

# **Development of Moldova psychological services market: the need to use regulatory mechanisms and foreign European partnership**

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## **Abstract**

*The article reflects the features of the formation and development of the market of psychological services in Moldova, which were identified as a result of a survey of psychologists in the country. The reasons for increasing demand and expanding supply in the market are explained. Problems and difficulties in the functioning of the market of psychological services were revealed, such as the lack of a legislative framework, price regulation, state support, and the quality of psychological services. The article highlights the ways and mechanisms for the effective development of Moldova psychological services market, the need to use regulatory mechanisms and foreign European partnership.*

*Keywords: psychological services market, European partnership, regulatory mechanism, supply and demand in the market of psychological counseling, client, range of psychological services, pricing, and promotion.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Moldova psychological services market development follows the example of the successful functioning and development of this type of service in European countries.

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The advanced experience of the European psychological community in Austria, Germany, Great Britain, the peculiarities of pricing for their services becomes the foundation for the formation of the market of psychological services in Moldova.

In the highly developed European countries, the organization of the process of providing psychological services is well thought out, there are developed professional associations of psychologists and psychotherapists, a licensing system, as well as laws regulating activities in this area, which ensures a much greater level of public confidence in psychologists than in the Republic of Moldova.

Moldovan psychologists urgently need the support of the psychological community of highly developed European countries on the basis of project activities, participation in European psychological associations, which are not yet available to our specialists.

The market for psychological services in Moldova is in its infancy, which began in the 90s of the last century.

The development of the market of psychological services is facilitated by the acceleration of the rhythm of life, crisis processes in society and, as a result, the state of uncertainty that is present and accompanies people's lives. The prevalence of uncertainty and multitasking in the daily life of society increases the number of anxiety disorders, neurosis, exacerbates problems within the family, and increases the threat of depression. All these make people think about their psychological health.

In modern conditions, the market for psychological services is growing and has not yet reached its peak. In the coming years, this trend will continue, because the human psyche is under enormous strain, processing information, the amount of which is constantly increasing.

Modern man lives in an ever-increasing information load. Currently, the psyche needs new behavior models, strategies and resources for adaptation. Depression, powerlessness, emptiness can be a reaction to an excess of "undigested" information - information stress.

The market of psychological services, responding to the demands of the times, offers many types and methods of finding peace of mind. This is

facilitated by the constantly growing demand for psychologist services, a fairly extensive offer, and a high level of competition.

However, it is rather difficult to research the market of psychological services in Moldova and identify development trends in it. The lack of relevant theoretical research on this topic, lack of knowledge and information about the functioning of the psychological services market, significantly limit theoretical support for research in this area.

This is also due to the shadow nature of this market, its spontaneity and the fact that the market itself is in its infancy.

## **2. Material and method**

Understanding the features of the functioning of the services sector gives to psychologists an understanding of their role and place in the market of psychological services, their effective presence in this market.

In order to identify the peculiarities of the development of the market of psychological services in Moldova, in December-February 2019-2020, a questionnaire survey of 60 certified psychologists of the country was conducted in the SFERA Psychological Center. Picks - quota.

The research objectives were:

- Determining the demand for psychological services in Moldova,
- The study of supply on the market,
- Study of the problems of the functioning of the psychological services market,
- Promotion of psychological services.

In the process of writing the article, secondary information and statistics were also used.

## **3. Results and discussions**

The results of the study and an understanding of the nature of the services market can contribute to the effective growth of the psychological services market, the growth of the quality of psychological services.

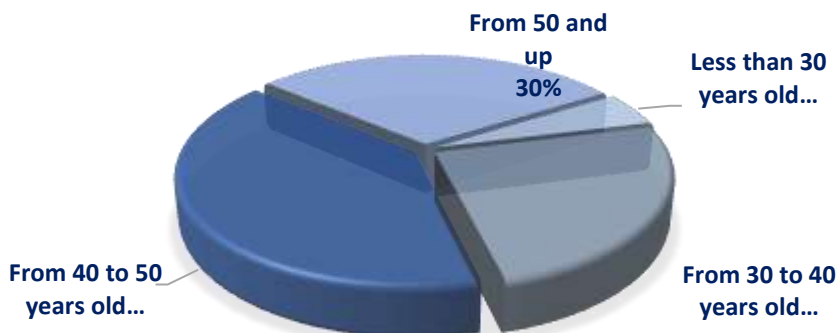
The nature of the service sector, the features that distinguish a service from a tangible product, determine the specifics of the service market, which is considered in unity with the product market as one of its varieties, obeying the general laws of a market economy.

