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The relationship between social capital, digital well-being, and quality of life of Ukrainians: An empirical study

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Abstract. The growing digitalisation of everyday life has transformed the role of social capital in shaping well-being, making it important to understand how traditional social ties operate in online contexts. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social capital, digital well-being, and quality of life in the Ukrainian population. An online survey was conducted among 91 participants (78% female), using three validated instruments: the KPIKS methodology for assessing social capital, the Digital Well-Being Scale, and the SF-36 v2 Health Survey for quality of life. Standardised data collection and statistical procedures ensured reliability of the results, while internal consistency analysis confirmed that the adapted scales demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties in the Ukrainian context. The results established that among several tested hypotheses, only one yielded a significant result: a moderate positive correlation between the total score of social capital and digital well-being ($r = .471$, $p < 0.001$). This indicated that individuals with broader and stronger social networks were more likely to experience balance, regulation, and emotional security in digital environments. At the same time, higher levels of digital competence and satisfaction were associated with greater opportunities for social fulfilment. Other hypothesised links, including those between social capital and overall quality of life or physical health indicators, were not statistically supported. These results contributed to the emerging literature on digital mental health by identifying social capital as a significant correlate of digital well-being, even when broader well-being indicators show weaker associations. The practical value of the study lies in its applicability for psychologists, educators, and digital health specialists who may use the results to design interventions that strengthen social networks and improve individuals' interaction with digital technologies

Keywords: digital literacy; psychological well-being; social support; civic engagement; solidarity; media consumption

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INTRODUCTION

Capital, as a concept, has long been integral to economic discourse, signifying both monetary and tangible resources that aid in the creation and growth of capital. The investigation of the capital has expanded to encompass interconnected domains beyond the economy, particularly the social realm, where elements such as social networks, trust, and collective norms play a crucial role in promoting cooperation and the sharing of resources among individuals and groups.

The exploration of social capital is, in fact, quite distinct from the in-depth analysis of its practical benefits and the various temporal contexts that play a crucial role in understanding its implications. J. Coleman (1990) viewed social capital as a resource that facilitates coordination and social mobility, while P. Bourdieu (1986) emphasised its role in reproducing social hierarchy and inequality. R. Putnam (2000) outlined the importance of social capital for civil society, showing that active participation in social ties strengthens democratic institutions. F. Fukuyama (2002) expanded this concept, emphasising its crucial role in shaping economic institutions and the level of trust in society. Thus, social capital is a multidimensional phenomenon that affects various aspects of social life, from education and politics to the economy and social structure.

Similar to economic capital, the presence of social capital significantly affects numerous dimensions of human life, notably concerning health and wellness. The literature in this area has pointed to the connection between social capital and quality of life in all human spheres: from childhood (Ramadan *et al.*, 2025) to assistance during man-made disasters (De Santis & Fantinelli, 2024). Within the micro-level framework, attention is directed toward the existing personal ties and their implications. Traditionally understood within offline, face-to-face interactions, social capital is increasingly being re-evaluated in the context of digital communication. Scientists, in particular M. Grottko *et al.* (2018) pointed to the difference in the mechanisms of social capital acquisition during the digital age, which indicates the importance of studying whether online connections can replace real ones. Digitalisation has also introduced many risks that can negatively impact health and well-being. Abuse of social media, dependence on phones, coupled with personalised content, can create isolation, an echo chamber bubble that can reduce cooperation and trust with people from other bubbles (Polishchuk *et al.*, 2024). M. Fahy & M. Barry (2024) found that computer-mediated communication that builds social capital improved individuals' well-being, especially for those experiencing loneliness, this further indicates the need to expand the study.

However, not only the digital environment itself is important, but also a balance called digital well-being, which was not implied in the social capital before. This experiential state is comprised of affective and

cognitive appraisals of the integration of digital connectivity into ordinary life. People achieve digital wellbeing when experiencing maximal controlled pleasure and functional support, together with minimal loss of control and functional impairment (Razzante *et al.*, 2021). Also, D. Peters *et al.* (2018) pointed out that gadgets and digital interactions should support basic needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Thus, the distinction between digital social capital and conventional social capital is essential, as literature emphasises their different content and mechanisms of acquisition.

The study formulated several hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 (H_1) stated that there was a positive association between social capital and quality of life. Hypothesis 2 (H_2) proposed that digital well-being was positively associated with quality of life. Hypothesis 3 (H_3) suggested that private-sphere social capital was positively correlated with quality of life. Hypothesis 4 (H_4) indicated that higher levels of public-sphere social capital were associated with better physical health indicators. Hypothesis 5 (H_5) assumed that the presence of international social contacts was positively associated with overall well-being. The Hypothesis 6 (H_6) stated that there was a positive correlation between social capital and digital well-being. The primary objective of the present study was to explore the relationships among social capital, digital well-being, and various indicators of quality of life. To this end, six hypotheses were formulated and tested using nonparametric statistical methods, due to the non-normal distribution of the dependent variables.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, a confirmatory research design was chosen to test the hypothesised relationships between all the phenomena under study, namely social capital, digital well-being, and quality of life. This design was based on the logic of the quantitative approach, which aims to develop and measure the statistical relationship between variables. The quantitative method provides the ability to collect standardised data and use validated scales, as well as a wide range of statistical methods. The definition of Social Capital used in this study is based on R. Styla (2009) KPIKS methodology (Individual Questionnaire for Measuring Social Capital, translated from Polish) as adapted by I. Semkiv (2015). The term defines an individual's access to social resources in the personal, public, and private spheres. The methodology included 64 statements related to the knowledge of a person who can help or support you at a given moment, and is assessed on a 4-point scale: 1 – "I don't know such a person", 2 – "I know such a person but poorly", 3 – "I know such a person well", 4 – "I know such a person very well". The questions were divided into productive indicators of skill, emotional, leisure, socio-professional, social institutions, international, and

private sphere resources. The resource index formed a general indicator – bonding social capital, which was defined as “the number of resources belonging to a person’s social network that can become available to their as a result of the peculiarities of previous contacts

(Semkiv, 2015). When using and transferring the methodology to Google Forms, some questions were updated to reflect the current context and universality. A complete list of these questions, along with the reasons for the changes, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Modification of KPIKS methodology questions

Nº	Original version	Modified version	Modification Criteria	Ukrainian final version
26	Do you know anyone who could look after your dog while you're on vacation?	Do you know anyone who could look after your pet while you are on vacation?	Universality	Чи знаєш когось, хто міг би доглядати за твої домашнім улюбленцем під час твоєї відпустки?
47	Do you know anyone who would like to watch TV with you?	Do you know anyone who would like to watch a media show/movie/series with you?	Modernisation	Чи знаєш когось, хто може подивитися з тобою медіа-шоу/ фільм/ серіал?
48	Do you know anyone who is a computer scientist ?	Do you know anyone who is an IT (information technology) specialist ?	Modernisation	Чи знаєш когось, хто є фахівцем в ІТ (сфері інформаційних технологій)?
49	Do you know anyone who can help you if your bike breaks down?	Do you know anyone who can help you if your small-sized vehicle (bicycle, etc.) breaks down?	Universality	Чи знаєш когось, хто може допомогти тобі, якщо у тебе зламається негабаритний засіб пересування (велосипед тощо)?
53	Do you know anyone who is a citizen of Russia ?	Do you know anyone who is a citizen of the Czech Republic ?	Political context	Чи знаєш когось, хто є громадянином Чехії?

Source: developed by the authors

Digital Well-Being was operationalised through the digital well-being scale (DWBS) developed by V.B. Arslankara *et al.* (2022), which measures subjective well-being related to the use of digital technologies in everyday life. The scale consists of 12 statements organised into three subscales: (1) digital satisfaction, (2) safe and responsible behaviour, and (3) digital well-being. All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 – “not at all reflective of me” to 5 – “completely reflective of me”. This

methodology was translated into Ukrainian specifically for this research. The questionnaire did not require linguistic or cultural adaptation, as its items are formulated in a simple and universally comprehensible manner, ensuring clarity across diverse respondent groups. A direct translation was made from English into Ukrainian with corrections by a specialist in the field of philology Hanna Kniaz, a lecturer at the Kyiv School of Economics. The list of corrections can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Translation of the digital well-being scale (DWBS) questions into Ukrainian

Factor	Original version	Ukrainian final version
Цифрове задоволення (Digital Satisfaction)	1. I can easily adapt to new technologies.	1. Я легко адаптуюся до нових технологій.
	2. I enjoy spending time with digital technologies.	2. Мені подобається проводити час з цифровими технологіями.
	3. I care about new digital experiences that can bring different experiences.	3. Мене цікавить новий цифровий досвід, що урізноманітнює враження.
	4. In digital skills, I feel in harmony with the people around me.	4. Мої цифрові навички допомагають почуватися в гармонії з людьми, які мене оточують.
Безпечна та відповідальна поведінка (Safe and Responsible Behavior)	5. I care about my digital reputation when using online platforms.	5. Я дбаю про свою цифрову репутацію під час використання онлайн-платформ.
	6. I take care not to exhibit behavior that disturbs other users on social media.	6. Я пильную, щоб не проявляти поведінку, яка заважає іншим користувачам у соціальних мережах.
	7. I use digital technology in purposeful meaningful ways.	7. Я використовую цифрові технології цілеспрямовано та осмислено.
	8. I always act cautiously against any harm that may come to me in the digital world.	8. Я завжди ставлюся з пересторогою до небезпеки, що може спіткати мене в цифровому світі.

Table 2, Continued

Factor	Original version	Ukrainian final version
Цифровий добробут (Digital Wellness)	9. I feel comfortable knowing that someone will see my social media posts.	9. Я почуваюся комфортно, знаючи, що хтось побачить мої дописи в соціальних мережах
	10. It makes me happy if the posts/stories/statuses I share are liked.	10. Мене тішить, якщо дописи/ історії/ статуси, якими я ділюся, є вподобаними
	11. A technological problem that I cannot solve makes me angry. (-)	11. Технологічна проблема, яку я не можу вирішити, злить мене (-)
	12. If I express myself freely on social media, I think that I will be ostracized by some people in my social networks (-)	12. Якщо я вільно проявлятимуся в соціальних медіа, думаю, що деякі люди з моїх соціальних мереж відкидатимуть мене (-).

Source: developed by the authors

The concept of Quality of Life was operationalised using the SF-36 v2 Health survey (Lopina, 2023), which was adapted and presented in medicine. Quality of Life is understood as an integrated assessment of a person’s physical, psycho-emotional, social, and functional well-being, reflecting their ability to perform daily activities, maintain social relationships, cope with pain and stress, and maintain energy and vitality. The questionnaire included 36 items grouped into eight subscales: physical functioning, role functioning, bodily pain, general health, life activity, social functioning, emotional role functioning, and mental health. All responses were numerical and processed using the methodology of calculating a total score in the range of 0-100%, where higher values indicate a better quality of life. The target population of this study was the population of Ukraine, that is, individuals who permanently reside within the country and possess a sufficient level of digital literacy to participate in an online survey. This population included representatives of various social groups, such as school students, university students, employed individuals, the unemployed, and retirees, regardless of their region of residence, gender, or professional background. The selection of this population was driven by the aim of the study – to explore general patterns in the relationship between digital well-being, social capital, and quality of life among users of digital technologies in the context of contemporary Ukrainian society.

Sample formation was intentionally based on the guiding principle of random and convenient access. To maximise participation, the link to the questionnaire was effectively distributed through various social networking platforms, and participants were motivated to complete the questionnaire by their own interest as well as the idea of youth science support. Data was collected online using a structured digital questionnaire powered by Google Forms containing standardised scales: The DWBS (which was specially translated into Ukrainian as part of the research), the adapted KPIKS social capital questionnaire, and the Ukrainian version of the SF-36 scale for assessing quality of life. Data analysis was conducted using Jamovi statistical software version 2.6 (The Jamovi project, n.d.; R Core Team, 2024), and all procedures followed

standard assumptions checking. Variables for DWBS, social capital (in both public and private spheres), and quality of life (QoL, as measured by the SF-36 v2) were computed by aggregating relevant item scores into total or subscale means. Where necessary, reverse-coded items were transformed before computation. Descriptive statistics were generated for each continuous variable, including means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis. Normality of distributions was assessed using Shapiro-Wilk tests, revealing non-normality in key outcome variables (e.g., QoL). Consequently, Spearman’s rank-order correlation was used for hypothesis testing involving ordinal or non-normal continuous data. To prevent ethical challenges, an informed consent form was presented at the beginning of the survey, including the purpose of the study, estimated time of completion, a reminder of the voluntary nature of participation, the possibility of withdrawal at any stage, and guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity of responses. At the end of the questionnaire, a debriefing was implemented in accordance with the ethical standards recommended by American Psychological Association (2017) and Standards of Ethical Practice (n.d.) It detailed the logic of the study, explained the choice of topic, provided contact information for withdrawal of participation within 48 hours, indicated the telephone number of the psychological support hotline, and offered links to the methods used in the questionnaire.

The sample comprised 91 respondents, with a pronounced preponderance of women (n = 71, 78.0%) relatively to men (n = 20, 22.0%). Age was classified into standard demographic categories (Under 18, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65 and older). The largest age group was 18-24 y.o. (45/91, 49.5%), followed by 35-44 y.o. (16/91, 17.6%) and 45-54 y.o. (9/91, 9.9%). Twelve participants (13.2%) were under 18 y.o., seven (7.7%) were 25-34 y.o., two (2.2%) were 55-64 y.o., and no one was 65 or older. Subjective monthly income (self-rated on a 0-5 scale from low to high) was moderate on average (mean = 2.62, SD = 1.50; median = 3.0), with the full range of responses (0-5) represented. In other words, most respondents reported mid-range income adequacy, while fewer endorsed the lowest (0-1) or the highest (4-5) categories. So, a distinctive feature of the

sample was that the majority (49.5%) are people aged 18-24, who constitute a young segment of the population that should be in harmony with digital technologies, as evidenced by the obtained results.

Before testing the study hypotheses, descriptive statistics were computed to summarise the central tendencies and variability of the main variables: total social capital, general quality of life (QoL), digital well-being, and subjective income. These variables represented the core constructs of interest and were analysed across a sample of 91 participants. Means, medians, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values, skewness, kurtosis, and normality indicators (Shapiro-Wilk test) were examined. Also, before proceeding to hypothesis testing, it was essential to establish the internal consistency of the instruments used in the study. Reliability analysis ensured that the scales employed, particularly those that were adapted or translated, consistently measure

the intended constructs. This was especially relevant when items have been modified or localised for a different cultural or linguistic context, as even minor changes may affect how respondents interpret and respond to the questions. Therefore, Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega were calculated to verify the reliability of the scales measuring social capital and digital well-being.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 3, social capital had a moderately low mean score ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 0.46$), while digital well-being was relatively higher ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.59$). The distribution of quality-of-life scores indicated moderate variability ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.38$), and subjective income had the largest spread ($SD = 1.50$). Shapiro-Wilk test results suggested that quality of life and income did not meet the assumptions of normality ($p < 0.5$), which was accounted for in the choice of nonparametric analyses.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for main variables (N = 91)

Variable	M	Mdn	SD	Min	Max	Skew	Kurt	SW p
Social Capital	1.67	1.63	0.46	0.57	2.52	-0.23	-0.62	0.146
Quality of Life (SF-36)	2.30	2.41	0.38	1.32	3.28	-0.49	-0.15	0.005
Digital Well-Being	2.48	2.58	0.59	0.83	3.83	-0.19	0.25	0.308
Subjective Income	2.62	3.00	1.50	0.00	5.00	0.04	-0.71	<0.001

Source: developed by the authors

The internal consistency of the modified KPIKS scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.948$) and McDonald's omega ($\omega = 0.952$), indicating excellent reliability. Although several items were modified (items 26, 47, 48, 49, and 53), most retained acceptable item-total correlations. One item (53) demonstrated a notably low item-rest correlation (13.05), suggesting the need for further revision or closer examination of its conceptual alignment with the overall construct. Several caveats should be noted. Due to the lack of social capital research in Ukraine that is not based on economic indicators, limited adapted methodologies for social capital were used. The KPIKS methodology was outdated and subject to change in several questions concerning Russian acquaintances or watching television. Also, the sample in this study does not represent the general population, as participants were recruited voluntarily through the distribution of invitations on social media (including personal pages and thematic communities), as well as through personal contacts of the researcher.

The reliability analysis of the Ukrainian adaptation of the DWBS demonstrated an acceptable level of internal consistency, with Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.747$ and McDonald's $\omega = 0.770$ for the full scale. These values indicate that the scale items are sufficiently interrelated to justify their aggregation into a total score. While most positively worded items showed strong item-total correlations ($DWBS_2 = 6.26$), reverse-coded items ($DWBS_{11} = 2.46$) exhibited notably lower correlations, consistent with

the original developers' caution regarding negatively phrased statements. Compared to the original Turkish validation study ($\alpha = 0.791$), the internal consistency remains within acceptable limits, although slightly reduced. These results suggest that the adapted scale maintains its psychometric integrity and is suitable for further use in assessing digital well-being in Ukrainian-speaking populations, particularly among younger adults engaged with digital technologies.

