

Consciousness depths and psychological defence mechanisms

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Abstract: The study of the depth of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms is particularly relevant nowadays, as it allows for better understanding of how stressful conditions affect people, shape their behaviour, and affect their mental health. The study aims to examine in detail the peculiarities of human consciousness and its changes in the context of activation of psychological defence mechanisms. The method of analysis, systematisation and survey was used in the study. As a result of the scientific research, the concept of consciousness and its key components in the context of the human psyche were considered. As a result of the work, the peculiarities of brain activity, which is a central component of the mechanisms of consciousness, were studied and highlighted. In addition, the research revealed details of the evolutionary development of mental defence mechanisms. This study examines the impact of stressors on the activation and modification of mental defence mechanisms and analyses both constructive and destructive mental defence mechanisms. The research shows that psychological defence mechanisms are dynamic structures that can change depending on specific conditions and circumstances. The paper surveyed respondents on their understanding of the phenomenon of depth of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms. The results of the survey indicate a high level of education and awareness of the respondents regarding the phenomenon of consciousness and mechanisms of mental protection. In the course of analysing the survey results, it was found that 98% of respondents expressed a positive attitude towards the need for in-depth education in the context of consciousness, indicating a high level of motivation for academic and psychological self-improvement. Within the same sample, 80% of participants reflected on psychological counselling as an effective mechanism for analysing and adapting psychological defence mechanisms.

Keywords: Displacement, Denial, Projection, Mental state, Rationalisation.

Resumo: O estudo da profundidade da consciência e dos mecanismos de defesa psicológica é particularmente relevante nos dias de hoje, pois nos permite compreender melhor como as condições de stress afetam as pessoas, moldam o seu comportamento e afetam a sua saúde mental. O estudo tem como objetivo examinar as particularidades da consciência humana e as suas alterações no contexto da ativação dos mecanismos de defesa psicológica. Para o efeito, foi utilizado o método de análise, sistematização e inquérito. Como resultado da investigação científica, foi considerado o conceito de consciência e os seus componentes-chave no contexto da psique humana. Como resultado do trabalho, foram estudadas e destacadas as peculiaridades da atividade cerebral, que é um componente central dos mecanismos da consciência. Além disso, o estudo revelou pormenores sobre o desenvolvimento evolutivo dos mecanismos de defesa mental. Este estudo examina o impacto dos fatores de stress na ativação e modificação dos mecanismos de defesa mental e analisa os mecanismos de defesa mental construtivos e destrutivos. A investigação mostra que os mecanismos de defesa psicológica são estruturas dinâmicas que podem mudar as condições e circunstâncias específicas. O documento inquiriu os inquiridos sobre a sua compreensão do fenómeno da profundidade da consciência e dos mecanismos de defesa psicológica. Os resultados do inquérito indicam um elevado nível de educação e de sensibilização dos inquiridos relativamente ao fenómeno da consciência e aos mecanismos de proteção mental. Durante a análise dos resultados do inquérito, verificou-se que 98% dos inquiridos manifestaram uma atitude positiva em relação à necessidade de uma educação aprofundada no contexto da consciência, o que indica um elevado nível de motivação para o autoaperfeiçoamento académico e psicológico. Na mesma amostra, 80% dos participantes refletiram sobre o aconselhamento psicológico como um mecanismo eficaz de análise e adaptação dos mecanismos de defesa psicológica.

Palavras-Chave: Deslocação, Negação, Projecção, Estado mental, Racionalização.

1. Introduction

The study of the depth of consciousness and psychological defence systems is crucial in the present world because of its many stressful circumstances and difficulties. The understanding the mechanisms that govern human consciousness and defence systems is essential for developing effective therapeutic strategies. These aspects of the human psyche are becoming the object of attention of scientists, psychotherapists and psychology specialists aimed at revealing and understanding complex mental processes [1]. The depth of consciousness, as a phenomenon that describes the increased meaningfulness and awareness of subjective experience, reflects the inner world of a person, personal experiences and attitude to the external environment [2].

The problem of this study lies in understanding how the depth of consciousness interacts with psychological defence mechanisms, particularly under conditions of stress and trauma. It addresses the challenge of exploring how consciousness involves self-reflection, emotional regulation, and decision-making, while defence mechanisms such as displacement and projection help

individuals cope with psychological stress. The research also seeks to understand how these mechanisms operate at both conscious and unconscious levels, influencing emotional responses and mental health, and how they evolve in response to personal and societal challenges.

