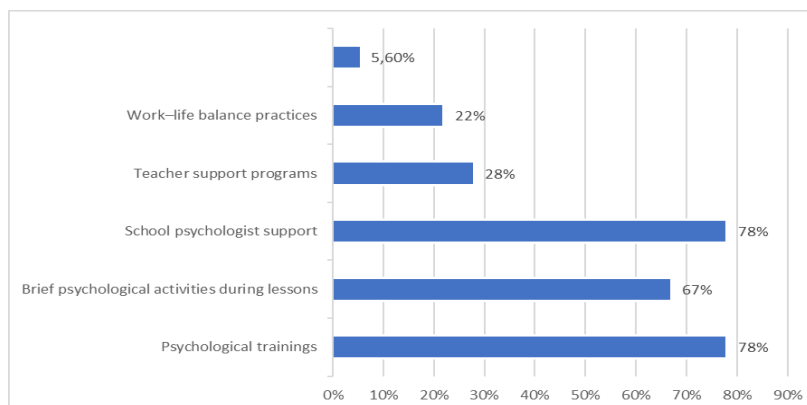


Figure 3 - Structure of work placements in educational institutions.

Source: compiled by the authors.

Only 28% of teachers and psychologists use techniques to self-regulate their psychological state on a regular basis, whilst 39% do so rarely and 33% occasionally. The data obtained indicate a gap between theoretical knowledge of psychological techniques and their practical application in everyday life, which reduces teachers' personal stress resilience (Figure 4).

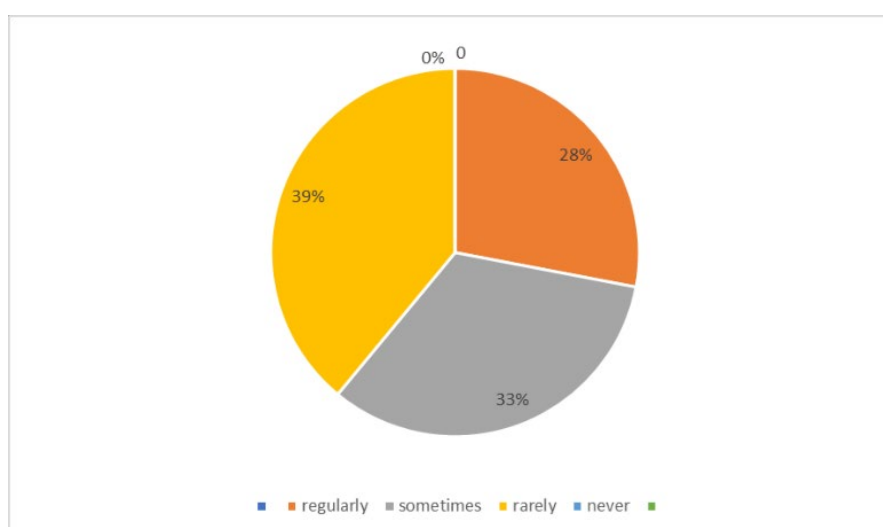


Figure 4 - Teachers' individual self-regulation.

Source: compiled by the authors.

56% of respondents rate the school where they work as a partially psychologically safe environment, whilst 39% of educators report it to be completely safe. This indicates the instability of the psychological climate in educational institutions and its dependence on local organisational and contextual conditions (Figure 5).

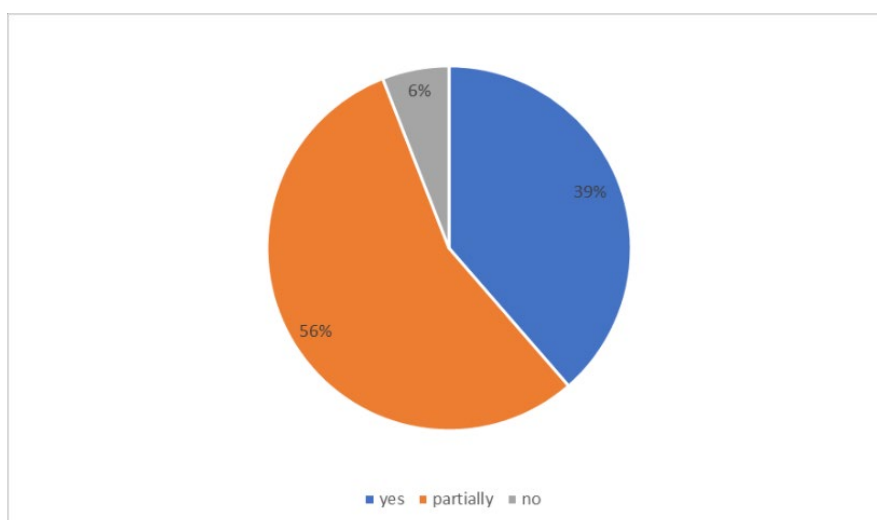


Figure 5 - Psychological safety in the educational environment.

Source: compiled by the authors.