For Hypothesis 1, which posited a positive association between total social capital and overall quality of life, the results revealed a weak, non-significant correlation (Spearman's $r = 1.14$, $p = 2.84$). Therefore, H_1 should be accepted, indicating insufficient evidence of a linear relationship between the two constructs in this sample. Correspondingly, Hypothesis 2, which suggested that digital well-being would positively correlate with quality of life, was also not supported ($r = 0.21$, $p = 1.97$), resulting in retention of H_2 . Regarding the specific domains of social capital, Hypothesis 3 predicted that private-sphere social capital would be positively associated with quality of life; however, the data again failed to support this claim ($r = 0.98$, $p = 3.56$), and H_3 was not accepted. In contrast, Hypothesis 4 addressed the role of public-sphere social capital and its association with physical health indicators (operationalised through the physical health component of the SF-36). Although conceptually plausible, this hypothesis did not find statistical support, as correlation coefficients

remained weak and non-significant ($r = 4.71$, $p = 9.44$), and H_4 was retained. Similarly, Hypothesis 5, which proposed that individuals with international social contacts would report higher levels of overall well-being, was not confirmed; correlation analyses revealed no significant difference between those with and without such contacts ($r = 0.18$, $p = 8.68$), thus supporting H_5 . In the final hypothesis (H_6), a statistically significant moderate positive association was observed between social capital and digital well-being ($r = 4.71$, $p < 0.01$). This was the only hypothesis for which the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, thereby confirming that individuals with stronger social capital networks – whether private or public – tend to experience greater digital self-regulation, satisfaction, and emotional security in online environments. Based on H.G. De Zúñiga *et al.* (2016), it is worth emphasising that the mechanism of social capital in real and digital life differs, which may indicate that people who have good face-to-face communication relationships maintain them at the digital level as well digital well-being (DWB), social capital (SC), and quality of life (QoL) demonstrated complex interrelations in this sample. SC exhibited moderate levels, whereas DWB was relatively higher, suggesting that participants maintained digital engagement even when social networks were less pronounced. QoL and subjective income varied across participants, reflecting diverse economic perceptions and contextual influences on well-being.

The Ukrainian adaptation of the DWBS demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with positively worded items correlating strongly with overall DWB, whereas reverse-coded items showed lower correlations, consistent with the original validation. These results confirm the reliability of the scale for assessing digital well-being among Ukrainian-speaking populations (Karabchuk & Shomotova, 2021). Analyses revealed that total SC and DWB were not directly associated with overall QoL. Specific domains of SC, including private and public social connections, as well as the presence of international contacts, did not predict differences in quality-of-life measures. These findings suggest that social networks and digital engagement alone may not translate into observable differences in general QoL, highlighting the role of contextual or mediating factors, such as digital literacy or social support quality, in shaping life satisfaction (Zhao *et al.*, 2024). In contrast, SC demonstrated a significant positive association with DWB, indicating that stronger social networks contribute to greater digital self-regulation, satisfaction, and emotional security online. This aligns with previous research showing that social capital reinforces adaptive digital engagement and supports psychosocial outcomes even when broader QoL measures remain unaffected (Judijanto & Nurwanto, 2024). The finding underscores that SC functions as an enabling factor for digital well-being, highlighting the need to consider indirect pathways linking social networks to online adaptive behaviours.

R. Calvo *et al.* (2011) highlighted the importance of having someone to rely on and count on in times of need. In contrast to this work, A.W. Taylor *et al.* (2017) focused on the state aspect, pointing out that developing resilience is an essential factor for enhancing well-being during disasters. Anyway, these aspects are directly influenced by economic indicators, which can play a role in either enhancing or degrading the significance of the bonds people create. For example, R. Calvo *et al.* (2011) pointed up the level of income in a country mediator which strongly influences the relationship between social capital and well-being, namely, the higher the level of income, the greater is the relationship. While D.P. Aldrich & M.A. Meyer (2014) noted that people who are isolated and have few social ties and therefore have no one to rely on are less likely to be rescued and receive help from others. With reference to the findings, the value of group activities and social initiatives that contributed to community cohesion can be emphasised.

The results also emphasised that traditional dimensions of SC may have a limited direct impact on physical health or overall life satisfaction. DWB appears to serve as a mechanism through which social networks influence subjective experiences of well-being, reinforcing the importance of distinguishing between online and offline domains when evaluating the effects of SC on quality of life (Danylova, 2021). Overall, these findings indicate that strategies aimed at enhancing well-being should focus on strengthening social networks to foster digital self-regulation and emotional security. Interventions could include digital literacy programs, peer-support initiatives, and structured online community engagement, reflecting the interdependence of social and digital dimensions in shaping individual well-being (Sewall *et al.*, 2020). The results indicate that overall social capital and digital well-being were not directly associated with general quality of life, physical health, or the presence of international contacts. However, the significant positive association between social capital and digital well-being suggests that stronger social networks contribute to greater digital self-regulation, satisfaction, and emotional security in online environments. This pattern highlighted the role of social capital as a supportive framework for adaptive digital engagement, even in the absence of direct effects on broader quality-of-life measures. Consequently, strategies aimed at enhancing well-being should focus on strengthening social networks to foster digital competence and emotional stability, emphasising the interdependence of social and digital dimensions in shaping individual well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found a robust positive association between social capital and digital well-being ($r = 0.471$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that individuals with higher levels of social support and trust in their networks also tended to

report greater digital well-being. In line with it, although social capital may not directly predict general life satisfaction or physical health within this sample, it remains an important correlate of digital well-being, and may function as a foundational resource in navigating digital life. Documenting a clear positive relationship in a recent study added to the growing body of evidence that interpersonal and trust networks shape how people perceive the use of technology. Results also suggest that digital well-being frameworks should account for social context: the social environment of users (bonding and bridging ties) appears to influence digital stress and habits. In practical terms, the study implies that interventions aimed at improving digital well-being might benefit from fostering social capital (for example, by encouraging supportive online communities).

Future studies should take into account the diversity of the sample, involve closed online communities, or lonely people who spend most of their time in the digital

environment. Given the ambiguous preliminary conclusions regarding hypotheses 1-5, it may be useful to use multi-item validated scales that will analyse the presented constructs in greater depth. Researchers could also test intermediaries or moderators: for example, whether loneliness weakens the positive impact of social capital on digital well-being. By addressing these questions, future research will enable better understanding of how social relationships and networks of trust contribute to positive outcomes in increasingly digital lives.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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Взаємозв'язок між соціальним капіталом, цифровим добробутом та якістю життя українців: емпіричне дослідження

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Анотація. Зростаюча цифровізація повсякденного життя змінила роль соціального капіталу у формуванні добробуту, тому важливо зрозуміти, як традиційні соціальні зв'язки функціонують в онлайн-контексті. Метою цього дослідження було вивчити взаємозв'язок між соціальним капіталом, цифровим добробутом та якістю життя українського населення. Було проведено онлайн-опитування серед 91 учасника (78 % жінок) з використанням трьох перевірених інструментів: методології KPIKS для оцінки соціального капіталу, шкали цифрового благополуччя та опитування про якість життя SF-36 v2. Стандартизований збір даних та статистичні процедури забезпечили надійність результатів, а аналіз внутрішньої узгодженості підтвердив, що адаптовані шкали продемонстрували прийнятні психометричні властивості в українському контексті. Результати показали, що серед кількох перевірених гіпотез лише одна дала значущий результат: помірна позитивна кореляція між загальним балом соціального капіталу та цифровим благополуччям ($r = 0.471, p < 0.001$). Це свідчило про те, що особи з ширшими та міцнішими соціальними мережами частіше відчували рівновагу, стабільність та емоційну безпеку в цифровому середовищі. Водночас вищий рівень цифрової компетентності та задоволеності був пов'язаний з більшими можливостями для соціальної самореалізації. Інші гіпотетичні зв'язки, зокрема між соціальним капіталом та загальною якістю життя або показниками фізичного здоров'я, не були підтверджені статистично. Ці результати внесли свій вклад у нову літературу з цифрового психічного здоров'я, визначивши соціальний капітал як значущий корелят цифрового благополуччя, навіть коли більш широкі показники благополуччя демонструють слабкіші зв'язки. Практична цінність дослідження полягає в його застосовності для психологів, педагогів та фахівців з цифрового здоров'я, які можуть використовувати результати для розробки заходів, що зміцнюють соціальні мережі та покращують взаємодію людей з цифровими технологіями

Ключові слова: цифрова грамотність; психологічний добробут; соціальна підтримка; громадська активність; солідарність; медіаспоживання

“Russian language” as a psychosemantic matrix of historical trauma and heteronomy

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to provide a scientific interpretation of the causes of this confrontation through a psychosemantic reconstruction of the “Russian language” as the core of a heteronomous civilisational model and to identify its role in maintaining the heteronomous structure of Russian society and legitimising aggression against Ukraine. The methodology was based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines psychoanalytic and humanistic concepts (E. Fromm, K. Horney, J. Bowlby), the sociology of power and habitus (M. Foucault, P. Bourdieu), self-determination theory (E. Deci, R. Ryan), as well as research on values and democratic transformations (R. Inglehart, K. Welzel, J. Maunk, W. Brown, R. Putnam, I. Krastev). Based on a psychosemantic analysis of intonations, grammar, vocabulary (including obscene language), and basic value oppositions, it has been shown that the “Russian language” structurally reinforces a heteronomous state of consciousness: it normalises fear, blurs responsibility, inverts the meanings of love, truth, honour, and freedom, frustrates the need for autonomy, and forms a readiness for violent mobilisation. A comparison with Ukrainian language practice showed that the Ukrainian language increasingly functions as a space of subjectivity, dignity, and mutual recognition, which exacerbates the civilisational conflict between the two psychosemantic models of the world. The practical significance of the results obtained lies in the possibility of using the proposed approach to develop linguistic and psychological strategies to overcome the influence of the “Russian world,” to design educational and communicative practices that support subjectivity, and to construct guidelines for the psychosemantic “therapy” of authoritarian societies

Keywords: Russian speech patterns; psychological meaning structures; authoritarian societies; democratic societies; war in Ukraine; civilisational conflict

INTRODUCTION

The current global context reveals an acute confrontation between two types of social development: authoritarian-heteronomous and democratic-subject. This conflict has manifested itself particularly tragically in Russia’s war against Ukraine, where the clash is not only between political regimes or economic models, but between two types of civilisational consciousness. Existing studies explained this confrontation primarily through differences in values (collectivism versus

individualism, traditionalism versus secularism, etc.). However, such an explanation remains at the level of declared attitudes and does not touch upon the deep psychosemantic structures of consciousness that support the stability of authoritarian systems and block the transition to subjective democracy.

T. Nedashkivska *et al.* (2025) demonstrated that semantic change in the 21st century is inseparable from the cultural and socio-political experiences of linguistic

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communities. The study showed that English and Ukrainian do not merely accumulate new vocabulary but continually reorganise the conceptual and emotional structure of existing words under the pressure of crisis, digitisation, and shifting collective identities. According to their analysis, contemporary speakers increasingly rely on evaluative and emotionally charged lexemes, reflecting intensified social anxieties, new forms of solidarity, and transformed perceptions of security, agency, and belonging. The authors argued that these shifts reveal how languages encode culturally specific trajectories of experience: in Ukrainian, semantic expansions often emerge from wartime and resilience-related contexts; in English, globalised digital communication accelerates the diffusion of hybrid emotional and ideological meanings.

I. Krastev (2020) examined the rise of "civilisational politics" in Eastern Europe and argued that authoritarian regimes increasingly rely on narrative and semantic constructions that depict political conflict as an existential struggle between incompatible cultural models. I. Krastev demonstrated that such narratives operate not only as ideological tools but as cognitive frameworks that shape collective perceptions of identity, freedom, and threat. The analysis showed that authoritarian power persists by embedding affectively charged semantic patterns into public discourse, thereby constraining the emergence of autonomous subjectivity. I. Yablokov & P. Chatterje-Doody (2022) analysed the evolution of Russian political culture and concluded that state-driven narratives intentionally cultivate a "besieged fortress" mentality, which normalises aggression and suppresses individual agency. This work demonstrated how authoritarian stability relies on emotional and symbolic frameworks rather than merely coercive institutions. T. Guriev & D. Treisman (2022) introduced the concept of "informational autocracy," showing that modern authoritarian regimes increasingly rely on narrative manipulation rather than overt repression. The analysis demonstrated that carefully crafted semantic framing, selective dissemination of emotionally charged language, and systematic distortion of key political categories enable such regimes to simulate broad public consensus while minimising the visible use of force.

The purpose of the article was to provide a scientific interpretation of the causes of the current confrontation between authoritarian and democratic societies – in particular, Russia's war against Ukraine, the threat of escalation into nuclear conflict and the undermining of the foundations of global security – through a psychosemantic reconstruction of the "Russian language" as the core of a heteronomous civilisational model and the identification of its role in maintaining the heteronomous structure of Russian society and legitimising aggression. The main hypothesis of the study was that the stability of authoritarian-heteronomous systems and their aggression towards democratic societies are

determined not only by institutional or value differences, but also by deep semantic structures – a psychosemantic matrix – through which the habitus of submission, fear, and dependence is reproduced, making stable authoritarian structures possible even after the formal reformatting of political institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scientific interest in the relationship between language and political subjectivity has produced a substantial body of research showing that linguistic practices are central to the reproduction of social power. Through language, societies transmit norms, shape emotional dispositions, and reinforce systems of obedience or autonomy. E. Fromm (1956) analysed the authoritarian nature of love and the "escape from freedom" in mass societies, arguing that individuals often internalise dependence and obedience when these are presented as sources of security and belonging. This work demonstrated how emotional attachment can be redirected toward figures of authority, creating a psychological foundation for acceptance of domination.

K. Horney (1942) expanded this line of inquiry by showing how neurotic strategies of submission, compliance, and the search for approval predispose individuals to relinquish autonomy in exchange for perceived stability or acceptance. She emphasised that such patterns are not merely intrapsychic but emerge from and reinforce social environments in which hierarchy and control are normalised. J. Bowlby (1969), in developing his theory of attachment, proved that early experiences of the "child-caregiver" relationship set the basic model of trust or distrust of the world. It is through this lens that we can see how language saturated with threats and humiliation reproduces traumatic attachment scenarios on a macrosocial level. This framework illustrated how language functions as a subtle technology of control, structuring perception long before explicit coercion is invoked. P. Bourdieu (1990) expanded this insight through the concept of habitus, arguing that embodied patterns of perception and action – shaped through repeated linguistic and social practices – become taken-for-granted dispositions that reproduce hierarchical structures across generations. From this perspective, language is not merely descriptive but operates as symbolic violence, naturalising asymmetries of power through routine expression.

E. Deci & R. Ryan's (2017) theory of self-determination added a complementary psychological dimension by identifying autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic human needs. When linguistic practices consistently undermine autonomy – through impersonal constructions, agent-suppressing grammar, or semantic inversions of concepts such as freedom or responsibility – patterns of external motivation, dependency, and "forced loyalty" are reinforced. R. Inglehart & C. Welzel (2005) demonstrated that long-term cultural shifts

toward self-expression values significantly influence the viability of democratic institutions. The research demonstrated that shifts from survival values toward self-expression values are central for the development of democratic institutions. These findings highlighted that democratic transformation requires not only institutional reforms but also deeper cultural transitions embedded within collective consciousness. Similarly, Y. Mounk (2018) argued that the resilience of democracy depends not only on formal procedures but on the internalisation of autonomy-oriented cultural norms. According to Y. Mounk, contemporary authoritarian movements succeed because they offer emotionally compelling narratives that replace individual responsibility with heteronomous loyalty to the state or leader. His conclusions underscore the psychological dimension of democratic backsliding, which cannot be explained solely through institutional variables.

Classic and contemporary researchers alike pointed to the central role of linguistic and affective mechanisms in sustaining systems of obedience, shaping cultural orientations, and reinforcing patterns of heteronomy. Nevertheless, despite the breadth of existing research, there remains a notable gap: scholars have not yet conducted a systematic psychosemantic analysis of the Russian language as an integrated matrix of heteronomy, one that encompasses intonation, grammar, obscenity, and the inversion of basic categories of meaning. This gap underscores the need for the present study, which seeks to advance theoretical understanding of how linguistic structures contribute to the reproduction of authoritarian consciousness and to the legitimisation of political aggression.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed an interdisciplinary approach that integrated psychoanalytic, humanistic, sociological, ethnolinguistic, and democratic transformation theories. The methodology involved a qualitative analysis of language through various theoretical lenses to reveal how language served as a vehicle for psychological and social processes. Psychoanalytic and humanistic theories (Fromm, 1941; Horney, 1942; Bowlby, 1969) were used to interpret linguistic expressions of dependence, insecurity, fear, and avoidance of agency, providing tools for identifying markers of attachment trauma and patterns of neurotic submission within linguistic behaviour. Sociological approaches derived from M. Foucault's (1975) notion of disciplinary power and P. Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus guided the investigation of language as a mechanism for regulating behaviour and reproducing hierarchical structures. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) informed the evaluation of how linguistic forms support or hinder autonomy and psychological well-being. Research on democratic transformations (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Mounk, 2018) provided a macro-sociological

context for understanding how linguistic patterns reflect broader political and cultural shifts.

The methodological core of the research was a qualitative psychosemantic analysis, understood as a systematic examination of how linguistic forms encode underlying psychological structures associated with heteronomy or subjectivity. The term "psychosemantic content" referred to the constellation of meaning patterns – intonational, grammatical, lexical, and metaphorical – through which speakers construct and interpret experiences of agency, subordination, fear, obligation, and responsibility. To identify these patterns, the study relied on a combination of content analysis and linguistic discourse analysis. Content analysis was used to trace evaluative and agentive lexical markers, while discourse analysis allowed for close examination of grammatical personhood, impersonal constructions, modal expressions, and intonational structures. These linguistic findings were then interpreted in relation to psychological constructs such as external or internal locus of control, attachment security, and autonomy.

