

# The Psycho-emotional State of the Ukrainian Society in the Conditions of War

V. Popovych (Vasyl Popovych)<sup>1</sup>, Y. Vikhliiaeva (Yana Vikhliiaeva)<sup>1</sup>,  
J. Holonic (Jan Holonic)<sup>2</sup>, Y. Popovych (Yana Popovych)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National university Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> Head of Merci, n.o.

Original Article

## E-mail address:

popovic.vasil@gmail.com

## Reprint address:

Vasyl Popovych  
National university  
Zaporizhzhia  
Ukraine

Source: *Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention*  
Pages: 49 – 55

Volume: 14  
Cited references: 17

Issue: 2

## Reviewers:

Tadeusz Bak  
Warsaw Management University, PL  
Andrea Shahum  
Medical University of North Carolina at Chapell Hill, USA

## Keywords:

War. Psycho-emotional State. Anxiety. Frustration. Rigidity. Social Fears. Psychosocial Consequences of War.

## Publisher:

International Society of Applied Preventive Medicine i-gap

CSWHI 2023; 14(2): 49 – 55; DOI: 10.22359/cswghi\_14\_2\_06 © Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention

## Abstract:

The article presents the results of the study of the peculiarities of the psycho-emotional state of the population and the determination of the factors for reducing the destructive impact of negative emotions in society in the conditions of war. The research methodology involves: determination of indicators of psycho-emotional states of the population and internally displaced persons; identification and assessment of the intensity of current social fears in Ukrainian society; determination of factors for reducing the destructive impact of negative emotions in society in the conditions of a long-term war. Peculiarities of the psycho-emotional state of the population have been determined: high level of anxiety and frustration, rejection of changes in the life situation; high intensity of social fears of loss of loved ones, death, war, occupation and forced displace-

ment; increased risk of depressive, psychosomatic and behavioral disorders, PTSD. The leading factors of reducing the destructive impact of the negative psycho-emotional state of Ukrainian society, which can act as mechanisms and tools for overcoming the psychosocial consequences of the war, are identified: institutional (creation of a network of centers and institutions for psychological assistance to the population); educational and personnel (training of qualified specialists in psychosocial support in war conditions, adaptation of educational programs to the cognitive and psychoemotional consequences of children with traumatic experiences); informative and educational (strengthening of the positive-emotional background in the information space).

## Introduction

War as a stressogenic factor has catastrophic consequences for any society and is reflected in the spread of destructive psycho-emotional states both at the individual and collective (at the level of the entire society) levels. The negative experience of war causes the spread among the population of a high level of anxiety and social tension, depressive and behavioral disorders, post-traumatic stress syndrome, increased intensity of psychological and social fears, disrupts the psychological well-being of children who have experienced aggression, violence, loss of loved ones [1; 2; 3; 4; 5], and as a result have a long-term influence on the generation that has had a negative experience of armed conflict - being in occupation, torture and violence, being in captivity, losing loved ones, forced displacement and losing homes [6].

The full-scale war in Ukraine that began on February 24, 2022 had a significant impact on the psycho-emotional state of Ukrainian society. As noted by Ukrainian scientists, with the duration of hostilities, the psycho-emotional state of the population passes into a depressive phase with the dominance of such conditions as a constant feeling of anxiety, apathy, pessimism, hopelessness [1, p.89]; increasing panic moods [7]. A special place in the structure of the population of Ukraine is occupied by internally displaced persons (IDPs), for whom the negative impact of the armed conflict had a sharp impact on the psycho-emotional state, which is reflected as a loss of autonomy, subjectivity, identity violation, a sense of insecurity, the state of the victim, PTSD [8, p. 291]. And as sociological studies show, about 50% of the population assess their emotional

state as tense [9, p.45]. Therefore, research and monitoring of the psycho-emotional state and mood of the population is relevant for Ukraine, which will allow to create an effective system of psychological assistance, support and correction, especially for the categories of the population that have suffered the most from the consequences of active hostilities - IDPs, participants in hostilities, children, who suffered psychological trauma.