In the context of today's complex geopolitical environment, understanding the depth of consciousness becomes key to developing effective psychological approaches to supporting mental health. The current geopolitical environment is marked by unprecedented complexity, shaped by shifting power dynamics, emerging global challenges, and the intricate interplay of national interests [3]. Regional conflicts, such as those in Ukraine and the Middle East, further exacerbate tensions and create unpredictable flashpoints [4]. Issues like climate change, cybersecurity threats, and global health crises add to the volatility, requiring multilateral responses in an environment where cooperation is often hindered by national interests and ideological divides [5]. Psychological defence mechanisms, in turn, are dynamic psychological processes

that are activated under conditions of stress or traumatic events to preserve mental stability [6].

The concept of consciousness as a scientific category does not have a clear, precise, and exhaustive definition that would fully describe this complex phenomenon. However, there were attempts to define this concept by different scholars. For example, Korkos [7] views it as a mental state that is characterised by subjective experience and purposeful, conscious behaviour. This awareness, according to the scientist, provides increased flexibility and complexity in the process of interacting with the world around us. According to the researcher, consciousness encompasses the process of reflection, self-awareness, and an expanded set of intellectual abilities that are unique to humans and manifests itself as the ability to experience sensory experience.

Nowadays, psychological defence mechanisms are gaining importance for people experiencing severe destructive states [8]. Stepanenko [9] notes that for people experiencing traumatic events, indicators of adaptive properties at all levels interact with the indicator of the “displacement” defence mechanism. The scientist noticed that the mechanisms of projection and hypercompensation have a selective direct impact on the indicators of adaptive properties. Thus, the success of the adaptation process in stressful situations is determined by a specific set of defence mechanisms and adaptive properties among Ukrainians, which requires more detailed study.

Derid and Dodonova [10] explored two prominent theories of consciousness: Michael Graziano’s attention schema theory and Bernard Baars’ global workspace theory. The authors analysed the neurobiological foundations and empirical evidence supporting each theory, providing insight into how the brain generates conscious experience. The researchers also examined the philosophical and ethical implications of consciousness, particularly in relation to self-awareness, responsibility, and social existence.

According to Fomina [11], psychological protection is seen as a reaction to the displacement of information from the mind that may threaten the emotional well-being of a person. The scientist notes that psychological defence mechanisms can have both a threatening impact on personal development and certain positive effects. The scientist emphasises that adaptive defence mechanisms, such as sublimation and compensation, are less pronounced in Ukrainian society. This points to the problem of the dominance of destructive psychological defence mechanisms in modern society, which requires a detailed study of this phenomenon. It should be noted that people with pronounced manifestations of such mechanisms show greater vulnerability, anxiety, passivity, and distortion of social perception [12].

Borets and Sivun [13] point out that an important characteristic of defence mechanisms is their role as a smokescreen that distracts attention from the true meaning of a particular

situation. Scientists note that both the unconscious influences the consciousness and the conscious, intentional desire to change oneself can influence the unconscious. Scientists are convinced that in the context of changing the psychological state, the mechanism of “discharging” tension is highlighted, which leads to a weakening of resistance and makes the causes of experiences more accessible to awareness. It is worthwhile to exploring the peculiarities of consciousness and defence mechanisms more thoroughly.

Psychological protection mechanisms today should also include the specifics of digital culture development [14,15]. To reduce the negative impact on the psyche and to better understand information in the media space, it is strongly recommended to develop media literacy, as noted by Gorodetska [16]. According to the scientist, this includes skills and habits that allow you to critically evaluate messages from various media, including traditional media, social networks, outdoor advertising. The development of media literacy is becoming key to avoiding the spread of inaccurate information and regulating consciousness by avoiding oversaturation with information flows [17]. The scientist argues that this skill is based on the personal responsibility of each consumer and reflects the mechanisms of psychological protection, using a conscious intellectual approach to the perception of information in the media space. It should be noted that developing this skill not only helps to protect against negative influences but also opens opportunities for active participation in one’s information environment and the formation of a sustainable psychological balance [18,19], so it is worthwhile to research the mechanisms of psychological protection within the media space in more detail.

