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Title of the doctoral thesis:

The Significance of Health Literacy Among Academic Youth to Health Policy in Poland

One of the fundamental challenges of public health in the 21st century is shaping the health literacy of individuals. Knowledge related to health contributes to better health behaviour among students, which also affects academic performance, skills acquisition and helps reduce health inequalities. It is important to place special emphasis on the education process, particularly on topics related to health and behaviour. Possessing health knowledge is a crucial factor in empowering individuals and gaining control over their own health. This also translates into active participation.

The main aim of the thesis is to examine the health literacy of academic youth aged 18-26 years old and the directions of health policy actions that can contribute to the growth of these competencies. The study involved students aged 18-26 years old enrolled in selected universities in Poland.

The main hypothesis of the thesis states that the level of health literacy among academic youth is relatively low and requires supplementation through systematically implemented educational programs, which should positively affect the health status of this youth in the future.

The **auxiliary hypotheses** are expressed in the following statements:

- 1) A significant portion of academic youth in Poland aged 18-26 years old lacks sufficient health literacy.
- 2) Depending on the direction of higher education, academic youth declare a different level of competencies in searching, evaluating and applying information related to health services provided within the healthcare system.
- 3) The main source of health information for academic youth aged 18-26 years old is the Internet.

The thesis answers the following **main research questions**:

- 1) In which areas of public policy should actions be taken to increase the health literacy of academic youth in Poland?
- 2) What factors can contribute to the growth of health literacy among academic youth in Poland?
- 3) What is the integrated model of health literacy and how can it be utilized?

The thesis also answers the following **supporting research questions**:

- 1) What is the level of health literacy among academic youth aged 18-26 years old?
- 2) How do the levels of health literacy among academic youth vary in terms of searching, evaluating and applying information related to health services provided within the healthcare system?
- 3) Does the Internet truly constitute the main source of health information for academic youth aged 18-26 years old?

Research methods

The research is based on subject literature and a self-assessment study of the health literacy of young Poles. The paper presents the results of both quantitative and qualitative research. The interdisciplinary approach used in the paper required the use of various research tools. The paper used the following methods: document analysis, statistical data analysis and historical-comparative method.

The paper also presents and analyses the results of a self-assessment study of the health literacy of academic youth, conducted using the HLS-EU-Q47 questionnaire developed under the European Health Literacy Project. The quantitative study involved a sample of 1072 people aged 18-26.

The paper also conducted a qualitative study based on an author's research questionnaire. The study involved 40 people (20 women and 20 men) aged 18-26, who were students at universities in the Mazowieckie voivodeship. The respondents participated in in-depth interviews based on a standard list of questions.

Work structure

The thesis consists of an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography. In the first chapter, the paper presents an overview of considerations regarding health policy in Poland. The chapter defines the place of health policy in the system of public policies.

Additionally, demographic trends and epidemiological issues with statistical data are presented. The chapter also analyses health policy instruments, particularly legal, financial and communication-related instruments.

The second chapter of the paper discusses the issue of health literacy, including its definition. The chapter also addresses the place of health literacy in health promotion. To this end, an analysis of exemplary models illustrating the components of health promotion was carried out. The chapter also presents research indicating the factors that influence the level of health literacy.

In the third chapter, the paper focuses on the role of health education in shaping the health literacy of young people. The chapter presents theoretical considerations of health promotion and disease prevention. Additionally, the chapter presents the results of research addressing the implementation of health education in schools. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the determinants of health.

The fourth chapter of the paper concerns the health status of young people and their health education. The chapter addresses health education and its role in shaping the health literacy of young people. Additionally, the chapter provides a review of research on the subject. The chapter also presents data obtained through access to public information, showing the number of healthcare services financed by the National Health Fund that were provided to people aged 18-26 between 2018 and 2020.

The fifth chapter of the paper presents a range of tools used to measure the level of health literacy. The chapter presents international experiences in researching health literacy. The chapter also introduces the method of conducting the HLS-EU-Q47 questionnaire used in the quantitative study.

In conclusion, the paper summarizes the results of the research and formulates conclusions. The paper highlights the role of health education in shaping the health literacy of young people and identifies the challenges in the implementation of health education in Poland. The bibliography lists sources used in the paper.

Conclusions

According to a survey on the level of health literacy conducted using the HLS-EU-Q47 questionnaire developed in the framework of the European Health Literacy Project, 21.2% of the surveyed representatives of academic youth aged 18-26 showed inadequate health literacy skills, while 32.1% demonstrated problematic levels. Thus, it should be noted that

a low level of health literacy skills (inadequate and problematic) was found in a total of 53.3% of respondents.

Based on the conducted research, a correlation was noted between the field of higher education and the declared level of health literacy. This issue was addressed both in the quantitative study and in qualitative research. The results presented in the dissertation may serve as a basis for further research.

The doctoral thesis includes a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening health literacy skills. Improving the level of health literacy in the population, especially among youth, requires undertaking comprehensive actions in many areas. These actions should be taken both by central government authorities and decision-makers responsible for health protection, education and science, as well as social policy. Promoting health-promoting behaviours as part of public policy is all the more significant as the causes of changes in individual health status usually lie outside the healthcare system. They are related to the individual activity of individual units, as well as their social activity. It should also be noted that many factors that affect health are present in the social, economic, or physical environment. Therefore, the actions taken should complement each other.