## Methodology

The research is aimed at identifying the impact of war on Ukrainian society, which manifests itself in the form of destructive psycho-emotional states (depression, high level of anxiety, panic attacks, frustration, experiencing loss, increased intensity of social fears, etc.). The research methodology consists of general scientific and empirical (psychodiagnostic, sociological) methods of cognition, which allowed the following research tasks to be identified: 1) determination of indicators of psycho-emotional states of the population and internally displaced persons (IDPs); 2) identification and assessment of the intensity of current social fears in Ukrainian society; 3) determination of factors for reducing the destructive impact of negative emotions in society in the conditions of a long-term war.

## Participants

250 people took part in the project. Among them: 1) 50 experts in the field of providing psychosocial support and assistance (psychologists, social workers, medical workers with psychological education); academics dealing with issues of people affected by armed aggression through an

online survey; 2) 75 internally displaced persons from the occupied territories (the average age of the interviewees is 37.3 years, 62% of them are women and 38% are men); 3) 125 people living on the territory of Zaporizhzhia (average age is 37.8 years, 64% of them are women and 36% are men). The study among IDPs and the population was conducted in November-December 2022.

### Methods

In accordance with the defined research objectives, we used the following methods: 1) determination of indicators of psycho-emotional states of the population and internally displaced persons (IDPs) using the method "Self-assessment of mental states" by H. Eysenck; 2) to identify and assess the intensity of current social fears in Ukrainian society - a sociological survey of the population, IDPs and experts based on the methodology "Questionnaire of the Hierarchical Structure of Current Fears of the Individual" (ISAS) by Yu. Shcherbatykh and E. Ivlev; 3) to determine the factors for overcoming and reducing the consequences of the destructive psycho-emotional state of the population in the conditions of war - an online expert survey. Mathematical statistics methods were used to process the research results (using SPSS 21.0 for Windows).

### Results

In modern psychological science, there is no single definition of the concept of "psycho-emotional state", but many researchers identify key features: the emotional response of an individual according to the dominant type; arises as a result of the interaction of the individual with the environment (in the conditions of war, the environment is perceived as a threat at the biological, psychological and social levels); may not be realized by a person due to a catastrophic stress load on the psyche; depends on the development of emotional intelligence [10; 11; 12].

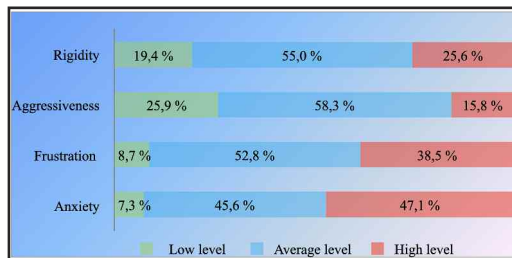
In the conditions of war, as we mentioned, the psycho-emotional state of a person is characterized mainly by negative emotions (high level of anxiety, depression, despair, negative perception of the environment, etc.) and has a destructive effect on the mental activity of an individual who is in the zone of armed conflict. An individual's reaction to emergency and stressful situations related to combat operations can cause an increase

in the level of anxiety, manifestation of aggression, frustration as an emotional and volitional tension in connection with the blocking of the basic needs of the individual, rigidity as a failure to recognize war as a reality and changes in one's own situation, therefore, to determine the features of the psycho-emotional state of the population in the conditions of martial law, the methodology "Self-assessment of mental states" by H. Eysenck was applied. Figures 1 and 2 show the levels of severity of indicators (in % of respondents) separately for the population of Zaporizhzhia and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

**Figure 1** Indicators of the psycho-emotional state of the population of Zaporizhzhia according to the results of the method "Self-assessment of mental states" by H. Eysenck (in % of respondents)



**Figure 2** Indicators of the psycho-emotional state of IDPs according to the results of the "Self-assessment of mental states" method by H. Eysenck (in % of respondents)



According to the results of the study, the greatest indicator of psycho-emotional state is anxiety, and it is significantly higher in internally displaced persons (39.3% in the population of Zaporizhzhia and 47.1% in IDPs), which mani-

feels itself in a feeling of anxiety, danger and uncertainty in the future. Almost half of the respondents showed an average level of anxiety, which is mainly situational in nature.