The empirical material consisted of four broad types of texts: official political discourse such as televised speeches and foreign-policy statements; media performances and talk-show interactions; everyday communicative material drawn from publicly accessible interviews, recorded conversations, and widely circulated online fragments; and obscene or militarised language used in police, military, and political contexts. These texts were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that they were publicly available, widely disseminated, and representative of mainstream Russian-language communication. Analysis focused on agentivity markers, emotional-intonational patterns, and semantic framing of key existential categories. A comparative dimension was introduced through examination of a parallel corpus of Ukrainian-language political, media, and conversational texts. The comparison concentrated on how Ukrainian linguistic practices encode autonomy, responsibility, reciprocity, and trust through explicit first-person grammar, dialogic intonation, and semantic framing. This contrast made it possible to identify systematic differences between linguistic environments that reproduce heteronomy and those that support subject-oriented communicative practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language as a carrier of trauma: power, intonation, and the unconscious

Language is never a neutral medium; it carries historical memory, emotional imprints, and culturally encoded expectations about how the world should be interpreted. Language is also a form of organising experience as it sets the framework in which "normal" and "threatening," "one's own" and "alien," "love" and "violence" are defined. In this sense, the "Russian language" appears as a psychosemantic matrix of heteronomy – a system in

which one's own will is systematically replaced by the will of the Other: the tsar, the boss, the "state," the "people." Intonation, vocabulary, and grammar here do not simply describe reality, but dictate its structure: there is the one who speaks with the voice of authority, and the one who must listen, adapt, and not ask questions.

Historical traumas – such as the Mongol domination, autocratic governance, and Stalinist terror – did not determine linguistic forms mechanically, but they shaped the communicative ecology in which certain patterns of speech became socially rewarded or punished. Prolonged exposure to rigid vertical power structures fostered communicative habits in which loudness, commanding tone, and impersonal constructions indexed safety and conformity, whereas soft, exploratory, or dialogical speech was associated with vulnerability. Over time, these behavioural adaptations solidified into stable intonational norms and grammatical preferences, reinforcing patterns of depersonalisation (e.g., impersonal verbs, passive voice, collective agency markers) and normalising asymmetric interactions between speaker and listener.

M. Foucault (1975) showed that power acts through "disciplinary mechanisms" built into everyday practices, including linguistic ones. In the terms of P. Bourdieu (1990), language acts as a means of symbolic violence, through which the habitus of submission is reproduced. Within the "Russian world," this logic is manifested in a recurring communicative pattern often referred to as the "voice of authority." This "voice" is not limited to formal institutions; it appears in family interactions, workplace hierarchies, military discourse, and political communication. It is characterised by elevated volume, imperative constructions, a reduced tolerance for dialogue, and intonational markers that signal dominance, urgency, or threat. The "voice of authority" thus becomes a culturally stabilised register that legitimises asymmetrical relations and signals that the speaker claims the right to define reality for others.

Fear and humiliation are embedded in the intonation pattern, and a person who has grown up in this sound field perceives aggressive speech as proof of "strength" rather than a sign of violence. Centuries of coercive governance cultivated speech patterns in which fear, humiliation, and depersonalisation became normalised communicative resources. These emotional and intonational imprints shape expectations about what "strong" or "persuasive" speech should sound like. Consequently, individuals socialised in this soundscape may interpret aggressive or domineering intonation not as violence but as an indicator of competence, control, or legitimacy.

F. Gayraud & Y. Auxéméry (2025) showed that traumatic discourse is characterised by reduced agentivity, with speakers relying on stative and perception verbs instead of action-oriented forms, thereby linguistically diminishing the presence of an acting subject. This finding parallels the observation that the Russian linguistic

environment frequently employs depersonalised constructions that obscure agency and reinforce heteronomous patterns of subjectivity. Whereas F. Gayraud & Y. Auxéméry examined individual trauma, the present analysis extends this mechanism to collective historical trauma, indicating that prolonged exposure to coercive power structures fosters a communicative ecology in which diminished agency becomes culturally encoded. In this way, the linguistic consequences of historical coercion do not simply reflect past violence, but actively reproduce a worldview in which dominance appears natural and autonomy becomes difficult to articulate.

Grammar without subjects: when language eliminates the "I"

A prominent structural feature of Russian grammar is the frequent use of impersonal constructions in situations where Ukrainian typically requires an explicit agent. In Russian communication, actions are often framed through subjectless forms such as "it was done," "it is necessary," "a decision was made," "it turned out this way," whereas in Ukrainian or English it would sound natural to say "I did," "we decided," "he ordered," in the "Russian language" the action seems to "happen by itself." The difference is not simply morphological but reflects two distinct ways of assigning or avoiding responsibility in everyday speech.

The idea that impersonal constructions function as a "linguistic metaphor for slavery" requires historical contextualisation. Under imperial and Soviet systems, explicitly naming the agent could entail personal risk. Subjectless constructions therefore developed as tools for linguistic caution, allowing speakers to report actions without identifying responsible individuals. Ukrainian communicative norms, shaped by different political pressures, preserved a stronger reliance on explicit subjects. In terms of self-determination theory and psychoanalysis, we can say that the "Russian language" systematically supports an external locus of control: "I am not acting – something is being done to me" (Fromm, 1941; Deci & Ryan, 2000; 2017). A comparison shows that where the Ukrainian language easily expresses the subject's position ("I decided," "we refused," "they committed a crime"), the "Russian language" often resorts to vague forms: "decided," "refused," "there are some violations." As a result, responsibility "dissolves into the system," and people get used to thinking of themselves as "small cogs" with no voice and no right to initiative.

It is essential to distinguish grammatical patterns from rhetorical strategy. In political discourse, Russian officials deliberately employ impersonal framing to obscure agency. For example, statements such as "all responsibility will fall on the other side," "there was a need," "a decision had to be made," systematically remove the acting subject and present Russian actions as reactive. Ukrainian official communication, by contrast,

follows an explicit-agent model: “Russia attacked,” “they shelled,” “we are defending ourselves.” Commenting on the possibility of escalation of the conflict, Putin shifts responsibility to the Ukrainian authorities, stating that “all responsibility for possible bloodshed will lie on the conscience of the ruling regime in Kyiv.” Russia here acts not as an active aggressor, but as one who only “reacts” to the actions of another. Sergey Lavrov uses phrases such as “we have absolutely no intention of crossing Ukraine’s borders” or “sanctions are merely a manifestation of irritation, not an instrument of serious politics” in his public statements. In such statements, Russia’s aggressive actions are hidden behind vague phrases, while responsibility is shifted to the West and the “Kyiv regime.”

It is important to note that even when referring to obvious acts of violence, the language avoids direct references to the perpetrator: instead of “we attacked,” phrases such as “there was an escalation,” “there was a need,” and “we had to make a decision” are used. This is entirely consistent with the grammar of heteronomy described above, where “I” and “we” disappear from the field of responsibility. S. Mahmood *et al.* (2025) showed that redemption is linguistically marked by a shift from impersonal and agent-suppressing constructions toward active forms with explicit subjects and clear action verbs, signalling the restoration of moral agency. This pattern aligns with the findings of the present study, where frequent impersonal constructions in the Russian linguistic environment were shown to obscure responsibility and reinforce heteronomous subjectivity, while explicit-agent forms characteristic of Ukrainian discourse enabled the expression of autonomous, accountable action. Both analyses demonstrate that grammatical encoding of agency functions as a key mechanism through which narratives – and broader linguistic environments – shape perceptions of responsibility and power.

The intonation of power: the psychoacoustics of submission

Language is not only a system of words and grammar but also a system of sound. Intonation patterns carry socially encoded expectations about hierarchy, distance, and legitimacy. In many communicative contexts associated with Russian-speaking cultural environments, a characteristic authoritative intonation can be observed: elevated volume, sharp downward accents, compressed phrasing, and minimal pausing. This intonational style does not simply “sound harsh”; it reflects and reproduces a social structure in which power is performed through vocal dominance.

Speakers who hold institutional or informal authority frequently use an assertive delivery – rapid tempo, reduced turn-taking, and categorical statements – to signal that discussion is unnecessary and resistance is inappropriate. By contrast, in communicative contexts

shaped by Ukrainian norms, softer, more dialogic intonation is more typical: moderate volume, stable pitch contour, longer pauses that invite turn-taking, and phrasing that leaves room for negotiation. These differences become especially visible in emotionally loaded situations. For example, when issuing instructions, Russian authoritative speech tends to take the form of compressed commands (“short, rapid, pressuring delivery”), whereas Ukrainian speakers more often employ explanatory or cooperative delivery (“steady tempo, open-ended phrasing”). The contrast is not absolute, but it illustrates how intonation participates in constructing expectations about interactional roles.

The cultural formation of these patterns is rooted in broader historical experiences. Societies marked by prolonged centralised authority – from imperial bureaucracy to Soviet administrative structures – often rewarded vocal styles associated with control and decisiveness. In such environments, raised tone and compressed rhythm became recognisable signs of “seriousness” and “status,” while gentler intonation could be interpreted as uncertainty or weakness. Political rhetoric reinforces these patterns: official speeches on state television, military briefings, and bureaucratic communication frequently employ forceful intonation that signals unilateral power rather than dialogue. When discussing issues such as military escalation or relations with NATO, this intonational frame amplifies the message by pairing the semantic content with a vocal form that conveys urgency and inevitability. The rhythm of speech plays a central role. Rapid, uninterrupted delivery, overloaded with consecutive clauses, creates a sense of momentum that discourages interruption. This produces what can be described as an “emotional pressure effect”: the listener experiences fewer opportunities to question, negotiate, or slow down the exchange. In this communicative logic, authority is not demonstrated through argumentation but through the sound of the voice itself – a performance of power that precedes and sometimes outweighs the content of the message.

Neuropsychological studies provide partial insight into why such patterns may have strong effects. Research on auditory processing (Zatorre & Salimpoor, 2013) showed that sudden increases in volume, sharp pitch shifts, and rapid rhythmic sequences can activate neural systems linked to vigilance and orienting responses. In real communicative contexts, this means that a consistently pressuring vocal style may elicit automatic physiological reactions such as increased tension, heightened attention, or readiness to comply. However, these responses are not universal: they depend on the listener’s prior experiences, personality, social expectations, and the situational context. A person accustomed since childhood to hearing raised voices in family communication may interpret a harsh tone as “normal,” whereas another may interpret it as aggressive.

The study of Sh. Ismayil (2024) showed that pitch contour, intensity, tempo, and pausing serve as key markers of interpersonal stance, with certain prosodic patterns consistently signalling dominance or submission. It confirms that elevated volume, sharp accents, and compressed rhythm in Russian-speaking contexts were shown to function as vocal markers of authority and reinforce hierarchical interaction. While Sh. Ismayil examined these features in a general stylistic framework, the current study situates similar prosodic mechanisms within a sociohistorical environment shaped by centralised power, demonstrating how intonation becomes a tool for reproducing asymmetry. The contrast with Ukrainian dialogic intonation further underscores how different prosodic norms shape expectations about reciprocity and agency.

Obscenity and the "power of words": power through humiliation

Another characteristic feature of the "Russian language" is its extreme saturation with obscene vocabulary and its almost complete normalisation. Swearing permeates all levels of speech – from street quarrels to military communication and "informal" communication among political elites. From a psychoanalytic perspective, obscene vocabulary can be interpreted as an attempt to discharge tension associated with humiliation, fear, and dependency. Where direct protest against authorities is dangerous or socially unacceptable, aggression is redirected onto safer targets in the horizontal dimension.

Sociolinguistically, obscenity acts as a "glue of shared trauma": it signals that "we are all in the same shit here," but at the same time it fixes the impossibility of true solidarity, because anyone can become the object of humiliation at any moment. The authorities actively use this resource – the military and police culture of the "Russian world" is permeated with obscene language, which turns violence into part of "normal male behaviour." The use of obscenity by high-ranking political figures, such as Dmitry Medvedev, requires a deeper political and rhetorical interpretation. When a representative of the elite publicly sends the proposals of another state "back to the hole they came from" and presents this as a "diplomatic response," obscenity functions as a deliberate strategy rather than a spontaneous emotional outburst. It serves several purposes at once: it signals to a domestic audience that the speaker is "unrestrained" and "honest," it publicly humiliates the opponent by reducing them to an object of ridicule, and it shifts the register of political communication from argument-based debate to symbolic domination. In this context, profanity operates as a performative act of delegitimization: the opponent is not refuted but stripped of dignity.

Statements targeting the President of Ukraine, in which he is described as an "illegitimate, worthless figure whose country is disappearing," exemplify this

mechanism of dehumanisation even without direct obscene terms. The logic is the same: a political leader is rhetorically reduced to something less than a full subject. Obscenity and quasi-obscene insults thus become part of a more general discursive pattern in which the political enemy is portrayed as contemptible, dirty, or vermin-like. This contributes to a discursive environment where the denial of subjectivity – of the right to be heard, respected, or negotiated with – appears acceptable. As a result, the very linguistic material available for expressing conflict, disagreement, or emotion is skewed toward aggression. This makes it difficult to stabilise communicative norms based on mutual respect and recognition: attempts to speak in the language of dignity and care are easily ridiculed or dismissed. In this way, obscene vocabulary does not merely reflect existing power relations but participates in maintaining a social and political order where humiliation becomes a routine and legitimate instrument of control.

The study of S. Hansson (2024) demonstrated that coercive impoliteness and strategic blame-avoidance in government communication operate through recurrent linguistic patterns that shift responsibility away from institutional actors while projecting authority through aggression, dismissal, and derision. Hansson showed that governments frequently employ face-threatening acts, implicit accusations, and derogatory formulations to construct an asymmetrical interactional frame in which dissent is pre-emptively delegitimised. This finding directly aligns with the present analysis, in which obscenity, humiliation, and verbally aggressive stylistics in Russian political discourse were shown to function as tools of symbolic domination rather than spontaneous emotional outbursts.

While S. Hansson examined these mechanisms within contemporary institutional communication, the current study situates similar strategies within a broader cultural-linguistic matrix shaped by prolonged authoritarian traditions, where humiliating or dehumanising language normalises asymmetric relations and constrains subjectivity. The comparison with Ukrainian political communication – which more consistently relies on explicit agency, dialogic framing, and non-humiliating registers – further underscores how divergent linguistic norms encode fundamentally different expectations about accountability, reciprocity, and political legitimacy.

Inversion of basic meanings: love, truth, honour, freedom, "I"

The "Russian language environment" demonstrates a consistent tendency to reshape basic existential categories through specific lexical choices and syntactic patterns. This becomes especially clear when examining how concepts such as love, truth, honour, freedom, and the self are expressed in everyday speech. The concept of love, which in humanistic traditions is grounded in reciprocity and recognition of the other as an

autonomous subject (Fromm, 1956), is often linguistically encoded in Russian as attachment to authority rather than mutuality. Common expressions such as “to love the Motherland,” “to love the leader,” “to love the tsar,” or “to love with suffering” frame love as devotion to a superior entity that may punish or humiliate yet must still be revered. By contrast, expressions denoting interpersonal love between equals tend to be overshadowed in public discourse. The semantics of love thus tilt toward fusion with power rather than acknowledgement of another person’s independent will.

A similar semantic recoding is observable in the notion of truth. In many European traditions, “truth” denotes correspondence to facts and moral obligation to honesty. In Russian everyday usage, however, the opposition between *pravda* (“moral/political truth”) and *istina* (“factual truth”) shows how “truth” can be detached from facts and tied instead to loyalty. Phrases such as “this is the real truth” often refer not to accuracy but to narratives that reinforce the hierarchy. Statements like “the truth is on our side” function less as empirical claims and more as declarations of fidelity to authority. Thus, “truth” becomes a marker of ideological alignment, not factual correctness. The term honor likewise shifts from an inner moral core to a relational position in a hierarchy. Linguistic patterns such as “it is an honor to serve,” “honor is obedience,” “he lost his honor because he disobeyed” reflect a logic where honor is tied to fulfillment of one’s role within the vertical structure. Instead of denoting personal integrity and responsibility for one’s actions, honor is linguistically framed as a function of loyalty and rank, which can be granted or withdrawn by superiors.

The semantics of freedom further illustrate this psychosemantic matrix. In democratic cultures, freedom is associated with autonomy and the capacity to act responsibly in the public sphere (Arendt, 1958). In Russian public discourse, however, the word is often embedded in constructions that mark it as dangerous or excessive: “too much freedom,” “freedom leads to chaos,” “freedom must be controlled,” “freedom is anarchy.” These recurrent collocations frame freedom not as a positive civic capacity but as a potential threat that requires containment. In such semantic contexts, messages like “better strong authority than destructive freedom” find a receptive audience because the linguistic environment has already coded freedom as instability. The question of the self reveals perhaps the deepest structural constraints. Different languages provide different lexical and syntactic tools for expressing inner experience. In Russian, expressions of selfhood frequently rely on collectivised forms such as “we decided,” “we think,” “we must endure,” which blur individual agency. Impersonal constructions – “it turned out,” “it had to be done,” “one should endure,” “circumstances forced me” – further dissolve the speaker’s autonomy by shifting action away from the “I.” These forms make it difficult to articulate

oneself as a responsible subject with independent decision-making power. By contrast, Ukrainian equivalents more readily employ explicit first-person forms (“I decided,” “I refuse,” “I take responsibility”), which linguistically support autonomous agency.

Thus, “Russian language environment” functions as a psychosemantic system in which basic existential categories are refracted through specific patterns of vocabulary and grammar. The study of Lenchuk and Ahmed (2024) demonstrated that language ideologies shape social hierarchies by privileging certain linguistic forms as “standard,” “legitimate,” or “proper,” while marginalising alternative varieties and the speakers associated with them. Their analysis showed that state institutions often frame standardised language as a marker of competence, authority, and social value, turning linguistic norms into tools of stratification and control. This finding aligns with the present study, which shows how the Russian linguistic environment similarly encodes hierarchical relations through lexical, grammatical, and discursive patterns that redefine concepts such as love, truth, and freedom in ways that reinforce dependency and loyalty.

Ukrainian linguistic subjectivity as a contrasting matrix

Ukrainian linguistic practice offers a contrasting model of subjectivity in which agency, reciprocity, and dialogic engagement are encoded directly into everyday communication. Rather than dissolving responsibility or obscuring the speaker’s role, the structure of Ukrainian discourse provides clear linguistic tools for articulating autonomous action and mutual recognition. Ukrainian grammar makes it straightforward to mark the speaker as a responsible agent through explicit first-person forms such as “I decide,” “I refuse,” “I take responsibility,” “we disagree,” “we object.” These forms appear frequently in both public and private discourse and signal that actions originate from identifiable subjects. In contrast to Russian impersonal constructions, Ukrainian routinely encodes agency in the verb morphology itself, creating an expectation that decisions have authors and consequences.