At the same time, its features are distinguished as: high dynamism; high speed of capital turnover due to the short production cycle; the predominance of small and medium-sized enterprises, the specifics of the service delivery process related to the personal contact of the producer and consumer; the individuality and originality of the services and technologies provided in many industries; high differentiation of services; the uncertainty of the result in many cases in the provision of services; the asymmetry of information between the producer and the consumer. (Лавлюк, 2005)

There are also features due to the specific nature of the service, the intangibility of the service, the impossibility of its storage and transportation, the simultaneous production and consumption of the service, the need for personal contacts between the consumer and the producer, a high degree of individualization and non-standard demand for services. (Новаторов, 2015)

The opinion of psychologists about the features of the functioning of the market and its understanding was revealed during a survey, in which practicing psychologists of various age groups took part: a) less than 30 years old – 5%; b) from 30 to 40 years old – 25%; c) from 40 to 50 years old – 40%; d) from 50 and up – 30% (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Age of practicing psychologists participating in the survey**



**Source:** Elaborated by authors

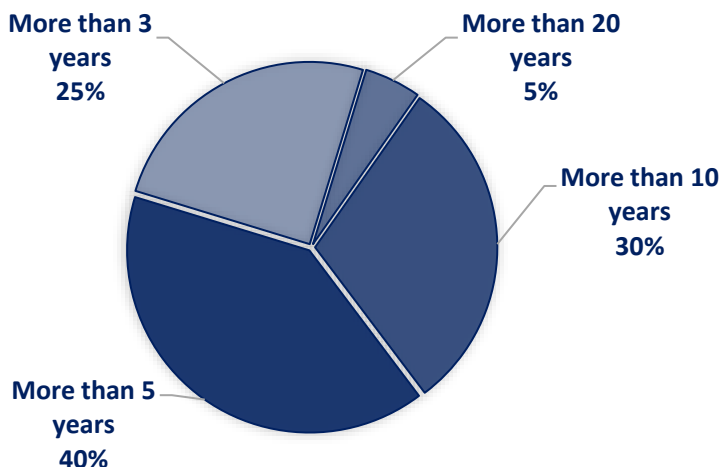
Therefore, the majority of actively practicing psychologists in the country are over 40 years old. This can be explained by the wide experience of specialists, the accumulated client base and the great trust of clients.

To the question: “How long have you been working in the market of psychological services in Moldova” 5% of respondents answered - more than 20 years, 30% of respondents have been working - more than 10 years, 40% - more than 5 years, 25% - more than 3 years (Figure 2).

Thus, it can be stated that most psychologists - about 70% have been working in the market of psychological services for 5 to 10 years. This suggests that in recent decades the number of players in the psychological market has been growing, the market is in a growing stage and attracts specialists from related fields.

The formats in which psychologists are represented on the market for psychological services are somewhat different: the most are the single specialists who receive appointments in a private office, receive at home or consult via the Internet – 55%.

**Figure 2. The period of functioning in the market of psychological services in Moldova**



*Source:* Elaborated by authors

Specialists at multidisciplinary medical centers or specialized clinics make up 20% of respondents, and psychologists who work in state medical and social institutions -25%.

According to the respondents' answers, it was found that the services of a psychologist are most in demand among people aged 15–35 years.

Among the issues that Moldovans turn to psychologists, the problems of interpersonal relations are leading – 65%.

Messages related to fears, anxiety and various phobias – 45%.

Further descending represent: psychosomatics -20%, problems of self-searching and self-realization - 15%, depressive disorders, stresses - 15%, decadent moods due to a midlife crisis - 10%. Psychologists also note an increase in appeals from clients with different sexual orientations who are trying to solve problems of gender identity and establish strong relationships in a homosexual couple (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Problems that clients turn to psychologists**



*Source:* Elaborated by authors

You can distinguish mysophobia (fear of germs, dirt, etc.), fear of closed spaces, fear of losing your mind and harming yourself or your loved ones, fear of contracting any disease, including cancer.

Among the psychotherapeutic areas offered by Moldavian psychologists are a multimodal approach, cognitive-behavioral therapy, Erickson hypnosis and NLP, gestalt therapy; art - therapy, body-oriented therapy; transactional analysis; psychodrama, symbol of drama, classical psychoanalysis.

Most of the experts surveyed noted an increase in demand for group training. Also popular are art therapy, family systemic therapy. Such a service as coaching is in demand, which was originally positioned as psychological support for successful people.

To the question, “What areas of psychological counseling do you use?” 90% of psychologists answered that they use an integrative approach, focusing on the client and his problem and 5% - gestalt therapy. 4% consider themselves psychoanalysts.

To the question “How do you promote your psychological services”, most of the respondents indicate that they necessarily use the capabilities of social networks, blogs, sites and other Internet features - 95%, many promote themselves using recommendations, word of mouth - 80%, outdoor and print advertising - flyers in certain institutions, relevant topics - 5%.

In addition, experts noted that for successful promotion in the market it is necessary to do:

- *Emphasis on personality.* Business acquires a human face. The psychologist both works and sells with his personality. The task of a psychologist - both in order to be a professional and in order to sell himself - to expand, enrich his personality;
- *Regular communication with the audience, live communication.* Communication through posts on social networks, video. It is needed to tell people about how they can solve your problem using your service. Unfortunately, this is what many psychologists are missing. Selling is focused on customer. (Черников2013)

Psychologists who participated in the survey also noted the difficulties and problems that hinder the development of the market of psychological services.