The current research addresses key gaps in understanding the depth of consciousness and its relationship with psychological defence mechanisms, particularly under stress. While existing research explores individual defence mechanisms, it often overlooks their interaction with consciousness and their adaptive role in modern societal contexts. The study also fills the gap in empirical research on how defence mechanisms impact mental health and relationships. Additionally, it highlights the need for psychoeducation, providing data on public awareness of these mechanisms and emphasising the importance of integrating this knowledge into education and therapy.

The study aims to examine the specific characteristics of an individual’s consciousness, such as self-awareness, emotional responses, and cognitive processes, along with the changes that occur in these aspects when psychological defence mechanisms, like displacement and denial, are activated in response to stress or trauma. The main research questions of the study are the following:

- What are the key components of human consciousness?

- How do psychological defence mechanisms activate and modify in response to stressors?
- What is the public’s understanding and perception of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms?

2. Materials and Methods

The survey consisted of 7 questions, designed to assess respondents’ understanding of the depth of consciousness and their awareness of psychological defence mechanisms (Table 1). These questions were designed to gather clear, binary responses, facilitating straightforward analysis of the data. The yes/no format allowed for easy comparison across responses, making the data analysis more efficient and providing a clear picture of participants’ views on topics such as the importance of understanding consciousness for personal development and the role of defence mechanisms in mental health.

Table 1. Survey questions.

No.	Aspect
1	Do you think that understanding the depth of consciousness is important for personal development?
2	Can you recall your experience of using psychological defence mechanisms in stressful situations?
3	Do you think that psychological defence mechanisms can affect your mental health?
4	Do you think that modern society recognises the importance of understanding psychological defence mechanisms?
5	Do you think that education about the depth of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms should be accessible to everyone?
6	Do you believe in the effectiveness of psychological counselling in understanding and using psychological defence mechanisms?
7	Do you think that the depth of consciousness affects your interpersonal relationships?

Source: compiled by the author.

The survey was designed to ensure that all respondents had the same response conditions, which simplified the analysis and comparison of data. It was conducted in 2023. The questions were anonymised to ensure confidentiality, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the survey. The participants in this study were selected through a survey method, where 100 respondents participated. Of these, 30 were male and 70 were female, with an age range from 18 to 53 years. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the survey questions were designed to assess their awareness and understanding of psychological defence mechanisms and consciousness. Specifically, for the female group, the age range was 18 – 48 years, while for the male group, the age range was 18 – 53 years. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. A study was approved by Ethics Commission of the Kyiv International University, No 5863-A.

The main goal of this survey was to explore the personal perception of the concept of “consciousness” and analyse the awareness of mental defence mechanisms among the participants. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of individual differences in understanding mental processes and the use of internal resources to protect against potential dangers or stressful situations. The data from the survey were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The responses to the seven yes/no questions were quantitatively assessed to identify patterns and trends in respondents’ awareness of the depth of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms. Each question was treated as a binary variable, and the proportion of “yes” and “no” answers was calculated for each item.

This approach allowed for a straightforward analysis of respondents’ perceptions and beliefs. The data were further categorised to examine the relationships between variables, such as age and gender, and the respondents’ views on topics like the importance of psychoeducation and the effectiveness of psychological counselling. The results were then integrated into the broader context of the study, providing insight into the general level of self-awareness and understanding of psychological processes among the participants.

The following research methods were used in the study: analysis, systematisation, and survey, which contributed to a deeper study and understanding of aspects of consciousness and mental defence mechanisms.

The analysis method was used to analyse in detail and reveal the conceptual apparatus of the term “consciousness”. It was employed to analyse the structural elements of consciousness and to investigate their interrelationships and influence on the general mental state of a person. Analysis was used to examine the internal processes, mechanisms and patterns underlying the phenomenon of consciousness. The analysis method was used to identify the nature and significance of these mechanisms in the modern psychological context. Furthermore, the interaction of stress factors with defence mechanisms was emphasised, considering stress as a determinant that affects the activation and adaptation of these mechanisms to external challenges.