Ukrainian intonation patterns also support dialogic interaction. Conversations typically involve moderate volume, clearly marked pauses, and melodic contours that invite turn-taking rather than suppress it. In political speeches, even when topics are emotionally charged, the delivery usually maintains a cooperative rhythm, allowing room for explanation and justification. This stands in contrast to the pressure-based intonational patterns characteristic of much Russian official and media communication, where raised tone, compressed phrasing, and minimal pauses communicate unilateral authority rather than shared deliberation. This does not mean that the Ukrainian linguistic space is automatically devoid of patterns of heteronomy (historical traumas, colonial dependence, and the Soviet legacy continue to have an impact).

However, it is precisely the Ukrainian language's focus on reciprocity, co-presence, and responsibility that creates the opportunity for the development of a subject-oriented model of civilisation – what contemporary research describes as a transition to “societies of self-expression and self-determination” (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Putnam, 2020). From this perspective, Russia's war against Ukraine appears not only as a struggle for territory or geopolitical influence, but as a conflict between two linguistic-psychological models of the world. On the one hand, there is the “Russian language” as a psychosemantic matrix of historical trauma and heteronomy; on the other, there is the Ukrainian language as a space for the restoration of subjectivity, in which there is room for the “I” and “we” as responsible actors, rather than objects of someone else's will.

This divergence becomes especially visible in the political-ideological discourse of the Russian state. The so-called “language of mission” employed by ideologists such as Alexander Dugin is not merely rhetorical ornamentation but a structured linguistic technique. It relies on modal imperatives (“must rise,” “are destined to act”), metaphysical generalisations (“absolute evil,” “sacred struggle”), and collective agency markers (“we were created for this mission,” “our historical duty”). The subject here is an abstract collective bound to a transcendent purpose, while individual agency is absorbed into a monolithic “we.” This type of discourse frames violence not as a political choice but as a metaphysical obligation, thereby bypassing ethical deliberation. Such mission-oriented rhetoric also normalises extreme proposals. When Dugin declares that opponents “must be destroyed” or that nuclear escalation is a legitimate option, these utterances rely on a linguistic structure that presents annihilation as a necessary component of the mission. Hyperbolic absolutes (“absolute evil,” “no other language”) and inevitability markers (“must,” “inevitably,” “there is no other way”) create a discursive environment in which violence becomes linguistically rationalised.

Because this style of speech saturates large segments of Russian media and political communication, its effects extend beyond elite discourse. It reinforces a cultural schema in which obedience, aggression, and sacrificial duty appear linguistically natural, while alternative forms of subjectivity remain underdeveloped or marginal. In this sense, the psychosemantic space produced by Russian linguistic and ideological practices represents not only a threat to Ukrainian sovereignty but also a challenge to broader civilisational security.

The analysis of O. Ivanova (2023) showed that Ukrainian sociolinguistic dynamics are characterised by a steady expansion of Ukrainian-language use in public, institutional, and interpersonal domains, accompanied by growing alignment between linguistic choice and civic self-identification. The study demonstrated that shifts toward Ukrainian increasingly

correlate with perceptions of personal agency, democratic orientation, and active citizenship, as speakers use explicit first-person forms, agentive constructions, and dialogic interactional patterns to signal autonomy and participation in collective decision-making. This finding resonated with the present analysis, which identifies Ukrainian linguistic norms as structurally conducive to expressing responsibility and subjectivity, in contrast to the impersonal and hierarchical patterns pervasive in Russian discourse. While O. Ivanova situates these processes within broader transformations in language policy, urban multilingualism, and post-Euromaidan identity change, the current study extends this logic to the psychosemantic level, demonstrating how grammatical, prosodic, and lexical structures reinforce the emergence of a subject-oriented communicative model. The contrast with the Russian linguistic environment – where impersonality, collective agency markers, and ideologically coded vocabulary obscure responsibility and naturalise vertical power – further underscores how divergent sociolinguistic trajectories reflect fundamentally different orientations toward autonomy, accountability, and civic agency.

The analysis demonstrates that the linguistic, international, and psychosemantic features of the Russian communicative environment form a cohesive matrix of heteronomy in which historical trauma, vertical power structures, and institutionalised coercion are sedimented into grammar, vocabulary, prosody, and the cultural encoding of core existential concepts. The normalisation of impersonal constructions, authoritarian intonation, humiliating or dehumanising lexical patterns, and collectivised forms of agency systematically weakens the speaker's subjectivity, blurs the line between violence and “strength,” and makes aggression and responsibility-avoidance culturally expectable. These results confirm the study's central hypothesis: the stability of authoritarian-heteronomous systems and their aggression toward democratic societies are shaped not only by institutional or ideological factors but by a deep psychosemantic matrix that reproduces a habitus of submission, fear, and dependence even after formal institutional change.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings demonstrated that recurrent linguistic patterns in the Russian language environment contribute to the maintenance of externally oriented, non-agentive forms of subjectivity. Impersonal constructions such as “it was decided,” “there was no choice,” “it turned out this way” consistently obscure the actor of the action, making responsibility appear external or diffused. In Ukrainian, the same communicative contexts typically employ explicit-agent forms – “I decided,” “we refused,” “they committed a crime” – which linguistically anchor responsibility in identifiable subjects and support the expression of autonomous agency.

Intonational patterns also contribute to these differences. Russian public and institutional speech often uses elevated volume, compressed rhythm, and reduced pausing, creating a sound pattern that conveys authority and minimises opportunities for dialogue or objection. Ukrainian communicative practice relies more on measured volume, clear pauses, and cooperative rhythm, which facilitates turn-taking and reflective justification rather than unilateral assertion. The normalisation of obscene and dehumanising vocabulary in Russian political and military communication strengthens vertical relations of dominance. Profanity, used even by high-ranking officials, functions as a rhetorical tool for humiliation and boundary-setting, reinforcing hierarchical distance. Ukrainian public discourse, even in conflict conditions, rarely relies on linguistic forms that erase the opponent's subjectivity, allowing interactions to remain rooted in concepts of dignity and mutual recognition.

Differences also emerge in the encoding of key concepts. In Russian usage, "truth" frequently appears in constructions associated with loyalty, while "freedom" is paired with terms suggesting disorder or danger. Ukrainian usage embeds these concepts in formulations tied to accountability and civic agency, supporting their use in democratic communication. Future research should analyse these patterns across diverse social groups and evaluate how shifts toward agentive linguistic forms influence civic behavior and democratic engagement.

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«Руський язык» як психосемантична матриця історичної травми та гетерономії

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Анотація. Метою дослідження було наукова інтерпретація причин цього протистояння через психосемантичну реконструкцію «руського язика» як ядра гетерономної цивілізаційної моделі та виявлення його ролі в підтриманні гетерономної структури російського суспільства й легітимації агресії проти України. Методологія спиралась на міждисциплінарний підхід, що поєднує психоаналітичні й гуманістичні концепції (Е. Фромм, К. Хорні, Дж. Боулбі), соціологію влади й габітусу (М. Фуко, П. Бурдьє), етнолінгвістику (А. Вежбицька), теорію самодетермінації (Е. Десі, Р. Раян), а також дослідження цінностей і демократичних трансформацій (Р. Інглгарт, К. Вельцель, Я. Маунк, В. Браун, Р. Патнем, І. Крастєв). На основі психосемантичного аналізу інтонацій, граматики, лексики (включно з обценною) та базових ціннісних опозицій показано, що «руський язык» структурно закріплює гетерономний стан свідомості: нормалізує страх, розмиває відповідальність, інвертує смисли любові, правди, честі й свободи, фруструє потребу в автономії та формує готовність до насильницької мобілізації. Порівняння з українською мовною практикою продемонструвало, що українська мова дедалі більше функціонує як простір суб'єктності, гідності та взаємного визнання, що загострює цивілізаційний конфлікт між двома психосемантичними моделями світу. Практичне значення отриманих результатів полягає у можливості використання запропонованого підходу для розробки мовно-психологічних стратегій подолання впливу «руського міра», проектування освітніх і комунікативних практик, які підтримують суб'єктність, а також конструювання орієнтирів для психосемантичної «терапії» авторитарних суспільств

Ключові слова: російські мовні моделі; психологічні смислові структури; авторитарні суспільства; демократичні суспільства; війна в Україні; цивілізаційний конфлікт

Wartime collaborationism as a subject of political psychological research: Theoretical approach

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Abstract. The problem of wartime collaborationism remains a pressing concern, particularly in the context of modern conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war. Understanding the psychological and social dynamics that lead to cooperation with occupying forces is a key to preventing these behaviours in the future. The aim of the study was to explore the phenomenon of collaborationism through the lens of political and social psychology and to develop recommendations for prevention and post-conflict reconciliation. The study employed an interdisciplinary approach, combining theoretical frameworks and empirical research from psychology, criminology, law, and history, to analyse different forms of collaborationism and the mechanisms that lead to them. The analysis integrated key psychological concepts including conformity, obedience, groupthink, deindividuation, social identity, diffusion of responsibility, cognitive dissonance, and differential association, to explain how individuals and groups under occupation may come to cooperate with enemy forces, often against their prior values or interests. Special attention was given to the role of educators, whose collaborationist activities can undermine national security and the continuity of civic identity. The article explored the mechanisms through which group dynamics, authority, and social learning contribute to collaborationist behaviour, especially in the context of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, demonstrating how such behaviours can become institutionalised within occupied societies. The findings of this research can be used by professionals in the fields of psychology, law, and security to develop strategies for preventing collaborationism and supporting post-conflict reconciliation

Keywords: groupthink; conformity; deindividuation; social identity; cognitive dissonance; diffusion of responsibility; differential association

INTRODUCTION

During war times, individuals face complex psychological dilemmas, driven by fear, survival instincts, and moral conflict, which may lead some to collaborate with occupying forces. This issue is not only rooted in historical events, such as the Vichy regime during World War II, but continues to manifest in contemporary conflicts. Understanding the psychological mechanisms behind collaborationism is crucial, as it provides insights into both past and present behaviours, illustrating how

occupation forces exploit these dynamics to secure compliance. This research explored various historical and modern examples of collaborationism, including the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict, to better understand the psychological factors that shape such decisions during times of war.

The researcher S. Kalyvas (2008) offered a comprehensive framework for understanding the conditions under which individuals may choose collaboration

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over resistance, particularly in the context of civil wars and occupations. This work examined how both structural conditions and individual psychological factors, such as moral conflict and the desire for self-preservation, contribute to collaborationism. S. Kalyvas concluded that while structural factors, such as the level of occupation, certainly play a role, individual choices driven by personal psychology are equally important in determining whether an individual collaborates. R. McDermott's (2015) study on the intersection of political psychology and international conflict highlighted the importance of decision-making under stress and threat. Applying models from cognitive psychology, such as prospect theory, R. McDermott explored how individuals, especially national leaders, make decisions when faced with high-risk situations. His findings suggested that collaborationist leaders, such as Pétain and Quisling, may have been influenced by cognitive biases, such as loss aversion, which shaped their willingness to cooperate with occupying forces.

J. Jackson's study (2003) of post-war France examined the social and political consequences of collaborationism, focusing on the legal and extrajudicial executions of collaborationists. J. Jackson argued that the post-war pursuit of justice, including the execution of those who collaborated, was deeply influenced by emotional reactions such as anger and a desire for retribution. The study provided insights into how the psychological aftermath of occupation and collaboration affects post-conflict societies and their attempts at reconciliation. G. Rose's (2010) research explored the long-term implications of wartime collaborationism, particularly in relation to post-war stability. This study emphasised that understanding the psychological mechanisms behind collaboration is crucial for creating lasting peace and stability in post-war societies. G. Rose's work emphasised that wartime collaborationism should not be viewed solely through a lens of criminality but should be understood as a complex phenomenon influenced by psychological, social, and political factors. The researcher called for a more nuanced approach to post-war justice that accounts for these psychological dimensions.

O. Dzhuzha (2023) examined how the concept of collaborationism has evolved in Ukrainian legislation, highlighting the shift from traditional definitions of treason to a more nuanced understanding of collaboration that includes various forms of cooperation with the occupying forces. This legal approach not only identifies collaboration as a criminal act but also offered a clear categorisation of its various forms, from political to administrative and military cooperation. O. Dzhuzha argued that such legal shifts are necessary to address the changing nature of modern conflicts and the new forms of collaboration seen in the context of Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territories. His work emphasised the importance of distinguishing between different degrees of collaboration to ensure fair and

proportional justice in the post-conflict period. Similarly, R. Turchyn's research (2025) on wartime collaborationism in Ukraine during the ongoing Russian invasion underscored the complexity of the issue beyond its legal implications. R. Turchyn adopted a sociological perspective, analysing the social dynamics and motivations that drive individuals and groups to collaborate with occupying forces. The scientist stressed that collaboration is not always a simple moral choice but is often influenced by a range of psychological, social, and economic pressures. According to R. Turchyn, the desire for survival, the fear of retribution, and the impact of propaganda can lead to complex decisions that may not always align with traditional notions of loyalty or betrayal. His analysis provided a valuable framework for understanding how collaborationism can persist even in societies with a strong resistance to occupation.

Despite the significant body of research on wartime collaborationism, several key aspects remain underexplored. Specifically, there is a need for further examination of the psychological processes at the mass level, particularly in relation to how entire communities or populations become complicit in collaborationist behaviour. The aim of this research was to examine the psychological mechanisms underlying wartime collaborationism, focusing on both individual and group dynamics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The theoretical and analytical approach was adopted, incorporating both historical and contemporary cases of collaborationism to explore how psychological factors influenced individuals' decisions to collaborate with occupying forces. The existing research, theories, and case studies were systematically reviewed and synthesised to understand the psychological mechanisms behind wartime collaborationism. The focus was on the psychology of small groups and intergroup interactions, as it allowed to analyse how conformity, submission to authority, groupthink, and group polarisation were formed in local communities under occupation, as well as among educators.

The methodology was structured around typological classification: collaborationism was classified according to different types, including involuntary versus voluntary collaboration, servile versus ideological collaboration, and collaboration equated with treason versus legitimate collaboration. This classification helped delineate the various motivations and justifications for collaboration in wartime contexts. Content analysis was used to analyse historical cases, legal frameworks, and contemporary examples, particularly the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, to illustrate how these types of collaboration manifest in modern conflict situations. A central focus of the study was on small group dynamics and intergroup interactions: particular attention was given to how conformity, submission to authority, groupthink, and polarisation emerge in small groups, such as

local communities and educational environments under occupation. This approach enabled the exploration of how individuals within groups may be influenced by the majority or by charismatic leaders, even when such influence contradicts their original beliefs.

To analyse how individuals align with occupying forces, the study applied Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorisation Theory, which explained how individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups. The theories were particularly relevant in understanding how shifts in group identity under threat can lead to collaboration, as individuals may identify with the dominant occupying group for survival or status. The application of cognitive dissonance theory helped explore how collaborationists might justify their actions, rationalising behaviour that conflicts with their prior values or identity in order to reduce internal psychological discomfort. The study utilised groupthink as a method of examining decision-making within groups under stress. This approach highlighted how group cohesion can lead to poor decision-making and irrational behaviour, such as collaboration with the enemy, as individuals seek consensus and avoid conflict within the group. The diffusion of responsibility model was also applied to understand passive complicity: it was examined how individuals, when part of a larger group, may fail to take action or resist, assuming that others will intervene, thus normalising collaborationist behaviour.

The differential association theory was employed to explain how deviant behaviours, including collaborationism, are learned and spread through social interaction, particularly within small groups. The theory emphasises that collaborationism is not an inherent trait but rather a learned behaviour, spread through personal interactions within communities that have already embraced collaboration. The study was grounded in case study analysis, focusing on both historical and contemporary examples of wartime collaborationism, particularly in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. By examining the role of educators and the psychological impact of occupation on communities, the research aimed to highlight the real-world dynamics that influence collaborationist behaviour in occupied territories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The psychological mechanisms of collaborationism: Conformity, obedience, and authority

The research of wartime collaborationism started with an attempt to analyse it through classification of its types. Some researchers subdivided collaboration into involuntary (reluctant recognition of necessity) and voluntary (an attempt to exploit necessity). According to this study, collaboration can be either servile or ideological. Servile is service to an enemy based on necessity for personal survival or comfort, whereas ideological collaborationism is an advocacy for

cooperation with an enemy power (Hoffmann, 1968). While others attempted to distinguish between ideological and non-ideological cooperation with the enemy, labelling those who committed it as “collaborators” in the first case and as “collaborationist” in second one (Gordon, 1980). The other approach was to divide the phenomenon into “collaboration equated with treason” and “legitimate collaboration” for survival, as used to describe the cooperation between civilian internees (mostly of American origin) and their Japanese captors in the Philippines (Ward, 2008).

The latter approach corresponds with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), specifically with Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1950), Section III of which allows the occupying state to collect taxes, and in general functioning of education and medical systems, and even courts and law enforcement bodies (though obliges to use the law of the state been occupied in their practice). The further development of the concept of “legitimate collaboration” is heavily undermined by the negative connotation of the term, as since Petain used it in his announcement on 30 October 1940, collaborationism is mostly associated with high treason and political figures (Brook, 2005). Nevertheless, the political psychological mechanisms of wartime collaborationism remain a complex subject for research till today, although the current geopolitical situation and specifically Russian Ukrainian war ongoing since 20 February 2014, provides a lot of material for researchers.

The first approach to the topic under research is phenomena of conformity and obedience. Research on the influence of groups and group norms on the opinions of their members has been ongoing since the 1930s, when experimental methods revealed that in situations of uncertainty, individuals tend to compare and align their own opinions with those of others, generally conforming to the group. M. Sherif (1935) highlighted that the overall system of life orientations formed under the influence of others continues to affect an individual's views and judgments even in the absence of the original source of influence. Although M. Sherif's research did not directly address conformity, focusing instead on the emergence and formation of group norms and various aspects of suggestibility, his experiments demonstrated that the degree of conformity depends both on personal characteristics – such as intellectual development, level of self-awareness, and presence or absence of self-perception defects – and situational factors, such as the importance of the expressed opinion to the individual, its connection to the person's real activities, social ties, and conscious acceptance of group norms and standards.