So, according to experts, the absence of a law that would regulate psychological activity in the country makes this market a shadow.

In 2018, a bill was proposed to approve the principles of joining the profession, the quality standards of private and state psychological services, psychological examination, guaranteed psychological assistance and regulate the activities of psychologists by creating an alliance responsible for certification of psychologists in Moldova based on best domestic and international experience; however, the law has not yet been adopted. (Newsmaker, 2020)

Until now, psychologists in Moldova have worked according to internal regulations, whether it be school, army or police. The new document will legitimize the work of specialists in all areas. Thus, while from the point of view of legal regulation, the market is practically not regulated in any way. To date, there are no criteria for distinguishing psychological, psychotherapeutic, and esoteric care. Education, too, while little effect on whether a person can be engaged in this activity. In addition, these services can be disguised as coaching and consulting services.

The law on the activities of psychologists should, on the one hand, mean a guarantee for the population to receive qualified psychological services, and will also contain requirements for the activities of psychologists.

In matters of *price regulation*, the market is at the very first stage of development. There is no average price for the market, unlike Europe, where there is a standard price for the whole country, which can be raised depending on certain criteria: experience, any regalia, any licenses or titles and you can raise it by exactly the same amount of Euro.

So, based on the results of the study, it was found that the spread in prices for psychological services vary from 200 to 500 lei. Pricing depends only on the desire and self-esteem of the psychologist. The question for consultation or per hour is also decided solely at the request of a specialist.

*Competition.* A healthy competition is possible when the client has an understandable tool for evaluating services and comparing offers from different consultants. People have no such tool at all in any form. Information on the criteria for evaluating the services of psychologists is not available.

Therefore, competition is based on the number of “first consultations”, and then the client relies on their own impressions and intuition. Therefore, unlike the traditional market, where competition leads to an increase in the



quality of services, in the market of psychological services, competition is more based on the quality promotion of oneself as a specialist.

*In terms of supply and demand on the market.* The growth in demand for psychological services is explained, as noted above, by the maturity and willingness to consume psychological services both at the level of individuals and their families, and at the level of organizations.

State structures, for example, have now announced a demand for performance psychologists, for example, school psychologists, sports psychologists, psychologists in law enforcement agencies, military psychologists.

The number of offers, differentiated by customer request, is growing. Therefore, the consumer of psychological services can learn the specialization of a psychologist. The number of seminars and trainings for different population groups is growing. The number of offers for parents, children, students and other categories of the population is growing.

*In terms of quality and professionalism of services.* There has been a tendency to separate the services of astrologers, tarologists, and esotericists from psychological services. Psychological centers position themselves separately from the esotericists, distancing themselves at a certain stage. The experience of the respondents shows that now it has become important for customers - from which market are you.

Moreover, although there is high competition in the market of psychological services, there are few good and highly professional psychologists, to this situation led the lack of legal responsibility for the misappropriation of the status of a psychologist.

Thus, based on the very study, tendencies and problems in the development of the market of psychological services were identified; recommendations were made to support psychological counseling in the country.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The market of psychological services in Moldova is actively developing, demand and supply are growing, the range of psychological services offered is constantly expanding.

Obtaining psychological services in the country is becoming the norm, contributing to the health of the nation and maintaining its mental balance in a turbulent environment.

Most psychologists work in the market of psychological services from 5 to 10 years. This suggests that in recent decades the number of players in the psychological market has been growing, the market is in a growing stage and attracts specialists from related fields.

Psychologists would be glad to cooperate with their colleagues from developed European countries, but they do not have yet such an opportunity.

Among the issues with which Moldavians turn to psychologists, the problems of interpersonal relations, appeals related to fears, anxiety, phobias and depression are leading.

The lack of a legislative framework makes this market shadow, prevents it from developing, and deprives state psychologists and clients of state security.

It is necessary to adopt legislative acts in the field of the implementation of psychological activities, as they can be used to track professional communities, maintain a register of specialists, and provide opportunities for further training and subsequent certification.

Based on the adopted law, the process of providing psychological assistance will become transparent and understandable to people trying to get it. (Newsmaker, 2020)

In matters of price regulation, the market is at the very first stage of development, the pricing methodology has not been developed.

As in any business, it is needed to pay attention to the marketing of psychological services: the quality and competitiveness of the service provided, the conditions for its provision and methods of promoting services.

The successful development of the market for psychological services in Moldova is impossible without studying the advanced experience of developed European countries, the specifics of regulation of this market by the state. There is a great necessity of close cooperation of psychologists from Moldova with psychologists from developed European countries, as well as active project activities, and participation in European associations of psychologists. The development of various forms of partnership with

European psychologists can also be based on joint training activities, supervisory support of Moldovan psychologists, and information support of the Moldovan community on innovations in the field of psychological counseling.

Thus, for the formation and development of a civilized market of psychological services, it is necessary: state support for psychologists, transparent legislation, close interaction with foreign psychological organizations, ongoing professional development and training of psychologists, education of a stress-resistant and trained client and the study of advanced foreign experience in order to maintain the psychological health of the nation at the proper level.

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