The study also employed the systematisation method, which was used to organise the information in a logical sequence, creating a clear structure for the research. It helped explore aspects of the defence mechanisms of the psyche. This method was used to identify the basic principles, regularities, and patterns in the functioning of consciousness. Both positive and potentially negative characteristics of the mental defence mechanisms were considered in an organised manner. This study has determined that these mental defence mechanisms are distinguished by their flexibility and ability to adapt to the specific conditions faced by the individual. The systematisation method helped to separate constructive psychological defence mechanisms that are based on the principles of adaptation, helping the individual to solve

problems and adapt to various circumstances. On the other hand, this method was used to identify destructive psychological defence mechanisms that can be activated in response to severe stress or traumatic situations, which can lead to adverse mental consequences.

3. Results

3.1. Human consciousness: Concept and key aspects

Consciousness, a unique inherently spectral aspect of the human psyche, has always been a subject of deep interest for scientists, philosophers, psychologists, and thinkers of different eras. Consciousness is an extraordinary mosaic that encompasses the awareness of one’s identity, which is revealed through the search for answers to the questions “Who am I?” and “Why am I here?”. It also encompasses the sense of time, whether it is awareness of the moment or reflection on the past and future. In addition, consciousness reflects our emotional reactions – joy, sadness, excitement, fear – that reflect deep inner feelings and reactions to external events.

Consideration of the concept of “consciousness” requires an integrative approach that encompasses a range of theoretical frameworks based on various disciplinary foundations of philosophy and scientific research. Consciousness is seen as a fundamental category of human existence, which is a complex object for analysis and specification. Consciousness cannot be completely reduced to the mechanical and biochemical processes of the brain; it encompasses deep aspects that go beyond simple neurophysiological interaction [20]. Particular emphasis is placed on such an aspect as the “meta-problem of consciousness”, which refers to the complex mechanisms of emergence and functioning of conscious states in the context of brain activity [21].

Consciousness can manifest in a variety of configurations and states, including experiences induced by psychoactive substances or meditation practices. In the context of profound states of ecstatic experience or depersonalisation, a person’s identity can undergo significant transformations. Some of these experiences can lead to a perception in which the individual function as an observer, detached from reality [22]. These phenomena emphasise the depth and complexity of the mechanisms of consciousness. At the same time, even in the face of such deviations, a person retains the ability to reflect on and analyse these experiences after they are completed, indicating a certain degree of metacognition, regardless of its traditional manifestation [23].

To minimise the effects of stress, trauma, or a sense of separation, the consciousness activates the mental defence mechanisms that serve as internal regulators. They can be both conscious and unconscious, thus some people may feel them consciously while others may not be aware of their defensive responses. As a result, consciousness engages with experience in addition to registering and interpreting it, activating a variety of

psychological defensive mechanisms to maintain mental health and individual integrity.

3.2. Mental defence mechanisms: evolutionary aspects and development

The concept of defence in the psychotherapeutic context is dynamic and multidimensional, as it is perceived by everyone from a unique perspective. Despite the individual approach to the perception of defence mechanisms, today there is a tendency to expand various defence mechanisms over time. The essence of these mechanisms lies in their unconscious nature; they are psychological reactions aimed at distancing oneself from potentially debilitating or conflicting thoughts, emotions, or feelings. In the context of psychological well-being, defence mechanisms serve as mental barriers aimed at reducing the level of anxiety that arises from internal conflicts or feelings of inadequacy.

The Austrian psychoanalyst Freud [24] classified various psychological defence mechanisms that operate at the unconscious level and are used by individuals to overcome internal conflicts and stressful situations (Table 2). These mechanisms reflect the different ways in which a person organises personal perception of the world and emotions, ensuring mental balance. S. Freud emphasised that in real life, people rarely use only one defence mechanism, usually they implement different strategies, depending on the specific situation. These mechanisms must operate at the level of the unconscious, and their use can affect the mental state and perception of reality [25].

Table 2. Psychological defence mechanisms by S. Freud

Defence mechanism	Description
Displacement	Separating unacceptable thoughts or feelings from consciousness to avoid unpleasant states.
Projection	Attributing personal traits that are perceived as unacceptable to other people.
Substitution	Transforming difficult or unpleasant thoughts into something more acceptable and reasonable.
Rationalisation	Justifying difficult or unpleasant thoughts by offering more acceptable or logical reasons.
Reactive formation	Identifying the opposite feeling or action to that which is unacceptable.
Regression	Departing from habitual ways of behaving to a less mature level, which helps to cope with stress.
Sublimation	Transforming unacceptable urges or emotions into socially acceptable forms, such as creativity.
Denial	Rejecting or ignoring the existence of an unpleasant reality.