Experimental research of conformity continued in the early 1950s, particularly exploring group pressure using the “confederate group” method. This led to the conclusion that individuals respond to group opinion

in one of two ways: either disagreement and alienation (nonconformity), or full acceptance (conformity). S. Asch (1955) noted that the degree of conformity was also found to depend on situational factors, group composition, and size. S. Asch's experiments were extended by Crutchfield, who automated the procedure using technical response tools. His study was notable for involving army officers who, believing they were being tested individually, responded in certain ways to the experimenter's questions but changed their answers when they thought others responded differently, aligning with the majority view – even when they clearly disagreed. Interestingly, conformity among army officers (a formal, positively referent group) was significantly higher than among students in S. Asch's experiments: 46% vs. 37% (Crutchfield, 1955). Based on these experiments, modern American social psychology identifies two types of conformity. The first type, normative influence, occurs when individuals conform in order to gain acceptance or approval from the group. The second type, informational influence, happens when individuals conform because they believe that the group possesses more accurate information, particularly in situations where the group is large and unanimous (Aronson, 1972).

Normative influence is tied to group norms, where the majority exerts pressure and its opinion is perceived as the norm. These norms surround individuals from early childhood, teaching them to respect and follow group standards. Informational influence involves changing one's position based on viewing the group as a source of information. While normative influence alters interpersonal relationships, informational influence shapes the individual's desire for a more accurate understanding of reality (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). This aligns with the informational approach to cognitive activity, which suggests that modern individuals cannot verify all incoming information and rely on others' opinions to form a more accurate picture of reality. This leads individuals to reduce dissonance between beliefs, knowledge, and actions by seeking confirming information and avoiding contradictory data (Festinger, 1957). Group pressure experiments continued in America into the next decade, showing that personal principles and values are influenced by leaders' authority and group norms (Milgram, 1963). Although these experiments focused more on obedience, they also demonstrated that conformity significantly affects behaviour, explaining why people in groups may act against their own beliefs, including actions with potentially severe and dangerous consequences for others and society.

S. Milgram's experiments vividly showed that 63% of participants "killed" a confederate with simulated (but perceived as real) electric shocks, obeying the experimenter's instructions despite the confederate's protests and pleas to stop. When S. Milgram modified the experiment, so the confederate complained of a "weak heart" and simulated louder suffering, 65% of

new participants again "killed" him, obeying the experimenter. To some extent, obedience and conformity levels can be predicted based on personality type – either authoritarian or innovative. Authoritarian personalities agree with traditional norms, show submissiveness, avoid responsibility, and depend on authority. In contrast, innovative personalities are open to new experiences, seek autonomy, and prefer original, independent solutions (Hagen, 1962). S. Milgram also identified several key factors that influence obedience. One of these factors is the emotional distance from the victim (for example, when the victim was unseen but still audible, participants were more likely to obey). Another important factor is the proximity and legitimacy of authority (when S. Milgram gave orders via phone instead of in person), obedience dropped to just 21%. The institutional authority also played a role, as obedience was significantly reduced (when the experiment was conducted in a provincial setting rather than at Yale University), with obedience dropping to 48%. Finally, the presence of a defiant peer had a liberating effect when two confederates refused to continue, 90% of the real participants also chose to disobey.

A side effect of these experiments was the identification of the "blaming the victim" principle, used by participants to resolve internal dissonance between their actions and beliefs. Participants justified their actions by saying the "victim" was "too stupid and stubborn," rationalising their compliance with the experimenter's instructions to continue the "torture." It's worth noting that S. Milgram's findings were horrifyingly applied in practice. The authoritarian regime of the "Black Colonels" in Greece selected torturers from the most obedient and authority-respecting candidates, gradually training them – first in guarding prisoners, then participating in arrests and beatings, then observing torture, and finally engaging in torture themselves. Through this gradual process, law-abiding individuals were transformed into diligent executioners (Haritos-Fatouros, 1989; Staub, 1992). These behaviors occur because individuals are influenced by the pressure to conform to group norms and the perceived legitimacy of authority, especially in situations where defiance feels risky or morally ambiguous. In the context of wartime occupation, these psychological mechanisms help to explain why collaborationism arises, as people may align with occupying forces to avoid conflict, gain perceived benefits, or rationalise their actions as a means of survival.

Social identity and collaborationism:

Theoretical perspectives and empirical insights

Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT) were proposed by H. Tajfel & J.C. Turner (1986). Tajfel and Turner in SIT supposed that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups (e.g., nationality, religion, political affiliation) which leads to in-group favouritism, out-group

discrimination and positive distinctiveness. These phenomena are implied by social categorisation (meaning that individuals classify themselves and others into groups), social identification (adopting the identity of the group individual belongs to) and social comparison (when groups are compared by individuals belonging to them to maintain or enhance their self-esteem).

H. Tajfel & J. Turner showed that even arbitrary group assignments led to favouritism and discrimination. This suggests that group loyalty can emerge without deep ideological commitment, relevant to understanding how collaboration can occur quickly under occupation. The scientists emphasised that group identity can override personal identity, especially in conflict. This helps to explain why individuals may commit acts against their own community on the side of aggressor as they start to identify themselves with a new dominant group. They noted that individuals may seek upward mobility by aligning with powerful groups, even if it means betraying former affiliations. J. Turner moved further and in his SCT focused on how individuals shift between personal and social identities depending on context and explained it through depersonalisation (meaning that a person sees oneself more as a group member rather than an individual), normative behaviour (instructing the group member to act according to group norms) and salience of identity (when the more relevant a group identity is in situation, the more it influences behaviour).

Wartime collaborationism can be explained through SIT and SCT perspective as group identity under threat: individuals may redefine their in-group to align with occupying forces if that group offers them security, status, or survival. Also, individuals in the occupied territories are affected by depersonalisation and norm conformity, forcing them to adopt group norms even if they conflict with personal views. Finally, collaborationists themselves may justify their actions by viewing their new group as superior or more “civilised,” aligning with SIT’s concept of social comparison, this also leads to stigmatisation of resistance movements and former compatriots as “out-groups”.

C. Khadka’s (2024) study on group behaviour and social identity aligned with the principles of Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT), illustrating how in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination emerge in times of conflict. As SIT suggests, individuals derive part of their self-concept from group membership, which leads to loyalty to the in-group and hostility toward the out-group. This process explains how collaboration can occur under occupation, as individuals may shift their identity to align with occupying forces, motivated by security, status, or survival. The study supports SIT’s notion of social comparison, where collaborationists justify their actions by viewing the occupying group as superior, and aligns with SCT’s concept of depersonalisation, where

individuals adopt the norms of the dominant group, even at the expense of their personal values.

The role of groupthink and deindividuation

Groupthink, a term coined by social psychologist I. Janis (1972), occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of “mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment”. Groups affected by groupthink ignore alternatives and tend to take irrational actions that dehumanise other groups. A group is especially vulnerable to groupthink when its members are similar in background, when the group is insulated from outside opinions, and when there are no clear rules for decision making.

I. Janis (1972) identified eight symptoms of groupthink. The first is the illusion of invulnerability, which creates excessive optimism and encourages taking extreme risks. Another symptom is collective rationalisation, where group members discount warnings and fail to reconsider their assumptions. The third is the belief in inherent morality, where group members believe in the righteousness of their cause and ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions. Stereotyped views of out-groups is another symptom, where negative perceptions of the enemy make effective responses to conflict seem unnecessary. Additionally, there is direct pressure on dissenters, where members are pressured not to express arguments against the group’s views. Self-censorship occurs when doubts and deviations from the perceived group consensus are not expressed. The illusion of unanimity is another symptom, where the majority’s views and judgments are assumed to be unanimous. Finally, self-appointed “mindguards” protect the group and its leader from information that could be problematic or contradictory to the group’s cohesiveness, views, and decisions.

When the above symptoms exist in a group that is trying to make a decision, there is a reasonable chance that groupthink will happen, although it is not necessarily so. Groupthink occurs when groups are highly cohesive and when they are under considerable pressure to make a quality decision. When pressures for unanimity seem overwhelming, members are less motivated to realistically appraise the alternative courses of action available to them. These group pressures lead to carelessness and irrational thinking since groups experiencing groupthink fail to consider all alternatives and seek to maintain unanimity. Decisions shaped by groupthink have low probability of achieving successful outcomes. I. Janis (1972) studied such groupthink “fiascos” as US failure to anticipate the attack on Pearl Harbor, the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion, the escalation of Vietnam war, and the ill-fated hostage rescue in Iran. The example of groupthink can be seen in decision of the aggressor state management to start the full-scale invasion against Ukraine in 2022, basing on underestimation of the bravery of Ukrainian nation, willingness

of our foreign partners to assist us and also overestimation of the number of collaborationists on the occupied territories (and territories the invaders thought would be occupied in the very first days of invasion).

M. Brown (2022) discussed the psychological mechanisms, including cognitive biases and group dynamics, that influence decision-making during war and conflict. Groupthink can lead to faulty decisions by narrowing the scope of available options and ignoring critical warnings, as seen in historical military failures. This aligns closely with I. Janis's definition of groupthink, where pressures for unanimity lead to a deterioration of critical thinking, and irrational decisions are made, often dehumanising the opposing side. The study emphasised that when groups are cohesive and face high stakes, such as in wartime scenarios, they are particularly vulnerable to these cognitive traps. For instance, I. Janis's identification of symptoms such as the illusion of invulnerability and stereotyped views of out-groups is evident in the decision-making processes that led to the 2022 full invasion of Ukraine, where the aggressor state underestimated the resilience of the Ukrainian nation and the international support they would receive. These factors, compounded by a misjudgement of the collaborationist presence in occupied territories, led to a significant miscalculation, exemplifying the dangers of groupthink in high-pressure, high-stakes situations. This reflects how groupthink's symptoms can distort reality and hinder effective decision-making, especially in military and political contexts.

The concept of deindividuation (Zimbardo, 1969) can explain how anonymity, group pressure, and loss of personal identity in certain situations can lead people to commit actions they would never do individually, as their sense of personal responsibility decreases. It is also worth mentioning that the phenomenon of deindividuation was described long before P. Zimbardo by G. Le Bon (1896), who argued that in a crowd, individual consciousness dissolves, and its place is taken by the "collective soul". People lose their individuality, intellect, and rational thinking, becoming more susceptible to emotions, suggestion, and irrational impulses. The crowd is extremely susceptible to suggestions and uncritically accepts any ideas if they are presented with sufficient force and repetition. Critical thinking is absent. The crowd is intolerant of any doubts or opposition, and its beliefs take the form of dogmas that are not subject to discussion. It tends to obey strong authority. G. Le Bon believed that the crowd always needs a leader who is able to use "affirmation, repetition, and contagion" to influence the masses. Leaders are not necessarily intellectuals but possess a strong will and the ability to influence emotions (Le Bon, 1896).

P.B. Paulus & J.B. Kenworthy (2025) provided insights into how various group dynamics influence deindividuation. The research demonstrated that factors such as group size, density, and the presence of observers

can significantly reduce self-consciousness and lead to disinhibited behaviour, aligning closely with the classical effects of deindividuation described by P. Zimbardo (1969). In line with P. Zimbardo's theory, the study emphasises that anonymity and loss of personal identity in group settings contribute to a diminished sense of personal responsibility, prompting actions individuals might not engage in under normal circumstances. This idea of losing one's individuality in the presence of a group also connects with G. Le Bon's (1896) earlier observations, which suggested that crowds are particularly susceptible to emotional influences and irrational impulses, as the collective "soul" of the group overrides individual rational thinking. G. Le Bon's notion of the crowd's tendency to follow strong authority figured who can manipulate emotions resonates with P.B. Paulus & J.B. Kenworthy's (2025) findings, where increased group cohesion and similarity among members intensify the loss of personal identity, leading to conformity and heightened group influence. These dynamics underscored the powerful role of group pressure in shaping individual behaviours and decisions, particularly when individuals feel less accountable for their actions within a crowd.

Group norms and psychological mechanisms triggering collaborationism correspond with the ones affecting and inspiring resistance against invaders. The most notable mechanisms in triggering initial resistance described by R. Petersen (2001) include resentment formation, threshold-based safety calculations, and focal points. Resentment formation is spurred by group status reversals that occur when the occupying power takes over. Threshold-based safety calculations refer to overall level of opposition in society needed to convince individuals that participation is safe, while status considerations describe the positive social standing and respect individuals can garner by joining the opposition, particularly in its early stages. Finally, focal points encompass cultural and historical symbols that are drawn upon to coordinate and rally popular resistance. Turning to the mechanisms that move individuals from unarmed, unorganised opposition to organised, armed opposition), the role of local community becomes critical. Threshold-based safety calculations are now determined at the community level, and community-level norms of reciprocity are needed to draw individuals into active opposition despite the high risks involved. In order to sustain organised rebellion, threats and irrational psychological mechanisms such as wishful thinking, the tyranny of sunk costs, and the value of small victories help convince individuals to stay the course in spite of high costs. However, when the above-mentioned mechanisms are applied to collaborationism with the enemy, a reflection of these dynamics becomes evident: marginalised ethnic and/or political groups may harbour resentment towards the government of the occupied state, threshold-based safety calculations may favour collaboration with the

enemy, and focal points of the marginalised and oppressed minority can significantly differ from those shared by the loyal majority of the population.

Cognitive dissonance, diffusion of responsibility, and moral disengagement in wartime

Diffusion of responsibility occurs when individuals in a group setting feel less personal accountability for acting, especially in emergencies or morally ambiguous situations. The more people present, the more likely individuals will assume someone else will act, leading to inaction or passive complicity. J. Darley & B. Latané's (1968) study was inspired by the Kitty Genovese murder, where 38 witnesses failed to intervene during a prolonged attack. Their experiments showed that responsibility is psychologically "spread" across the group and social cues from others influence whether a situation is interpreted as requiring action. On the occupied territories it may result in passive complicity of atrocities committed by the occupiers, when individuals don't resist (or even don't admit) war crimes committed by the occupiers, justifying them via psychical constructions of "they just have followed their orders" or "other side was responsible", or even "the victims were punished lawfully". The other side of diffusion of responsibility lies in the direction of above-mentioned S. Milgram's (1963) obedience studies (which J. Darley & B. Latané referenced), where participants inflicted harm under authority, often justifying it by shifting responsibility to the experimenter. When others in group remain silent and passive, individuals interpret the situation as non-critical, reinforcing inaction and normalising collaborationist behaviour.

Y. Ai *et al.* (2024) highlighted how the bystander effect, and consequently diffusion of responsibility, remains prevalent across various helping scenarios, particularly in general assistance situations. The research demonstrated that in these contexts, individuals are less likely to intervene due to the assumption that others will take responsibility. The study also noted that this effect is weakened in extreme or emergency situations, where individuals are more likely to act due to heightened awareness of the urgency and moral responsibility. This aligns with J. Darley & B. Latané's (1968) findings, where the diffusion of responsibility was observed in less critical situations, like the Kitty Genovese murder, where multiple witnesses failed to intervene. The study by Y. Ai *et al.* (2024) further emphasised that in less critical contexts, the presence of others creates a shared responsibility, leading to inaction. However, in high-pressure or urgent situations, individuals are more likely to overcome this diffusion and act.

In the first case, collaborationists may experience dissonance between their moral beliefs and actions (e.g., reporting neighbours, enforcing orders of occupiers, spreading their propaganda). And in attempt to reduce discomfort, they may rationalise their behaviour,

starting to think: "I had no choice" or "I was protecting my family". Post-decision dissonance means that after making a choice to collaborate, individuals may enhance the value of their decision and devalue resistance to justify their choice. For example, those who report their neighbours and acquaintances for participation in resilience or join a collaborationist police force may justify their actions by viewing resistance fighters as dangerous or misguided to reduce internal conflict. Avoidance of contradictory information speaks for itself: collaborationists may avoid news, people, or ideas that challenge their actions, as tis selective exposure helps maintain consonance and protects their self-image.

To some extent previous L. Festinger *et al.* (1956) research regarding the doomsday cult, whose leader's prophecy of flood failed. Instead of abandoning their beliefs, the most committed members intensified their proselytising, seeking social support to reduce dissonance. The same pattern can be seen in those collaborationists on the occupied territories, who continued to collaborate with the occupiers even after the latter withdrew from specific territories and it became obvious that their Blitzkrieg-style full-scale invasion failed. Also, the outcomes of L. Festinger & J.M. Carlsmith (1956) next experiment on forced compliance theory can also be applicable. In this experiment participants were asked to lie about a boring task being enjoyable for \$1 or \$20, and those paid \$1 experienced more dissonance and changed their attitudes to believe the task was fun, because the low reward didn't justify the lie. With some rare exclusions (usually limited to top-rank officials who betrayed the state), nowadays collaborationists do not receive enormous payments or much of glory even in the aggressor state society, while been condemned by their compatriots and punished by Ukrainian law-enforcement agencies and courts. Nevertheless, collaborationists adjust their beliefs to align with their actions when external justification (e.g., coercion or reward) is minimal.

The study of A.-M. Bliuc & D. Muntele-Hendreş (2025) illustrated how, during the ongoing war in Ukraine, individuals create narratives that justify aggression and discrimination, thus reflecting moral disengagement and cognitive adaptation. The study revealed how collaborationists, facing dissonance between their moral beliefs and actions, may rationalise their behaviour to reduce discomfort, such as by convincing themselves that they had no choice or were protecting their families. These self-justifications echo L. Festinger's concept of post-decision dissonance, where after choosing to collaborate, individuals enhance the value of their decision and devalue resistance. Similarly, the avoidance of contradictory information helps collaborationists maintain cognitive consonance by shielding themselves from ideas or facts that challenge their actions. A.-M. Bliuc & D. Muntele-Hendreş's (2025) research provided a contemporary empirical example of how moral disengagement mechanisms operate in wartime, showcasing

how narratives of moral superiority and justification of collaboration parallel L. Festinger's theoretical framework on cognitive dissonance and its role in reducing internal conflict during morally ambiguous situations.