The most well-developed elements of the mental health support infrastructure in schools are the availability of a psychologist's office (83%) and regular preventive measures (67%). At the same time, other components are underdeveloped: support for teachers (39%) and spaces for psychological recovery (28%). Consequently, the infrastructure is at a basic but unsystematic stage of development (Figure 6).

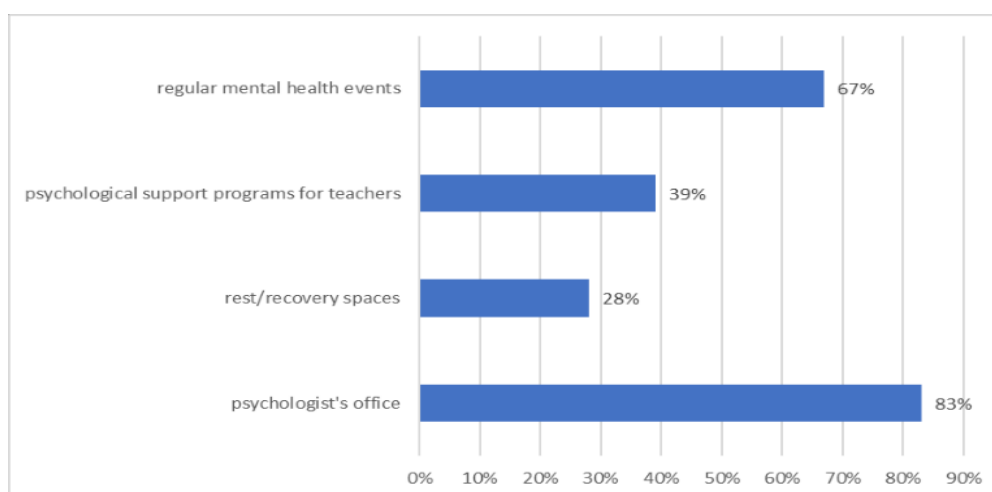


Figure 6 - Infrastructure provision.

Source: compiled by the authors.

Among the key factors determining mental health in the educational environment, the war context (83%) is the dominant factor, acting as a powerful source of stress. Teachers' professional overload (72%) and emotional exhaustion (72%) also have a



significant impact; together, these factors contribute to heightened psychological stress and reduce educators' resilience (Figure 7).

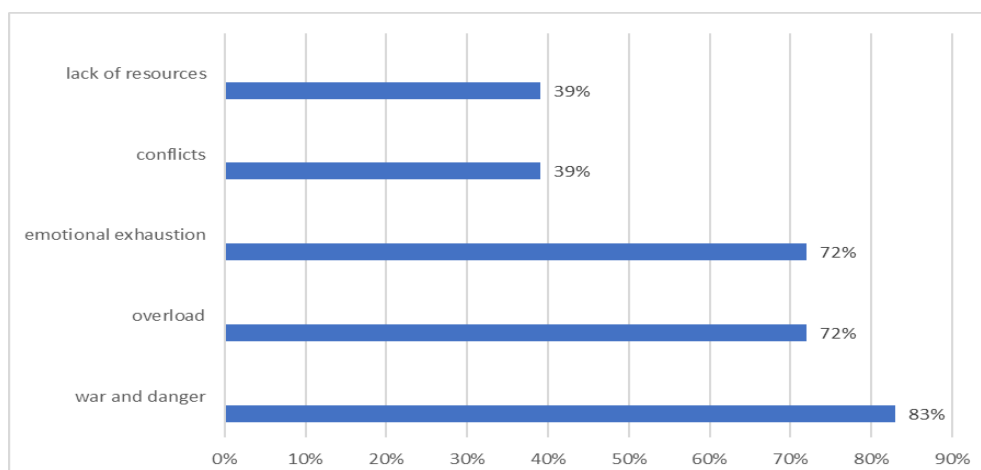


Figure 7 - Influencing factors and barriers.

Source: compiled by the authors.

The main obstacles to the effective implementation of mental health support practices are a lack of time (67%), excessive workloads (56%) and a shortage of resources (50%). At the same time, insufficient knowledge was identified as the least significant barrier (11%), indicating that teachers and psychologists have sufficient theoretical knowledge, but limited opportunities to systematically apply this knowledge in practice (Figure 8).