The rate of frustration is also more pronounced among internally displaced persons (27.9% of the population of Zaporizhzhia and 38.5% of IDPs), which indicates the impossibility or difficulty of meeting needs, such that the majority of IDPs have lost housing, work and wealth, and the uncertainty of further life in other communities contributes to increasing the feeling of despair and apathy.

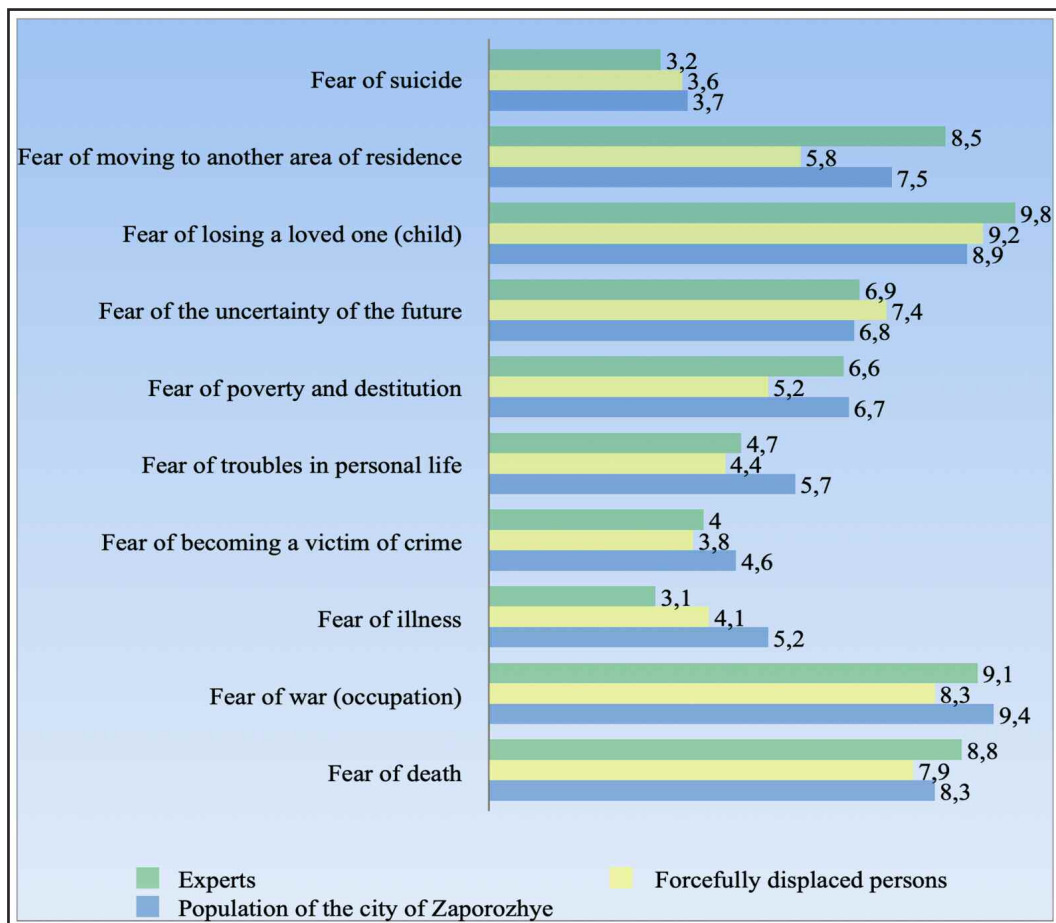
Aggressiveness as an indicator of psycho-emotional state has average values (58% of the population and IDPs), although 12-15% of re-

spondents show a high level of aggression towards the environment.

