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INDIVIDUAL FACTORS IN THE FORMATION OF SELF-HARMING BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

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Self-harm is the deliberate infliction of physical injury upon oneself, a complex phenomenon that is shaped by a combination of various factors. Its emergence is determined both by internal psychological characteristics of the individual and by external social circumstances that determine the nature of a person's response to stressful situations, emotional tension or life difficulties. According to Oxford University, the causes and preconditions for self-harm are as follows: individual factors, family factors, social factors.

Risk factors for self-harming behaviour: mental illness, young people without parental or guardian care, vulnerable groups of the population who experience discrimination, death of loved ones due to suicide.

Individual factors significantly influence the propensity for self-harm, as certain psychological and personality traits increase vulnerability to using self-harm as a way of coping with emotional pain.

One of the key factors is difficulty with emotional regulation – a reduced ability to recognise, understand and manage one's own emotions. People with such difficulties may resort to self-harm as a quick way to reduce intense negative experiences.

Another important factor is low distress tolerance, i.e. the inability to endure unpleasant emotional states or difficult life circumstances. In such cases, self-harm may be perceived as a way to temporarily escape painful experiences, even though it has negative consequences in the long term.

Another significant factor is impulsivity. People who are prone to spontaneous actions and making decisions under the influence of the moment, in a state of strong emotional tension, may impulsively harm themselves. Individual

factors also include negative self-perception and low self-esteem. Feelings of worthlessness or self-hatred can provoke a desire to use physical pain as a 'punishment' or a way to express internal distress.

Certain cognitive characteristics also have an impact, such as black-and-white thinking, catastrophising, and avoidance of problems. The inability to see other ways of responding to stress creates the impression that self-harm is the only way out.

People with high neuroticism are particularly vulnerable to stress, get upset easily, dwell on conflicts for a long time, and often experience anxiety and depression, which can also increase the risk of self-harm.

Thus, self-harming behaviour is a complex multifactorial phenomenon that arises under the influence of a combination of individual, family, and social factors. Psychological characteristics of the individual play a significant role in its formation, in particular, difficulties with emotional regulation, low tolerance to distress, impulsiveness, negative self-perception and increased vulnerability to stress. Together, these factors can lead a person to perceive self-harm as a way to cope with internal tension or emotional pain, which emphasises the importance of timely psychological support and prevention of this phenomenon.

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