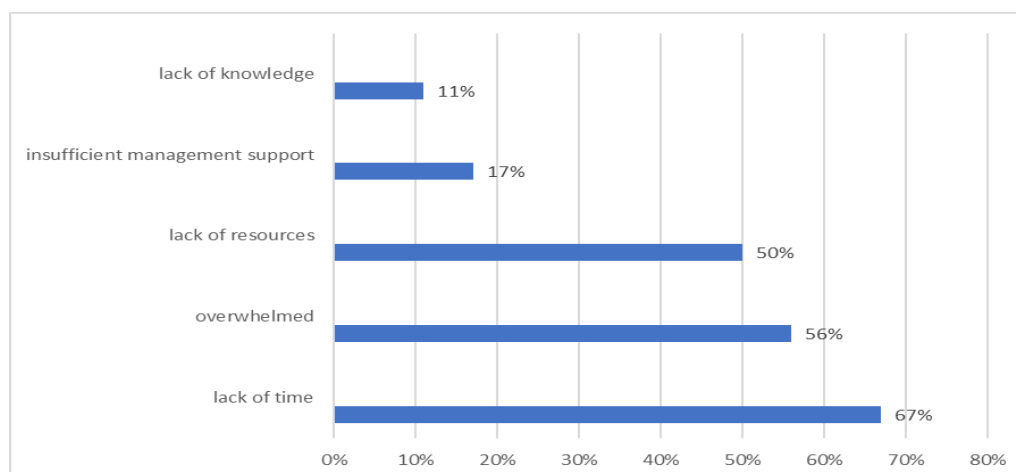


Figure 8 – Barriers to the implementation of mental health practices.

Source: compiled by the authors.

Among the priority measures for improving the effectiveness of the mental health



support system, respondents highlighted the following: training for teachers (78%), strengthening administrative support (61%), reducing workloads (57%) and improving the provision of resources (50%). The results obtained are consistent with the identified barriers and confirm the need for systemic organisational changes (Figure 9).

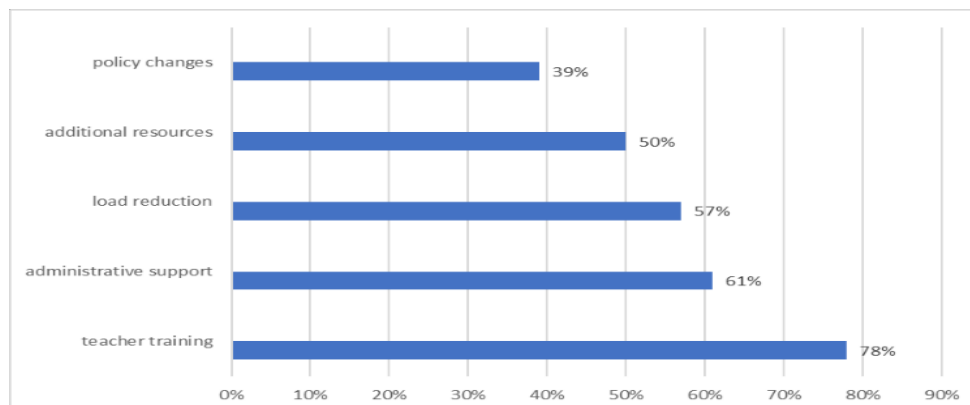


Figure 9 - Areas for improvement.

Source: compiled by the authors.

The findings therefore demonstrate that the mental health support system within the educational environment is at a stage of gradual development. It already incorporates individual practices and basic infrastructural elements, but still requires greater coordination and systematic integration to form a holistic approach.

The main limiting factor is the combination of a heavy professional workload and external stressors that significantly exceed the available support resources.

Prospects for development are linked to the transition from fragmented measures to a systemic model of the educational environment, focused on the well-being and professional wellbeing of all participants in the educational process.

Conclusions

This study has identified the characteristics of mental health support practices in the educational environment and assessed the extent to which they are institutionally established. The results indicate that attention to mental health in schools is predominantly at a moderate level, suggesting a partial awareness of the importance of the issue, but without its systematic integration into educational practice. A significant



proportion of respondents assess the situation as partially established, whilst approximately one-fifth indicate a low level of attention to this issue.

The analysis showed that the implementation of mental health support practices is largely piecemeal and is carried out only partially or sporadically. A systematic approach has been observed in only 28% of institutions. The most common forms of psychological support are traditional ones, such as the work of school psychologists, training sessions and short psychological activities. At the same time, programmes aimed at supporting teachers, as well as measures related to work-life balance and resource recovery, are significantly less prevalent.

The use of self-regulation techniques by teachers and psychologists is sporadic, indicating a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The psychological safety of the educational environment is assessed as partial (56%), suggesting the presence of some positive conditions but the absence of a stable system to ensure them.

The infrastructure for supporting mental health in schools is at a basic level of development and consists mainly of a psychologist's office and isolated initiatives, whilst systemic elements of support for teachers and spaces for resource recovery remain underdeveloped. The main factors affecting mental health have been identified as the war context, overload and emotional exhaustion, which contribute to high levels of occupational stress.

Among the barriers to implementing these practices, a lack of time, excessive workload and a shortage of resources are the most prevalent, whilst a lack of knowledge is not a major constraint. At the same time, respondents highlight the need for teacher training, increased administrative support, a reduction in workload and the provision of resources as priority areas for improvement.

Consequently, the mental health support system in the educational environment is at the stage of development and partial implementation. It requires further development towards the formation of a more comprehensive model that would harmoniously combine the organisational, resource and professional components of ensuring the psychological well-being of those involved in the educational process.