The role of education and group influence under occupation

The criminological theory of differential associations (Sutherland, 1947) is based on the theory of imitation (Tarde, 1892). Unlike G. Le Bon (1896), who focused on the irrationality of the crowd, Tarde emphasised interpersonal interaction and imitation as fundamental elements of social life. Social change and order occur through the diffusion of ideas, beliefs, desires, and habits from one person to another. Imitation can be both conscious and unconscious and often occurs according to the principle of hierarchy: people tend to imitate those whom they perceive as more prestigious, successful, influential, or strong. Tarde distinguished logical imitation, when an individual imitates something that seems logically beneficial or expedient, and non-logical, when imitation occurs without an obvious logical reason, often through emotions or habit (Tarde, 1892). Under occupation, when social norms and structures are destroyed, imitation becomes a key mechanism of adaptation.

People may imitate the behaviour of those who have already started cooperating with the occupying power, especially if this behaviour seems "beneficial" or "safe." This can be imitation of habits (for example, adopting the rules of the occupation administration) as well as deeper ideas (for example, adopting the ideology of the occupiers). G. Tarde (1903) might say that collaborative activity "spreads" through imitation, like a social epidemic. This assumption is based on Tarde's conclusions about the identity of the guilty action of a person and their environment in cases where the environment and the personality of the offender are inseparable (describing what is now called group cohesion). Developing Tarde's ideas, E. Sutherland (1947) developed his own theory of differential associations, which states that a person acquires criminal behaviour not because they have a natural personal inclination, but because they see examples of criminal behaviour in the group to which they belong. Learning criminal behaviour does not occur through mass media or abstract ideas, but through direct communication with other people, and the most significant and effective learning occurs in small groups, such as family, friends, colleagues, neighbours. A person's behaviour is determined by the balance between "definitions" that support breaking the law (positive attitude toward deviant behaviour) and "definitions" that condemn it.

According to N. Djaković & M. Rowlands (2024) the combination of differential associations and personal traits can predict the antisocial behaviour and it can explain why individuals may collaborate with occupying forces. The researchers argued that collaboration

is not merely a result of fear or momentary emotional impulse, but rather the outcome of the social environment in which individuals are embedded. The environment (comprising family, friends, colleagues, or groups supportive of the occupier) can create conditions where deviant behaviour becomes normalised. If definitions that favour collaboration or support the occupying power prevail within one's social circles, individuals may be more likely to adopt those views and engage in collaborative actions.

Collaborationism in this context can be seen as a form of deviant and criminal behaviour from the point of view of national legislation and public morality. However, people are not born collaborators; they learn such deviant behaviour, which means that the tendency to cooperate with occupiers is formed through social interactions and learning, in particular through personal contacts with those who already cooperate with the occupiers, or with the occupiers themselves. These can be conversations with neighbours, relatives, colleagues who have already changed their position, or direct interactions with representatives of the occupation administration. People see how others adapt, what advantages they receive, or what punishments they suffer for disobedience, and this affects their own decision. People not only learn what to do according to the instructions of the occupiers, but also why it is "right" or "justified," that is, they assimilate rationalisations and motivations for such behaviour. Under occupation, the family, closest circle of friends, work collectives, and local communities become key centres where attitudes toward the occupiers are formed. If people appear in these small groups who begin to justify collaborative activity, or even encourage it (for example, through fear or benefit), this significantly increases the likelihood that other members of the group will also be inclined to cooperate.

Under the conditions of Russia's full-scale aggression, accompanied by the occupation of significant parts of Ukraine's territory, all types of collaborationism emerge, shaped by the factors mentioned above. However, this issue takes on particular significance in the context of collaborationism committed by educators. Specifically, as of May 1, 2025, there were 2,537 verdicts issued by courts of first instance and 1,895 verdicts and rulings by appellate courts under Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2001). Of these, 296 verdicts from courts of first instance and 69 verdicts and rulings from appellate courts concerned precisely the collaborationism in educational sphere (Criminal Code of Ukraine, 2001). The substantial number of criminal proceedings initiated against educators underscores the particular relevance of the issue of wartime collaborationism within the educational sector during the Russian-Ukrainian War, thereby necessitating a nuanced and specialised analysis of its underlying dynamics and implications. Thus, according to the preamble of the Law of Ukraine No. 2145-VIII (2017), education

is the basis of the intellectual, spiritual, physical, and cultural development of the individual, their successful socialisation, economic well-being, a guarantee of the development of a society united by common values and culture, and the state. The purpose of education is the comprehensive development of a person as an individual and the highest value of society, their talents, intellectual, creative, and physical abilities, the formation of values and competencies necessary for successful self-realisation, the upbringing of responsible citizens capable of conscious social choice and directing their activities for the benefit of other people and society, enriching on this basis the intellectual, economic, creative, cultural potential of the Ukrainian people, raising the educational level of citizens to ensure the sustainable development of Ukraine and its European choice.

Both elements of the crime of collaborative activity, provided for in Part 3 of Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2001), which the legislator has classified as Section I "Criminal offenses against the foundations of national security," encroach on the foundations of national security precisely through their harm to the above-mentioned tasks of education, and are committed by representatives of a specific group – teachers, whose task, among other things, is to educate citizens of Ukraine as honest and full-fledged subjects of the political process in Ukraine, future voters and candidates for elective positions. It is impossible to overestimate the harm caused both by propaganda in the interests of the aggressor state and by the introduction of educational standards of the aggressor state to a pupil or student who is just forming an idea of the form of government, state structure, and state-legal regime in the country, the rights and duties of a citizen, legal consciousness, and civic identity. In fact, the collaborative activity of teachers encroaches on what ensures the existence of our state over time – the succession and reproduction of generations in the civic and socio-political sense. It is difficult to imagine a problem more relevant to the subject (considering it from any of scientific approaches) of political psychology than this.

CONCLUSIONS

The research confirmed that psychological mechanisms, including groupthink, deindividuation, diffusion of responsibility, and cognitive dissonance, are primary factors motivating individuals to collaborate with occupying forces. Groupthink leads individuals to prioritise group consensus over moral considerations, while deindividuation reduces personal accountability, making collaboration easier.

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Diffusion of responsibility, as seen in the bystander effect, results in inaction or passive complicity, and cognitive dissonance enables individuals to rationalise their collaborationist actions, such as by justifying them as necessary for survival. These mechanisms, in combination with pressures to conform and the desire for social acceptance, illustrate how individuals align with occupying forces, even when it contradicts their prior values or beliefs.

The analysis demonstrated that collaborationism is multifaceted, encompassing involuntary and voluntary forms, as well as servile and ideological motivations. The complex interplay between personal survival, group dynamics, and broader societal influences creates fertile ground for collaborationism, particularly under occupation, when social structures are disrupted. Theories from social psychology, such as deindividuation and diffusion of responsibility, further elucidate how individuals may lose their sense of personal accountability and become more susceptible to group pressures, leading to actions that contradict their prior values and moral beliefs. The research highlighted the role of educators in collaborationism, noting that teachers, as agents of socialisation and civic identity formation, are uniquely positioned to influence the values and beliefs of future generations. Educators who engage in collaborationist activities, either by spreading occupier-imposed propaganda or adopting educational standards of the aggressor state, contribute to undermining national security and societal continuity. This underscores the need for a targeted politico-psychological approach to understanding and addressing the factors driving collaborationism among educators, whose influence extends far beyond the immediate context of occupation.

The study of wartime collaborationism through the lens of political psychology not only deepened understanding of human behaviour in extreme conditions but also provided practical guidance for safeguarding democratic values and national integrity in times of crisis. Future research should focus on examining the long-term psychological impact of collaborationism on individuals' moral recovery and identity reconstruction after conflict.

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Колабораційна діяльність як предмет політико-психологічного дослідження: теоретичні підходи

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Анотація. Проблема колабораціонізму під час війни залишається нагальною, особливо в контексті сучасних конфліктів, таких як війна Росії проти України. Розуміння психологічних і соціальних механізмів, які призводять до співпраці з окупаційними силами, є ключовим для запобігання таким явищам у майбутньому. Метою дослідження було вивчення феномену колабораціонізму через призму політичної та соціальної психології, а також розробка рекомендацій для попередження колабораціонізму та постконфліктної реабілітації. Дослідження застосувало міждисциплінарний підхід, поєднуючи теоретичні рамки та емпіричні дослідження з психології, кримінології, права та історії для аналізу різних форм колабораціонізму та механізмів, що до них призводять. Аналіз включав ключові психологічні концепції, такі як конформізм, підкорення, групове мислення, деіндивідуація, соціальна ідентичність, дифузія відповідальності, когнітивний дисонанс і диференціальна асоціація, для пояснення того, як індивіди та групи під окупацією можуть почати співпрацювати з ворогом, часто всупереч своїм попереднім цінностям чи інтересам. Особлива увага була приділена ролі освітян, чия колабораційна діяльність може підірвати національну безпеку та безперервність громадянської ідентичності. У статті розглянуто механізми, за допомогою яких групова динаміка, авторитет і соціальне навчання сприяють колабораціоністській поведінці, зокрема в контексті триваючої російсько-української війни, що демонструє, як такі явища можуть інституціоналізуватися в окупованих суспільствах. Результати цього дослідження можуть бути використані фахівцями в галузях психології, права та безпеки для розробки стратегій запобігання колабораціонізму та підтримки постконфліктного примирення.

Ключові слова: групове мислення; конформізм; деіндивідуація; соціальна ідентичність; когнітивний дисонанс; розсіювання відповідальності; диференціальна асоціація

Pragmatic markers as a means of implementing strategies of linguistic influence in political debates

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Abstract. The relevance of the topic is determined by the growing significance of political communication in public life, the intensification of information flows, and the need to identify linguistic mechanisms that enable political actors to create argumentative appeal, construct emotionally charged messages, and influence the interpretive frameworks of the audience. The aim of the article was to determine the functional potential of pragmatic markers and to clarify their role in implementing strategies of persuasion, manipulation, discursive positioning, and the regulation of communicative interaction within debate discourse. The methodological basis of the study included the method of pragmatic analysis, discourse and contextual methods, as well as elements of quantitative analysis, which made it possible to establish the frequency of use, typical positions within the structure of an utterance, and the functional load of different groups of markers. This approach enabled the identification of correlations between linguistic form and the speaker's pragmatic intentions, as well as the determination of strategies in which pragmatic markers are most effective. The results of the study demonstrated that pragmatic markers perform a multifunctional role in political debates: they structure utterances, guide the audience's attention, shape the emotional background, strengthen or soften arguments, ensure the expression of confidence or doubt, contribute to establishing and maintaining contact, and help politicians construct and reproduce their desired public image. The most effective groups of markers include modal, intensifying, contact, and positioning markers, which allow the optimisation of persuasive influence and ensure the achievement of communicative goals. The practical value of the research lies in the possibility of applying the results to the training of political communicators, improving the quality of political discourse analysis, optimising debate strategies, and developing educational courses in political linguistics, rhetoric, and strategic communication

Keywords: pragmatic intensifiers; discursive positioning; political argumentation; communicative influence strategies; markers of emotional modality; regulators of debate interaction; strategic meaning construction

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INTRODUCTION

In an environment of heightened media polarisation and real-time audience engagement, politicians increasingly rely on modal expressions, parenthetical constructions, and metadiscursive markers to manage interaction, frame arguments, and subtly guide audience interpretation. In linguistic discourse, the issue of pragmatic markers in political communication has attracted significant attention from researchers due to their powerful influence on argumentation structure, management of the emotional frame, and construction of political identity. The growth of informational competitiveness, the spread of social media, and the polarisation of public debates have prompted linguists and political scientists to study micro-linguistic tools that subtly but deliberately affect audience perception. In particular, the issue of manipulation through pragmatic markers such as modal particles, parenthetical expressions, and metadiscursive constructions has been studied across different contexts by I. Nedainova (2023), V. Kuchinska (2023), O. Mazepova & V. Sobora (2024).

For instance, I. Nedainova (2023) analysed how modal, intensification, and parenthetical markers are used by political actors to manage audience perception, emphasising their function in constructing an image of power and authority. The author highlighted that markers serve as a tool for indirect control over the communicative process and allow politicians to influence audience interpretative frameworks, enhancing the effectiveness of persuasion strategies. V. Kuchinska (2023) examined the specific use of pragmatic markers in debates and public speeches, demonstrating that intensification and positioning markers enable politicians to strengthen arguments and regulate the emotional perception of the audience. V. Kuchinska (2023) emphasised that the strategic use of markers reflects individual rhetorical styles and cultural features of political discourse in Spain. O. Mazepova & V. Sobora (2024) examined the communicative-pragmatic parameters of military-political discourse and demonstrated how markers shape the perception of events in debates and media. The scientists demonstrated that markers perform multifunctional roles: structuring utterances, regulating audience attention, creating an emotional tone, and supporting the speaker's positioning within the discourse.

Another aspect is the role of discursive positioning and "stance markers" in manipulative communication, which is confirmed by analyses of contemporary Ukrainian political discourse. Y. Maslova (2025) highlighted the cognitive-pragmatic mechanisms of intertextuality in newspaper discourse during wartime. The researcher emphasised the cognitive-pragmatic aspect of marker usage in crisis-period discourse. The scholar showed that pragmatic markers contribute to the formation of polarised narratives and help speakers convey a desired image in the media while simultaneously influencing

the interpretation and emotional perception of messages by the audience. L. Pavlychenko (2022) analysed media discourse and highlights that pragmatic markers are important instruments for polarising opinions, providing emotional coloring to messages, and forming strategies of influence on public opinion during wartime. The author showed that contextual and social factors determine the effectiveness of markers in media discourse. V. Paliadnik (2024) examined the use of pragmatic markers in online debates and public speeches of political parties. The researcher noted that markers play a strategic role in establishing communicative advantage, maintaining audience interaction, and guiding message interpretation in new media, enabling political actors to effectively implement strategies of speech influence.

Despite numerous works, a systematic approach to studying pragmatic markers specifically in the context of speech influence strategies in political debates remains insufficiently developed. The aim of this research was a thorough analysis of the functional potential of these markers and their role in forming strategies of persuasion, manipulation, discursive positioning, and regulation of interaction in debate speech. The scientific novelty lies in the integration of pragmatic, discursive, and quantitative approaches, the empirical analysis of an actual corpus of political debates, and the classification of pragmatic markers according to their strategic functions of influence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study of pragmatic markers as a means of implementing strategies of speech influence in political debates was conducted using an extensive, comprehensive, and multi-level methodological framework that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to discourse analysis. This approach was specifically designed to ensure the objectivity, reliability, reproducibility, and representativeness of the obtained results, while simultaneously capturing the intricate mechanisms through which pragmatic markers function in real-life political discourse. The empirical base of the study consisted of a carefully curated sample of debates conducted between 2022 and 2025, both in Ukraine and abroad. The selection criteria included the political relevance of the debate topics, the number and diversity of participants, the availability of complete verbal transcripts, the feasibility of transcription and coding, and the accessibility of contextual information regarding audience composition and communicative environment. The dataset incorporated debates involving a wide array of political actors, from state representatives to non-state actors, and covered different ideological and stylistic orientations, thereby capturing the full heterogeneity of political communication styles, argumentation strategies, and rhetorical preferences. To ensure methodological rigor and the comparability

of data, all debate recordings were systematically transcribed following established transcription protocols, which accounted for intonation, pauses, speech tempo, emphasis, and other prosodic features. This approach allowed for a nuanced analysis of the functional and strategic role of pragmatic markers in discourse.

The classification of markers included several functional categories: modal markers, which express certainty, doubt, possibility, or necessity of action and influence audience evaluation of arguments; intensification markers, which amplify or attenuate arguments, highlight critical points, and modulate emotional engagement; contact markers, which facilitate the establishment and maintenance of interaction with the audience, promote engagement, and regulate the dynamics of discourse; positioning markers, which indicate the speaker's attitude toward topics, events, or interlocutors, contributing to strategic self-representation and alignment within political debate; and emotionally colored markers, which modulate the overall affective tone of discourse and influence audience interpretation, contributing to the construction of a desired political image and reinforcing persuasive impact (Nedainova, 2023; Kuchinska, 2023). The methodological framework was designed as a multi-pronged analytical system, combining pragmatic, discourse, and content analysis. Pragmatic analysis was employed to identify the functional roles of markers in situ, establishing the connections between linguistic forms, communicative intentions, and strategic goals. It enabled the examination of how markers implement strategies of persuasion, manipulation, and the regulation of communicative dynamics. Discourse analysis provided tools for exploring the logical organization of utterances, the sequencing of arguments and counterarguments, the identification of recurring discursive patterns, and the mapping of strategies of speaker positioning. Contextual analysis allowed the researchers to evaluate how marker effectiveness depends on social and communicative variables, such as speaker status, audience characteristics, genre, medium, and situational conditions (Mazepova & Sobora, 2024; Maslova, 2025). Quantitative content analysis complemented the qualitative investigation by providing empirical data on the frequency, distribution, and functional roles of markers across debates. Each marker was coded according to type, subtype, position within utterances, and functional significance. Additional coding procedures included normalisation of variations, accounting for synonymous forms, and thematic categorisation across debate segments. This approach made it possible to identify recurrent usage patterns, evaluate the relative effectiveness of different marker types, and examine correlations between marker deployment and specific persuasive or manipulative strategies (Mazepova & Sobora, 2024; Paliadnik, 2024). To enhance reliability and ensure replicability, a two-stage verification process was implemented. Initially, two

independent researchers analysed the same debate transcripts, followed by a collaborative reconciliation of discrepancies and consensus building on marker classification and functional assignments. The second stage involved inter-researcher calibration of coding criteria and harmonisation of analytical procedures, standardising methodological approaches and minimising subjective biases, thereby reinforcing data integrity. Special emphasis was placed on the strategic classification of markers. To ensure systematic analysis, the researchers developed comprehensive coding tables, where markers were catalogued by type, subtype, position, functional role, and contextual features. These tables allowed for the tracking of patterns across diverse debate formats, facilitating both qualitative interpretations and quantitative statistical analysis. This methodological rigor provides a template for replicable studies, enabling future researchers to apply the same procedures for the analysis of pragmatic markers in political discourse, multimodal formats, crisis communication, and strategic political rhetoric. Overall, the multi-level methodological approach adopted in this study represents a robust and replicable model for investigating the complex functions of pragmatic markers in political debates. By integrating qualitative insights, quantitative validation, discourse-structural mapping, and contextual analysis, the study provides a thorough, nuanced, and empirically grounded understanding of how pragmatic markers operate as instruments of speech influence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that the transcription process was methodologically rigorous, capturing not only verbatim speech but also crucial paralinguistic features such as intonation, pause duration, stress, and speech tempo. The markers were classified into distinct categories: modal, intensification, contact, positioning, and emotionally colored. Each type of marker was found to play an important role in shaping strategies of persuasion, manipulation, discursive positioning, audience engagement, and the regulation of interactive dynamics during debates. The analysis revealed that pragmatic markers play a systematic and multifunctional role in the implementation of speech influence strategies in political debates, affecting both the structural organization of discourse and the regulation of interaction with audiences. Across the analysed corpus of political debates pragmatic markers consistently functioned as strategic instruments for shaping argumentation, managing audience attention, and constructing speaker positioning in real-time communicative contexts.