Rigidity as an emotional rejection of war and changes in one's own situation is revealed by 25.6% of the interviewed IDPs, which indicates the inability to experience stress and the inability to independently find internal resources (individual resilience) to reassess one's attitude towards oneself, other people and the world as a whole.

An indicator that reflects the psycho-emotional state of Ukrainian society in war conditions is the intensity of social fears. As scientists note, fear is the main subjective indicator of real and potential risks, threats and dangers [13, p.14], and the rational element of fear is due to the desire to

**Figure 3** Current social fears in Ukrainian society  
(assessment of the population of Zaporizhzhia, IDPs and experts)



survive in an extreme situation, especially in war conditions [14]. In our opinion, social fears in Ukrainian society in the conditions of war are expressed by confusion, insecurity, feeling of loneliness, fear of death, fear of the future, fear of unemployment, etc.

In order to identify and assess the intensity of current social fears in Ukrainian society, we conducted a sociological survey of the population, IDPs and experts based on the methodology "Questionnaire of the Hierarchical Structure of Actual Fears of the Individual" (ISAS) by Yu. Shcherbatykh and E. Ivlev, where several indicators were selected indicators of methodology and author's claims. The interviewees were asked to answer the projective question: "Please rate the intensity of fear in Ukrainian society in the conditions of war on a 10-point scale?". The results are presented in Figure 3.

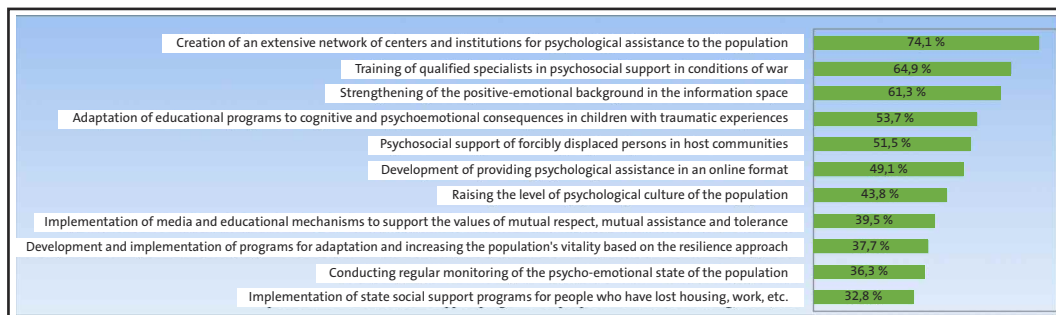
The most relevant social fears were identified as: fear of losing a loved one (from 8.9 to 9.8 points); fear of war and occupation (the lowest indicator among IDPs, which may be related to previous experience, the highest among the population of Zaporizhzhia, which may be a consequence of the information background about life in the occupied territories); fear of death (from 7.9 to 8.8 points). The indicators of internally displaced persons deserve special attention - for them, fears related to crime, poverty, illness, moving to another territory of residence are less relevant, while experts consider forced relocation to be one of the most relevant social fears for the population of Ukraine.

Overcoming the negative psycho-emotional state of the population depends on many factors,

but, of course, the main thing is the end of the war, the de-occupation of the territories and the restoration of the country. Currently, there is a war and active hostilities in Ukraine, so it is important to determine the factors that would contribute to reducing the level of destructive influence of the negative psycho-emotional state in Ukrainian society in the conditions of the ongoing war. Therefore, the experts were asked to answer the question: "What, in your opinion, will contribute to reducing the level of the negative psycho-emotional state of the population in the conditions of the ongoing war?" The experts were asked to identify the 6 most significant factors in their opinion. The results are presented in picture 4.