Source: compiled by the authors.

Defence mechanisms are recognised as part of the unconscious mental process that regulates an individual’s interaction with potentially stressful or conflicting stimuli. It is important to understand that mental defence reactions are not always an indication of pathology but often play an adaptive role in the individual’s relationships and behaviour [26]. Psychotherapeutic intervention is important in the context of

regulating and modifying defence mechanisms. Interaction with a therapist can contribute to a deeper understanding and rethinking of existing defence strategies, as well as to achieving harmony in the patient's inner world. It is also important to consider the evolutionary and developmental aspects of mental defence mechanisms. Various defence strategies are formed at different stages of mental development. During the evolution of the human species, the emergence of these mechanisms is due to the individual's adaptive response to threats within the environment and stressful situations. For example, our distant ancestors developed a mechanism that provide "fight or flight" response which was useful for the survival in the wild.

In early childhood, basic defence mechanisms are formed to help children adapt to the world. For example, regression, projection, or rationalisation may emerge as ways of organising new experiences and reactions to stress. Different cultures and social systems have their ideas about what mechanisms are acceptable or unacceptable. Cultural norms and values can influence how an individual responds to stress and what strategies they use to protect their mental health. While most of them are adaptive, there are cases where they can become pathological. Excessive use of withdrawal or denial mechanisms can interfere with adequate social adaptation and interaction with others. Over the course of a person's life, defence mechanisms can evolve, changing in response to new life circumstances, experiences, and interactions.

3.3. Destructive and constructive mental defence mechanisms

Destructive mental defence mechanisms play a role in psychological processes, but their use can lead to negative consequences for the individual and their environment. These are particularly active among high-risk populations, such as adolescents, people involved in substance use, someone with personality disorders or who have suffered traumatic brain injuries. These categories are more likely to show immature defence mechanisms in their efforts to adapt to internal and external stressors [27]. Additionally, it is important to note that these reaction mechanisms are rarely affected by verbal therapeutic strategies alone. Thus, an effective psychotherapeutic intervention requires a comprehensive approach that considers the specifics of these mechanisms and the individual characteristics of each patient.

When developing psychotherapy strategies, it is important to take these mechanisms into account and promote their adaptive transformation. However, it should be noted that defence mechanisms can be both destructive and constructive, depending on the context and circumstances in which they are used. The basic principle underpinning this understanding is that defence mechanisms are neither negative nor positive in themselves; they play a role in an individual's attempt to adapt to the external world and internal mental processes [28].

The projection mechanism can be destructive if it leads to conflicts and misunderstandings in relationships with others. However, in some cases, projection can help a person recognise individual aspects of their personality that they have previously ignored or rejected. It is also important to consider the individual characteristics and the context in which the defence mechanism is used. What may be constructive for one person may be destructive for another, depending on their unique life situation, psychological state, and personal resources. It is also important to understand that over time, with increased self-awareness and psychological flexibility, an individual can rethink and rebuild their defence mechanisms, learning to use them more effectively and adaptively in different life situations [29].

Thus, in the context of mental health and self-development, it is important to approach defence mechanisms not as static and unchanging, but as dynamic tools that can be rethought and transformed at a certain time.

Constructive mental defence mechanisms are an important element of psychological adaptation and ensure the mental balance of an individual in various life circumstances. They help a person to interact effectively with the world around them, as well as with internal conflicts and stressors.

One of the key aspects of constructive defence mechanisms is their ability to integrate conflicting motivations. Instead of rejecting or hiding negative or conflicting feelings, these mechanisms allow the individual to find a middle ground where a balance between different needs and desires can be achieved [30]. These mechanisms can promote the development of a sense of belonging, where a person feels part of a community or group rather than an individual acting in isolation, which in turn can encourage interaction, compassion, and harmonious interpersonal relationships. A person with such responses often has a high level of emotional intelligence. They can effectively recognise, understand, and manage their emotions and those of others. Instead of avoiding responsibility for their actions or feelings, they actively interact with the world around them, using their experiences as opportunities for personal growth. Constructive mental defence mechanisms are a key element of psychological resilience and development. They help not only to feel safe and secure but also to actively interact with life challenges, opening new opportunities for personal growth.