Modal markers were found to be central in shaping audience perception of speaker credibility and authority. Their use enabled speakers to signal varying degrees of certainty, probability, obligation, or necessity, thereby guiding audience interpretation of political arguments. In confrontational segments of debates, modal

markers were frequently employed to assert epistemic dominance, whereas in explanatory or justificatory segments they functioned to mitigate categorical claims and present positions as reasonable or inevitable (Tannen, 2007). For instance, modal markers were frequently used to shape argumentation and signal varying degrees of certainty or necessity. A prime example of this is found in the statement, “We must act now to combat climate change”, where the modal marker “must” emphasises urgency and authority, positioning the speaker as an authoritative figure and guiding the audience toward interpreting the argument as not only necessary but inevitable. Similarly, intensification markers, such as “absolutely” in the phrase “This is absolutely crucial for our future”, were used to amplify key points, intensify the persuasive force, and reinforce the emotional impact of the argument (Furko, 2017).

Intensification markers demonstrated a significant role in regulating the persuasive force and emotional salience of arguments. These markers were used to amplify key points, emphasise evaluative judgments, or, conversely, to soften potentially controversial claims. The analysis showed that intensification markers often co-occurred with modal markers, producing a cumulative effect that enhanced both argumentative strength and emotional engagement. Markers such as “extremely” and “absolutely” are frequently used to reinforce the strength of an argument, making the speaker’s position appear more convincing (Carter & McCarthy, 2006). For example, in a political debate, a speaker might say, “This is extremely important for our nation’s future,” with “extremely” intensifying the perceived importance of the issue. Similarly, “I am absolutely certain that this policy will lead to prosperity” uses “absolutely” to stress the speaker’s unwavering confidence and to enhance the emotional intensity of the claim. Conversely, markers like “perhaps” or “maybe” serve to soften statements, mitigating their assertiveness and reducing confrontation. For instance, “Perhaps we should consider revising this policy to avoid unforeseen consequences” uses “perhaps” to introduce a degree of uncertainty, making the statement less categorical and more diplomatic. In some cases, intensification markers work in tandem with modal markers, creating a cumulative effect that strengthens both the emotional appeal and the argumentative structure. For example, “This decision is absolutely crucial for the success of the program” combines the intensifying function of “absolutely” with the modal certainty of “crucial”, creating a statement that is both emotionally charged and logically firm. Contact markers were identified as primary tools for maintaining interactional dynamics and audience involvement. Their use increased during moments of audience address, topic transitions, and rhetorical appeals, contributing to the maintenance of attention and responsiveness. In digitally mediated debates, contact markers appeared particularly salient, compensating for reduced physical

co-presence and reinforcing perceived communicative proximity (Surtikanti *et al.*, 2023).

Positioning markers functioned as indicators of speaker stance and relational alignment within the debate. These markers were instrumental in constructing political identity, delineating in-group and out-group boundaries, and negotiating alignment or opposition toward interlocutors. The findings indicate that positioning markers frequently operated in combination with evaluative and modal elements, reinforcing strategic self-representation and discursive role allocation. These markers were often deployed to negotiate alignment or opposition toward interlocutors, and they frequently co-occurred with evaluative and modal elements, reinforcing strategic selfrepresentation and discursive role allocation. Such effects of stance and positioning in political rhetoric are well attested in discourse research, where positioning mechanisms are shown to be central to how political actors situate themselves, their parties, and their opponents in relation to audiences and ideological frameworks. For example, phrases like “We, the people” or “Our party will stand firm” reflect not only group identity but also convey the speaker’s positioning vis-à-vis others in the debate. These markers were frequently deployed to establish solidarity or assert authority, and were linked to persuasion strategies intended to shape audience perceptions of the speaker’s credibility and political affiliation.

Emotionally colored markers are shown to shape the affective dimension of political discourse, influencing audience emotional responses and interpretative framing. Their use contributed to the construction of a desired political persona and to the modulation of emotional climate within debates. These markers were particularly prominent in segments addressing socially sensitive or value-laden topics. These markers are frequently used to craft a desired political persona and to regulate the emotional climate within debates, enhancing the persuasive impact of the speaker. For instance, emotionally charged phrases such as “This is a tragic failure” or “We cannot allow this injustice to continue” were utilised to evoke strong emotional reactions from the audience, reinforcing the speaker’s stance while appealing to emotions like anger, empathy, or urgency. For instance, political figures often employ fear-inducing language in debates on immigration, using phrases like “we must protect our families from these dangerous threats” to align the audience’s emotions with their political objectives. Such markers help shape both emotional perception and interpretive understanding of complex political issues, furthering the speaker’s persuasive agenda (Charteris-Black, 2011).

Discourse-level analysis revealed that pragmatic markers significantly contribute to coherence, cohesion, and the rhythmic organization of political debate (Chilton, 2004). Beyond structuring arguments and sequencing reasoning, markers regulated the flow of

discourse and mediated audience alignment with the speaker's intended message. The same marker was observed to perform different functions depending on its placement within the utterance, the surrounding linguistic environment, and accompanying paralinguistic features, underscoring the non-linear and context-dependent nature of pragmatic influence. A key result of the study is the identification of a synergistic effect arising from the interaction of different marker types. Modal, intensification, and positioning markers emerged as primary instruments of strategic influence, while contact and emotionally colored markers functioned as facilitators of interaction and moderators of emotional climate. Their combined use enhanced persuasive effectiveness and enabled speakers to maintain control over debate dynamics.

The findings confirm that pragmatic markers function as linguistic micro-strategies through which political actors achieve macro-level communicative goals, including persuasion, audience alignment, emotional framing, and identity construction. The study also highlighted that the same marker can perform different functions depending on its placement, surrounding linguistic environment, and interaction with other paralinguistic cues, underscoring the non-linear and multi-dimensional nature of pragmatic influence in political communication. Comparison with prior research confirms and extends existing knowledge on the strategic functions of pragmatic markers. I. Nedainova (2023) emphasised the capacity of modal and intensification markers to simultaneously regulate speaker authority and audience emotional perception, corroborating the multifunctional effects identified in this study. V. Kuchinska (2023) and O. Mazepova & V. Sobora (2024) highlighted the importance of contact and positioning markers in sustaining audience engagement and implementing persuasion strategies, which aligns with the present findings across various genres and platforms. Y. Maslova (2025) illustrated the influence of stance markers in shaping interpretation and aligning audience response, supporting the contextualised analysis presented in this study. V. Paliadnik (2024) emphasised the mediating role of platform and delivery format in marker effectiveness, reaffirming the necessity of integrating technological, social, and contextual dimensions in understanding pragmatic influence. The study demonstrated that pragmatic markers serve a dual and complementary function: they provide structural and logical organization of arguments, ensure the coherence and intelligibility of discourse, and simultaneously regulate cognitive and emotional reception, allowing speakers to craft persuasive messages, shape audience attitudes, and project desired identities.

Scholars such as A. Partington *et al.* (2024) emphasised the interactional nature of these markers, suggesting that they are not only used to convey content but to manage audience expectations and align the

speaker with a particular stance. This supports findings in the present study, where the use of markers such as "must" or "absolutely" helps position speakers as authoritative figures, enhancing their persuasive power. Moreover, S. Statham (2022) and R. Iqbal *et al.* (2025) contributed valuable frameworks for understanding how markers play into broader power dynamics. They argued that discourse markers, especially those related to emotional engagement and positioning, are tools through which political figures can shape power relations, framing their arguments in ways that reinforce their own authority and align their audience with their political agenda. These markers are not only used to reinforce certainty or authority but also to soften or intensify claims, allowing speakers to navigate the complexity of contentious political issues. For instance, the use of "perhaps" or "maybe" can soften an otherwise confrontational statement, whereas "absolutely" or "extremely" can amplify the emotional salience of an argument. Further, the study by Y. Fu (2024) on the use of contrastive markers in British political interviews provided a nuanced understanding of how markers like "but" frame argumentation. While Y. Fu (2024) focused on the role of contrastive markers in defining opposing viewpoints, this study emphasised the integration of positioning markers with evaluative and intensification markers to build a cohesive political identity and emotional connection with the audience.

S. Alghazo *et al.* (2025) focused on how markers contribute to the coherence and logical flow of discourse, which is crucial for making arguments persuasive. R. Hayik (2025) added a layer of complexity by examining how these markers help construct political identity, enabling speakers to build a connection with their audience. Q. Al-Azzawi *et al.* (2022) extended this by exploring how intensifying and modality markers can be used for manipulation, creating emotional tension that strengthens political arguments. Finally, S. Qaiwer & B. Kazemian (2025) explored the role of metadiscourse markers in political speeches, showing how these markers help in the persuasive structuring of political discourse. They focused particularly on how speakers use metadiscourse to frame arguments and engage with the audience. The present study agrees with this perspective, particularly in the way emotionally colored markers serve to establish emotional rapport and regulate audience interpretation. However, the present study expands upon this by showing that pragmatic markers also serve a dual role, functioning both to organise arguments and to regulate emotional reception, thereby creating a more complex strategic tool for political speakers. Modal, intensification, and positioning markers emerged as primary instruments for strategic influence, whereas contact and emotionally colored markers functioned as facilitators of interaction and moderators of emotional climate. Importantly, the analysis revealed that the interplay between these markers creates

synergistic effects, enhancing both persuasiveness and the ability to maintain control over debate dynamics. These findings provided valuable insights into the intricate mechanisms by which political actors manage argumentation, audience attention, emotional framing, and identity construction within real-time debate environments.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research on pragmatic markers in political debates provided a comprehensive understanding of their functional role as instruments for the implementation of speech influence strategies and established their multi-layered effectiveness across different genres and communicative contexts. The analysis revealed that pragmatic markers perform structural, cognitive, and emotional functions simultaneously, ensuring the logical organization of argumentation, highlighting key points, maintaining coherence of statements, regulating interaction with audiences, and shaping the emotional tone of messages. Furthermore, these markers actively influence audience perception of political positions, allowing political actors to model information interpretation, emphasise their stance, and create a desired public image, confirming their strategic significance for communicative control and political positioning.

Within the classification of markers, it was found that each group performs specific functions. Modal markers ensure the demonstration of certainty, doubt, probability, or necessity of actions, thereby shaping argument persuasiveness, regulating audience perception of speaker competence and authority. Intensification markers amplify or soften arguments, modulate the emotional tone of statements, and draw attention to critical points, enabling speakers to achieve strategic

emotional manipulation of audiences. Contact markers serve as a means to establish and maintain interaction with the audience, activate audience engagement, regulate the dynamics of discussions, and create a sense of direct communication, which is especially important in interactive online debates and public speeches. Positioning markers demonstrate the speaker's attitude toward the topic, interlocutors, or political events, contribute to strategic discursive positioning, and facilitate the construction of speaker identity within the debate arena. Emotionally charged markers form the overall tone of the discourse, influence audience interpretation, and ensure emotional engagement, supporting a coherent emotional image of the politician and enhancing the effectiveness of speech influence strategies. The findings contribute to theoretical advancements in political linguistics, enhance understanding of persuasive communication strategies, and offer a foundation for practical applications in political training, media analysis, and the development of effective public discourse strategies. The prospects for further research lie in a deeper exploration of the interaction between different types of pragmatic markers in the context of various political cultures and social groups, as well as studying their influence on the formation of political narratives in new media.

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Прагматичні маркери як засіб реалізації стратегій мовленнєвого впливу в політичних дебатах

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Анотація. Актуальність теми зумовлена зростанням значення політичної комунікації у суспільному житті, інтенсифікацією інформаційних потоків та потребою у виявленні мовних механізмів, які дозволяють політичним акторам формувати аргументативну привабливість, конструювати емоційно забарвлені повідомлення та впливати на інтерпретаційні рамки аудиторії. Метою статті було визначення функціонального потенціалу прагматичних маркерів і з'ясування їхньої ролі в реалізації стратегій переконання, маніпулювання, дискурсивного позиціонування та регулювання комунікативної взаємодії у межах дебатного дискурсу. Методологічну основу дослідження становили метод прагматичного аналізу, дискурсивний і контекстуальний методи, а також елементи кількісного аналізу, що забезпечили можливість встановити частотність використання, типові позиції в структурі висловлення та функціональні навантаження різних груп маркерів. Такий підхід дав змогу простежити взаємозв'язок між мовною формою та прагматичними намірами мовця, а також визначити стратегії, у яких прагматичні маркери є найбільш ефективними. Результати дослідження засвідчили, що прагматичні маркери виконують багатофункціональну роль у політичних дебатах: вони структурують висловлення, керують увагою аудиторії, формують емоційний фон, посилюють або пом'якшують аргументи, забезпечують демонстрацію впевненості чи сумніву, сприяють встановленню та підтриманню контакту, а також допомагають політикам формувати та відтворювати бажаний образ. Найефективнішими виявилися модальні, інтенсифікаційні, контактні та маркери позиціонування, які дозволяють оптимізувати процес впливу та забезпечити досягнення комунікативних цілей. Практична цінність полягає у можливості застосування отриманих результатів у підготовці політичних комунікаторів, поліпшенні якості аналітики політичного дискурсу, оптимізації дебатних стратегій, а також у створенні навчальних курсів із політичної лінгвістики, риторики та стратегічних комунікацій.

Ключові слова: прагматичні інтенсифікатори; дискурсивне позиціонування; політична аргументація; комунікативні стратегії впливу; маркери емоційної модальності; регулятори дебатної взаємодії; стратегічне конструювання смислів

(Self)regulation of psychoemotional state among university students

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Abstract. The research relevance is determined by the need to examine the impact of student employment on their psychoemotional state and self-regulation effectiveness during wartime, as this facilitates the identification of differences in anxiety, stress, and well-being levels between employed and unemployed students. The study aimed to empirically explore the psychoemotional state of students by comparing two categories of students – those who are employed and those who combine work with study. Empirical data were collected using the Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale (MAS), the Diener's Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), and a survey to collect information essential for interpreting the results. The study determined that employed students have higher levels of anxiety (mean value $M = 33.31$), but more diverse individual indicators of this condition. Their average scores for mental well-being ($M = 33.90$) and subjective well-being ($M = 21.81$) are slightly higher than those of unemployed students ($M = 30.30$ and $M = 19.70$, respectively), although the latter are better at managing stress (PSS: $M = 21.25$ for unemployed students and $M = 23.31$ for employed students). Employed students were more prone to higher stress levels but regulated their psychoemotional state more effectively. Overall, despite increased stress, they demonstrated higher levels of mental well-being, life satisfaction, and lower anxiety levels. The research also showed that employed students, despite higher stress levels, had more developed self-organisation and adaptation skills for the learning process. This suggested the relevance of developing stress resilience strategies and psychoemotional self-regulation to support their well-being. The conducted study provides a comprehensive assessment of psychoemotional state among students depending on employment and reveals both potential risks associated with overload and more effective self-regulation of their psychoemotional state

Keywords: student employment; anxiety; stress; mental well-being; stress resilience strategies

INTRODUCTION

The research relevance is determined by the growing number of students combining studies with employment in wartime conditions, which creates an additional burden on their psycho-emotional state. Students

experience numerous stress factors, including anxiety, emotional instability, and physical fatigue, which can affect their ability to study and their overall well-being. In a state of martial law, when social and economic

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challenges are intensifying, it is necessary to determine how employment affects students' levels of stress, anxiety, and mental well-being. Determination of these factors will help identify potential risks to students' psycho-emotional stability and develop effective support strategies to improve their adaptation to learning and professional training conditions during difficult periods.

As stated by I. Vasylenko (2013), psycho-emotional state is a holistic characteristic of the emotional side of mental activity, reflecting the dynamics of emotional processes depending on the perception of events and the experience of previous experiences. This state combines short-term emotional reactions and long-term moods, forming a picture of emotional and cognitive well-being. This opinion was confirmed by A. Podhorna & O. Tserkovna (2024), arguing that the psycho-emotional state is an integral characteristic that reflects the emotional, cognitive and behavioural functioning of the personality in response to external or internal stimuli. This state depends on the interaction of past experiences, current emotional experiences and cognitive assessments, which can be used to assess the level of adaptation and psychological balance of an individual. Physiological changes, such as rapid heartbeat or high blood pressure, occur under the influence of emotions that mobilise the body to overcome stress. According to observations by N. Morochylo & H. Sereda (2020), physical well-being is also a significant indicator of an optimal psycho-emotional state. The researchers noted that students who take care of their health, follow a balanced diet and engage in physical activity cope better with stressful situations. Well-being affects the overall energy level and ability to adapt to external changes, ensuring the harmonious functioning of the body. Chronic stress caused by academic overload, lack of time, or pressure from peers also negatively affects academic performance. It leads to decreased concentration, impaired memory, and reduced logical thinking skills. Fatigue and emotional burnout cause a decrease in motivation, which leads to students losing interest in learning and performing worse.