As can be seen from the diagram, the most significant factors are: 1) institutional (creation of a network of centers and institutions for psychological assistance to the population - 74.1%); 2) educational and personnel (training of qualified specialists in psychosocial support in war conditions - 64.9%, adaptation of educational programs to cognitive and psychoemotional consequences of children with traumatic experience - 53.7%); 3) informational and educational (strengthening of the positive emotional background in the information space - 61.3%, implementation of media and educational mechanisms to support the values of mutual respect, mutual assistance and tolerance - 39.5%). Separately, it should be noted the sufficiently high indicators of such factors as: psychosocial support of IDPs in host communities - 51.6% and the development of providing psychological assistance in an online format - 49.1%.

**Figure 4** Factors reducing the destructive impact of the negative psycho-emotional state of society in the conditions of a long-term war.





## Discussion

The results of the research show a high prevalence of negative manifestations of the psycho-emotional state of the population, the main of which is a high level of anxiety and frustration. It should be noted that these manifestations have a higher rate in internally displaced persons (especially among those who have survived a certain period of occupation), which is manifested in: first, anxiety about one's own future, its uncertainty can provoke the development of depressive disorders and apathetic manifestations of behavior; secondly, the loss of housing and work, moving to another area of residence reduces the level of psychological well-being and makes it difficult or impossible to realize basic needs and security needs. Rigidity also has a relatively high rate among IDPs than among the population of Zaporizhzhia, which indicates a phase of non-acceptance of reality, incomplete awareness of a new (albeit negative, extraordinary, stressful) life situation.

An increase in the level of anxiety among the population can provoke the emergence of mental and behavioral disorders, in particular post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), depressive and psychosomatic disorders, which in the conditions of a long-term war (especially its active phase) tends to increase the risk of an increase in percentage [15; 16], and the risk group includes children who have experienced a traumatic experience [17]. That is why there is an urgent need to increase psychological assistance to the population, especially those who have suffered psychological trauma from hostilities and occupation, as indicated by the results of a survey of experts on the factors of reducing the destructive impact of the negative psycho-emotional state of society in the conditions of a long-term war.

The high intensity of such social fears as the fear of losing loved ones, the fear of war and death, the fear of being forced to leave home as indicators of the destructive psycho-emotional state of the population (especially among those who live in the front-line and safer territory), are related, in our opinion, to psychological the consequences of informational influence (although not consciously manipulative) from the mass media and the media, in which the negative aspect of the war and its consequences prevails over the positive-emotional attitudes towards the future. The survey of experts proves that the strengthen-

ing of the positive-emotional background in the information space is one of the factors in reducing the level of negative psycho-emotional state in Ukrainian society.

Another aspect related to the results of the conducted research is the determination of factors for reducing the destructive impact of a negative psycho-emotional state on society, among which, along with institutional, personnel-educational and information-educational ones, it is necessary to highlight the implementation of constant monitoring of the psycho-emotional state of the population, which will allow tracking changes in its dynamics and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented and applied mechanisms and tools for overcoming the psychosocial consequences of war.

## Conclusion

So, based on the results of the research, the following conclusions were made:

- firstly, in Ukrainian society during the war there was a rather high level of negative indicators of the psycho-emotional state, which is characterized by: a high level of anxiety and frustration, rejection of changes in the life situation; high intensity of social fears of loss of loved ones, death, war, occupation and forced displacement; increased risk of depressive, psychosomatic and behavioral disorders, PTSD;

- secondly, the factors of reducing the destructive impact of the negative psycho-emotional state of Ukrainian society, which can act as mechanisms and tools for overcoming the psychosocial consequences of the war, are identified: institutional (creation of network centers and institutions for psychological assistance to the population); educational and personnel (training of qualified specialists in psychosocial support in war conditions, adaptation of educational programs to the cognitive and psychoemotional consequences of children with traumatic experiences); informative and educational (strengthening of the positive-emotional background in the information space).

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