These mechanisms represent a high level of psychological adaptation and inner harmony. They are reflected in a highly developed perception of reality and in the individual's ability to respond adequately to life challenges, which determines the maturity of decisions and behavioural strategies (Table 3).

Table 3. Mature defence mechanisms

No.	Defence mechanisms	Description
1	Altruism	It is manifested in a person's tendency to act for the benefit of others without seeking personal gain or mutual benefit. Altruistic actions are aimed at the benefit of the community or individuals around the individual, and at the same time help the individual to feel deeply satisfied by acts of kindness and selflessness.
2	Sublimation	This process involves transforming negative thoughts into constructive actions that are useful to society. For example, a person can use the energy of aggression for creative efforts or to achieve lofty goals.
3	Humour	Humour allows a person to approach life with ease, finding the comic or ironic in the world around them. Although at first glance it may seem that humour reflects an avoidance of reality, it helps to relax and let go of accumulated emotional tensions. Humour, similarly, to meditation, can help activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which in turn promotes recovery and relaxation.

Source: compiled by the author based on G.E. Vaillant [31].

Mature mental defence mechanisms reflect a deep level of self-knowledge, emotional stability, and flexibility in responding to life circumstances. They are an important component of mental health and help individuals experience harmony and peace in their inner world [32].

Raising awareness of defence mechanisms among young people opens great opportunities for their psychological development and social adaptation. Understanding these mechanisms is a key element in building psychological flexibility and the ability to respond adequately to stressful situations. This will also help young people to choose more adaptive and constructive strategies to respond to life challenges. In particular, they can more effectively use mechanisms such as altruism or reflection, which contributes to the harmonious development of the individual [33]. Learning about defence mechanisms contributes to a better understanding of one's emotions and those of others. This contributes to the development of emotional intelligence and the ability to communicate effectively, which are key competencies in the modern world.

Constructive mechanisms of mental protection contribute to the harmonious development of the individual, promoting psychological stability and adaptability. They are an important element of psychotherapeutic practice, as they contribute to the development of resources and strategies for overcoming life's difficulties and stresses.

3.4. Perceptions of the consciousness depth and psychological defence mechanisms: an empirical study

The study surveyed 100 respondents to understand the phenomenon of depth of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms (Table 4).

Table 4. Survey results

No.	Aspect	Yes	No
1	Do you think that understanding the depth of consciousness is important for personal development?	75%	25%
2	Can you recall your experience of using psychological defence mechanisms in stressful situations?	85%	15%
3	Do you think that psychological defence mechanisms can affect your mental health?	87%	13%
4	Do you think that modern society recognises the importance of understanding psychological defence mechanisms?	79%	21%
5	Do you think that education about the depth of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms should be accessible to everyone?	98%	2%
6	Do you believe in the effectiveness of psychological counselling in understanding and using psychological defence mechanisms?	80%	20%
7	Do you think that the depth of consciousness affects your interpersonal relationships?	73%	27%

Source: compiled by the author.

The data obtained reflect the respondents' awareness of the importance of understanding the depth of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms. The majority (75 %) believe that understanding the depth of consciousness is important, which indicates a high level of self-awareness and a desire for personal development in this group. Such answers may be related to a general interest in the inner world and self-knowledge. An important number (85 %) can recall the experience of using psychological protection mechanisms. This may indicate the widespread use of adaptive strategies in stressful situations and awareness of their role in mental well-being. 87 % of respondents believe that psychological defence mechanisms can have an impact on their mental health. This may indicate an awareness of the risks associated with the misuse of such mechanisms and the need for their conscious regulation. A significant proportion (79 %) believe that modern society recognises this importance. Such answers may indicate the influence of socio-cultural factors on the awareness of psychological aspects of personal development. Almost all respondents (98 %) support the idea of access to education about the depth of consciousness. This indicates a high level of readiness to learn and develop their psychological competencies. The majority (80 %) believe that psychological counselling is effective in understanding and using psychological defence mechanisms. This indicates a belief in professional support and a desire to use knowledge to improve mental health. For 73 % of respondents, the depth of consciousness affects their interpersonal relationships. This may indicate an understanding of the importance of inner development for improving interpersonal communication. The results of the survey show a high degree of education and self-awareness among respondents who are aware of the importance of depth of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms for their personal development and mental well-being.

It is worth paying attention to the importance of psychoeducation of the Ukrainian population about the workings

of the mind and mental protection mechanisms. Psychoeducation is the process of providing individuals or groups with information and skills related to psychological concepts, mental health and coping strategies to improve understanding and well-being. Its basic elements include informing people about mental health conditions, the psychological mechanisms underlying thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, and developing coping strategies for dealing with stress, anxiety, or trauma. Psychoeducation also includes promoting emotional regulation, developing self-awareness, and improving interpersonal skills. In addition, it aims to empower individuals by teaching them how to recognize early signs of psychological distress and when to seek professional help, ultimately fostering a proactive approach to mental health.

Psychoeducation allows people to better understand themselves, their emotions, reactions, and the mechanisms they use to protect their psyche. This forms the basis for personal development and self-awareness. An educated community knows how to respond to stressful situations promptly, avoid unconstructive coping mechanisms and seek help from professionals when needed. Understanding the mechanisms of protection allows a person to interact better with the world around them, feel comfortable in different situations and maintain positive relationships with others.

Individuals who understand their internal mechanisms are better able to adapt to society and build stable and healthy relationships with others. Educated people are more likely to be aware of their emotional reactions and be able to control them, which can prevent conflicts and violence. When people understand the basic principles of mental health, they know when and how to seek professional help. Informed citizens can actively contribute to a friendly environment where everyone feels safe and understood. Given the above, psychoeducation is an important component of the well-being and stability of society. Its spread and popularisation in Ukraine can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of life and strengthening social cohesion.

4. Discussion

The study of the depths of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms is a fundamental aspect of modern psychological science, which attracts the interest of a wide range of researchers. A lot of studies on the mechanisms of consciousness are focused on the phenomenological manifestations of perception, cognitive processing, and semantics in the context of psychological, sociocultural, and biological influences. The theoretical models proposed by various authors serve as a framework for further scientific reflection and experimental research. On the other hand, the analysis of psychological defence mechanisms focuses on regulatory mechanisms that modulate mental processes in response to external and internal stressors. Scientists focus on the examining of psychological mechanisms that model the interaction of an individual with the social environment and personal adaptation strategies. The

presented above systematic analysis of various concepts and theories related to the depths of consciousness and defence mechanisms contributes to the discovery of unique scientific insights and deepens the overall understanding of these complex psychological phenomena.

Fingelkurts and Fingelkurts [33] point out that the human brain actively functions as a dynamic system that exhibits nonlinear dynamics and is always in a state of disequilibrium. This dynamic nature of the brain is supported by its constant transition between different states of activity at different levels. An important characteristic of the brain is its ability to self-organise, which is manifested by the interaction between stable and unstable states [34]. Scientists note that there is a cyclical relationship in brain activity, that forms the basis of perception and response to the world around us. It should be noted that consciousness reflects this dynamic, arising from the interaction of different levels and scales of brain information processing.

Stressors that are constantly encountered in our daily lives activate the body's internal self-regulatory system, according to Cooper et al. [35]. When the body is faced with a stressor, the activation of the neuroendocrine system is noted, which helps to mobilise the body's resources in response to stress. In addition, stress reactions can be manifested in several behavioural indicators, such as changes in attention, concentration, aggression, or avoidance. While some stressors can have a beneficial effect on activation and adaptation, prolonged or excessive stress can lead to negative consequences, such as high cortisol levels, sleep disturbances, or immunological problems [36, 37]. Considering the findings of the current study, it should be recognised that mental defence mechanisms play a key role in the body's response to stressors.

The defence mechanisms of the psyche, which can be both beneficial and problematic, according to Rice and Hoffman [38], are key to understanding their impact on an individual's behaviour and mental well-being. Under optimal conditions, these mechanisms can be beneficial, enabling individuals to respond appropriately to stress, unpleasant emotions, or distressing circumstances. Mechanisms such as rationalisation or retreat can be a means of providing emotional calm in situations of stress, as noted by the researchers. However, in certain circumstances, these defence responses can interfere with personal development or social integration. For example, excessive use of retreat can lead to a sense of alienation from the community, and the use of rationalisation can interfere with a meaningful understanding of personal responsibility. Therefore, it is important to consider defence mechanisms in the context of a particular situation, understanding their impact on other aspects of mental health and social adjustment. Considering the results of this article, it is possible to state that mental defence mechanisms play an important role in the interaction of the individual with the environment.

Costa and Brody [39] emphasise that psychological defence mechanisms serve as regulators of emotional stress that arises from internal conflicts or external stressors. These mechanisms can help a person adapt to various life circumstances, but their immature or ineffective use can lead to undesirable consequences and pathological manifestations. According to scientists, individuals who use defence mechanisms intensively may exhibit specific behavioural and emotional responses that reflect their attempts to hide internal conflicts or unacceptable aspects of their personality. These reactions may include forms of aggression, passive-aggressive behaviours, or emotional outbursts that may not always accurately reflect their state or context. Some of the mechanisms that can cause problems include projection, where a person directs their internal conflicts to others; affect isolation, where they cut off from their emotions; and other methods, including rationalisation, devaluation, denial, and others [40, 41]. These mechanisms are not only designed to temporarily reduce emotional pressure but can also contribute to the development of psychopathological conditions that require a specialised psychotherapeutic approach to restore mental health [42]. Compared to the results of this study, it should be noted that mental defence mechanisms play a key role in the interaction of an individual with the environment and can have various consequences for mental well-being.

The study of the depths of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms are key areas in modern psychology that require an integrative approach. Various theories and concepts proposed by scientists are valuable sources of knowledge that contribute to a deep and comprehensive understanding of human mental processes. Further research and integration of different approaches and perspectives are needed to analyse these issues fully and deeply. Stressors in a person's environment activate internal regulatory mechanisms, causing physiological and behavioural responses. These responses are usually adaptive and aimed at mobilising resources to overcome stress. However, prolonged, or excessive stress can hurt the body, leading to various reactions, such as elevated cortisol levels or sleep disturbances. The mental defence mechanisms of the psyche, while useful for adapting to stressful situations, can also have some negative consequences, especially if they are used inappropriately or immaturely. They help a person respond to internal conflicts or external stressors but can lead to pathological manifestations if they are not used effectively. Thus, brain dynamics, stress response, and mental defence mechanisms interact with each other to form a complex mechanism of regulation and adaptation of the human personality to the outside world.

Conclusions

This study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between the depth of consciousness and psychological defence mechanisms, particularly in the context of stress and trauma. The findings demonstrate that most respondents recognise the importance of understanding the depth of consciousness for personal development and mental well-being. The survey results

show a high level of self-awareness among participants, with many acknowledging the role of psychological defence mechanisms in managing stress and mental health. The study also emphasises the dynamic nature of these mechanisms, highlighting that while they can serve as protective tools, their adaptive or maladaptive use depends on the context and the individual's psychological state.

The research has contributed to a deeper understanding of how psychological defence mechanisms, such as displacement, denial, and projection, function to protect individuals from emotional distress. Additionally, it has underscored the need for psychoeducation in enhancing public awareness of these mechanisms and their impact on mental health. The findings suggest that psychoeducation can empower individuals to better understand their psychological processes, use adaptive coping strategies, and seek professional support when necessary. This is particularly important in the context of modern societal stressors, where the ability to regulate one's psychological defences can significantly affect overall well-being.

The study relies heavily on self-reported survey data, which introduces several limitations. One key concern is social desirability bias, where participants may provide responses that they perceive as more socially acceptable or favourable, rather than reflecting their true beliefs or behaviours. Additionally, response biases could affect the accuracy of the data, as participants might tend to select certain answers over others due to personal preferences or the framing of questions. The reliability of self-reports is another critical limitation, as participants may not always be fully aware of their own psychological processes or may have difficulty accurately recalling or articulating their experiences. These factors can undermine the validity of the survey findings and should be considered when interpreting the results.

In the future, researchers are encouraged to explore the impact of modern technologies, such as artificial intelligence or augmented reality, on human consciousness and the formation of psychological defence mechanisms. Longitudinal studies could also provide further insights into how these mechanisms evolve over time and their long-term effects on mental health.

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