T. Tsyhanchuk (2017) noted that the psycho-emotional state is multidimensional and includes several interrelated components. The emotional component includes short-term or long-term emotional experiences that determine the overall emotional background. The cognitive component covers the processes of assessing and responding to situations that affect emotions and the choice of adaptation strategies, particularly in conditions of educational stress. The behavioural component manifests itself through external manifestations of emotions, such as facial expressions or gestures, and can influence the response of others. In addition, physical activity can help reduce the intensity of the psycho-emotional state. Thus, the psycho-emotional state is a complex structure in which emotional, cognitive, behavioural and motivational components interact to

form the overall emotional state of the individual. According to I. Serohina (2010), educational activities are accompanied by numerous stressors that significantly affect their psycho-emotional state. One of the most common sources of stress is a heavy academic workload and high demands. The large volume of tasks, the complexity of disciplines, and the need to complete several projects simultaneously within specified deadlines cause fatigue and emotional tension. The researcher emphasises that exam and test periods, when students are required to demonstrate their knowledge within strict time frames, are particularly stressful. Fear of failure is also a significant stressor. Many students stress about the possibility of receiving a low grade, which could affect their academic standing or scholarship. Such stress is often accompanied by doubts regarding personal abilities and lower self-esteem, especially if they constantly compare themselves to their peers or face high expectations from their teachers.

A common cause of stress is a lack of time due to large amounts of study material and combining studies with other activities, such as employment. A lack of time management skills only exacerbates the situation, leading to fatigue and chronic stress. V. Kyselov & D. Balashov (2023) confirmed that social interactions in the student environment can also be challenging. Competition within the group, communication difficulties, and conflicts with classmates or teachers create additional psycho-emotional tension. For many students, especially first-year students, adapting to a new environment becomes a significant stressor, as the transition to university life, unfamiliar conditions, new rules of behaviour, and the loss of familiar support from loved ones cause difficulties in adjustment, which, according to M. Shpak (2021), is exacerbated by financial problems. Many students are forced to support themselves, which adds to their anxiety due to the need to find a job or combine it with their studies. At the same time, there is still insufficient research into students' experiences as reflected in their psycho-emotional state, as well as the possibilities and effectiveness of their (self-)regulation. Therefore, the study aimed to conduct an empirical analysis of the psycho-emotional state of students, comparing the psycho-emotional characteristics of unemployed students and those who combine study with employment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study covered students aged 16 to 35 who are enrolled in full-time and part-time programmes, including 75 women and 15 men. In terms of employment, most respondents combine study with work (70 people), while 20 students are not employed. Among those who work, 51.43% are employed full-time and 48.57% are employed part-time, indicating a significant workload and the need for effective time management between academic and professional responsibilities. To measure

the level of anxiety among students, J. Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale (MAS) (Kokun *et al.*, 2011) was used, which can be used to assess the intensity of anxiety reactions. Each respondent answered 20 questions concerning various aspects of anxiety, such as the presence of worries, physical symptoms of anxiety, tension, etc. Each answer had a certain score corresponding to the degree of anxiety on a scale from 0 to 3. For each respondent, the scores for all questions were summed up, which provided a total anxiety score for each person. Based on the scores obtained, the level of anxiety (low, medium or high) was determined. Next, the results of the group were compared between employed and unemployed students using Mann-Whitney's U-test, which was used to verify the statistical significance of the difference in anxiety levels between the two groups. To assess the level of subjective well-being of students, the following was used.

The E. Diener's Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Olefir & Bosnyuk, 2024) was used, which consists of five questions assessing the level of satisfaction with life in general. Participants rated each question on a 7-point scale, where 1 was "completely dissatisfied" and 7 was "completely satisfied". The scores for all five questions were added up to provide an overall result for each respondent. The average value for each group was calculated for further comparison of the level of life satisfaction between employed and unemployed students. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Veldbrekht & Tavrovetska, 2022) was used to assess the intensity of stressful experiences over the past month. It consists of 10 questions that assess how often respondents felt stress, tension, or felt in control of their situation. For each question, respondents rated their experiences on a scale from 0 (never) to 4 (very often). The total score was obtained by summing the ratings for all questions. The higher the score, the higher the level of perceived stress. To analyse the results, the average scores for employed and unemployed students were compared, and Mann-Whitney's U test was used to determine the statistical significance of the differences between the groups.

To measure students' mental well-being, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) (Hudimova, 2021) was used, consisting of 14 questions that assess the emotional and psychological state of respondents. Each question was rated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "never" and 5 is "always". The total score for each respondent was obtained by summing the scores for all questions, after which the average value for each group of students was calculated. A comparison of the average values revealed differences in the level of mental well-being between employed and unemployed students. In addition to these tools, a questionnaire was conducted to collect additional information, which determined the age, course of study, and employment status of students. This formed a complete picture that incorporates not only stress factors but also the

general socio-economic context of the participants. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the results between groups, as the data did not follow a normal distribution. This method was used to compare two independent samples by medians and determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between them. The significance level (p-value) was determined for each of the compared scales: anxiety, subjective well-being, perceived stress, and mental well-being. A threshold of $p < 0.05$ was used to determine statistical significance. The study was conducted following the ethical principles described by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research (1979).

RESULTS

The diagrams showing the distribution of anxiety levels according to the Taylor Scale demonstrate clear differences between the two groups of students – employed and unemployed. The average anxiety level among employed students ($M = 33.31$) is higher than among unemployed students ($M = 29.25$), which may indicate a more pronounced level of anxiety among those who combine study with employment. The diagrams show that the distribution of anxiety scores among employed students is skewed towards higher scores, confirming the general trend towards increased anxiety in this group. Visual analysis of the diagrams shows that employed students' anxiety scores more often exceed 30 points, with the maximum frequency falling within the 30-40-point range. A slightly different picture is observed among unemployed students – the largest number of anxiety scores are in the range of 25-35 points, indicating a generally lower level of anxiety in this group. It is also worth noting that the distribution among unemployed students appears more symmetrical, while employed students show greater variability in scores (Fig. 1). The average scores also suggest that employment may be one of the factors influencing anxiety levels among students. Visual analysis of the graphs confirms that the higher anxiety levels among employed students are not accidental – this trend is evident in the form of a rightward shift in the distribution. The results also show that employed students have more diverse individual anxiety levels, while unemployed students have a more uniform distribution. Identification of differences in anxiety levels between employed and unemployed students is substantial for the determination of the psycho-emotional state of young people in the context of contemporary socio-economic challenges. The results indicate that the need to combine study with employment may be a factor that increases anxiety levels, as employed students are more likely to face additional physical and emotional stress, time constraints and responsibilities in both their academic and professional activities. The results of the comparative analysis showed that the

average rank for employed students (group 1, N = 70) is 48.46, while for unemployed students (group 2, N = 20) it is 35.13. Thus, employed students have higher levels of anxiety than their unemployed peers. The

Mann-Whitney U-test is 492.5, the Z-statistic is -2.017, and the significance level (p-value) is 0.044. Since $p < 0.05$, it is possible to argue that the difference between the groups is statistically significant.

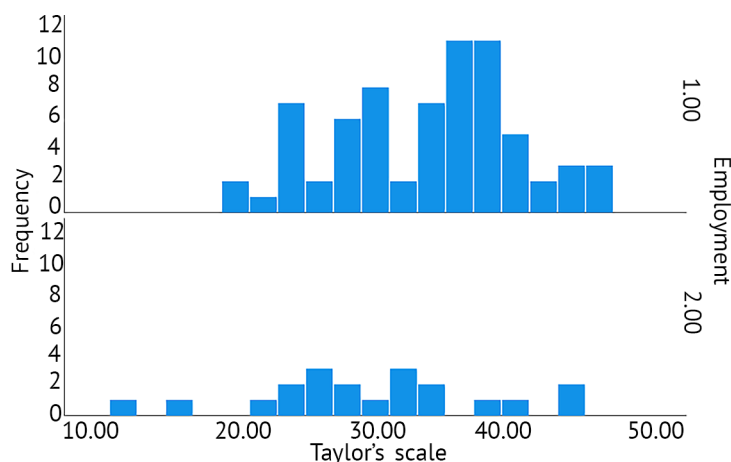


Figure 1. Distribution of anxiety levels based on J. Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale among employed and unemployed students

Source: compiled by the authors

A graphical representation of students' subjective well-being levels using E. Diener's methodology shows certain differences between employed and unemployed students, which may reflect the characteristics of their lifestyle, employment and general perception of life circumstances (Fig. 2). Among employed students, the average level of subjective well-being is 21.81 points, and the median is 22.00. Thus, most representatives of this group assess their well-being at a

level slightly above the average values of the scale. The distribution diagram shows a relatively orderly picture, with the highest frequency of responses falling within the range of 25-30 points, which includes 12 students. This cluster of values around the average may indicate a certain stability in the perception of life satisfaction among employed students. The distribution of values is smooth, without sharp fluctuations, which indicates a relatively even distribution of scores in the sample.

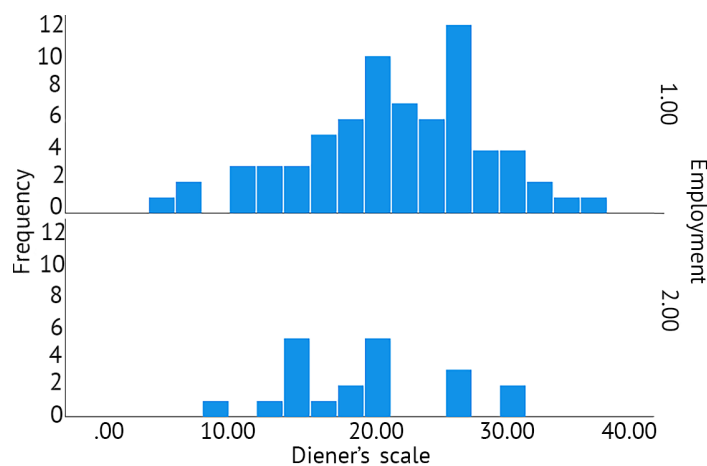


Figure 2. Distribution of life satisfaction levels on E. Diener's Scale among employed and unemployed students

Source: compiled by the authors

In contrast, among unemployed students, the average score is 19.70 points, and the median is 19.50, which is slightly lower than that of employed students. The diagram for this group shows a less pronounced centre of distribution. The highest frequency is observed

in two intervals – 15-20 and 20-25 points, with 5 students in each interval. Thus, a significant proportion of unemployed students, compared to employed students, rate their well-being within the lower ranges, and the overall distribution pattern is more scattered, without

a defined central concentration. Analysing the general trends in the distribution of indicators in the two groups, it is possible to note that employed students have a more predictable structure of life satisfaction: the values tend towards the average level, while unemployed students show a greater spread of responses. Among other things, this may indicate a possible stabilising effect of employment. A visual comparison of the diagrams shows that employed students' life satisfaction levels are more often within the average range, which may indicate a certain stability and predictability in their condition. In contrast, among unemployed students, well-being assessments are less evenly distributed, which may be associated with a wider range of subjective experiences and lifestyle characteristics. Thus,

analysis of the diagrams and average values concluded that employed students generally rate their well-being slightly higher than their unemployed peers.

A study of the level of perceived stress among employed and unemployed students revealed certain patterns that reflect the psychological state of these two groups of students (Fig. 3). The average level of perceived stress among employed students is 23.31, which is higher than the average level among unemployed students, which is 21.25. The median value for employed students is 23, while for unemployed students it is 21.5. This difference between the mean and median values indicates a relatively even distribution of stress among both groups, although the group of employed students tends to experience higher levels of tension and stress.

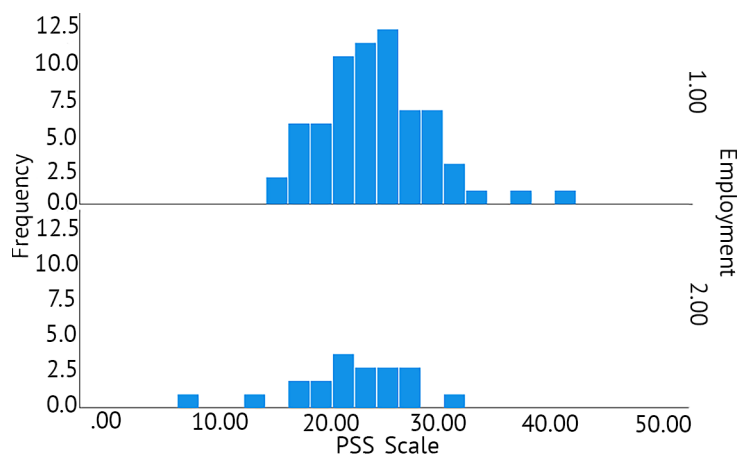


Figure 3. Distribution of perceived stress levels on the PSS Scale among employed and unemployed students
Source: compiled by the authors

Analysis of the distribution of indicators in the diagrams also further demonstrates the characteristics of stress prevalence among students depending on their employment status. For employed students, most values are in the range of 20 to 30 points, indicating that a significant portion of this group experiences stress at a moderate or above-average level, but within limits that do not exceed high stress levels. As demonstrated below, the relatively high stress experiences of employed students are balanced by their skills in (self-)regulating personal psycho-emotional state. At the same time, the distribution of values among unemployed students is at a slightly lower level, 15-25 points, which indicates a less pronounced level of perceived stress. However, the standard deviation among unemployed students is higher (5.476 versus 4.832 among employed students), which may indicate significant individual differences in the perception of stress factors. At the same time, unemployed students have more opportunities for rest and recovery, which contributes to a reduction in stress levels. The distribution pattern in the diagrams is noteworthy. Employed students demonstrate a certain concentration of values within the range of 20-30, with a slight

bias towards higher values, indicating the presence of a group of students who experience significant levels of stress. This may be due to the combination of academic workload and professional activity, which requires considerable physical and emotional resources. Among unemployed students, the distribution is more even, with a slight skew towards lower values. This may indicate that there are fewer students with high stress levels in this group, and more who experience relatively low stress. This confirms the assumption that the absence of additional work-related responsibilities ensures better control of stress levels and adaptation to the learning process without excessive psychological pressure.

The differences in mental well-being depending on students' employment status (according to the Warwick-Edinburgh Scale) (Fig. 4) show that the average mental well-being coefficient for employed students is 33.90, which is higher than that for unemployed students, which is 30.30. The median value in the group of employed students is 33, while in the group of unemployed students it is 29.50, which indicates a general trend that students who combine employment and study generally demonstrate a higher level of

subjective well-being. However, it is worth noting that these indicators may be influenced by additional factors, such as stress adaptation, social support, and overall life satisfaction. The distribution of indicators in the group of employed students shows relative stability. Most values are in the range of 30 to 40 points, reflecting a predominantly high level of mental well-being among these

students. Unemployed students show a wider range of values, concentrated in the range of 20-30 points, which may indicate a significant difference in well-being levels among this group. Unemployment can either have a positive effect on students' functional state, providing more free time and rest, or create a certain uncertainty that can reduce their psychological comfort.

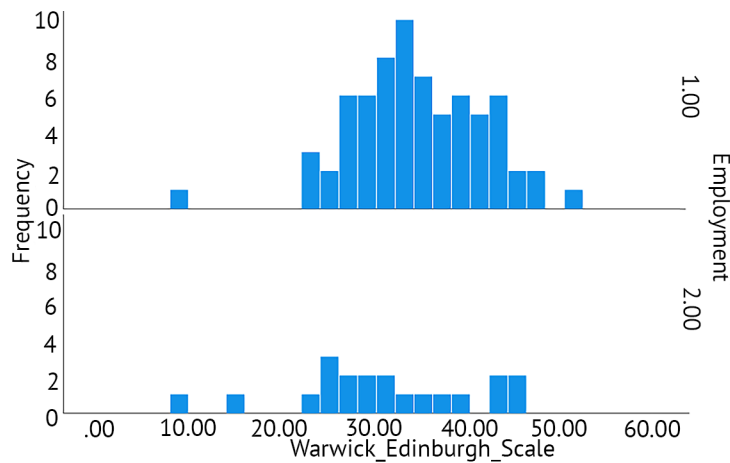


Figure 4. Distribution of mental well-being levels on the Warwick-Edinburgh Scale among employed and unemployed students

Source: compiled by the authors

The distribution of indicators in the diagrams also confirms the identified trends. For employed students, the values are more clustered around the average level, reflecting the stability of their mental well-being in general and their psycho-emotional state in particular. This may be because employment provides a structure in daily lives and additional opportunities for self-fulfillment. In contrast, the distribution of indicators among unemployed students is more variable, indicating individual differences in mental well-being within this group. The standard deviation among the indicators of unemployed students is significantly higher (9.69 versus 7.096 among employed students), indicating a greater dispersion of results and the presence of a subgroup of students with significantly lower levels of mental well-being. Overall, the results of the analysis show that employed students tend to have higher levels of mental well-being, which may be related to their social activity, structured lifestyle, and skills in regulating their psycho-emotional state. At the same time, unemployed students show greater variability in their levels of well-being, which may reflect the influence of different life circumstances, lifestyle, personality traits, and insufficient self-regulation skills.

Overall, the results obtained are contradictory and require further consideration and interpretation. Employed students, despite being overworked, demonstrate a more positive psycho-emotional state compared to unemployed students, and there is a phenomenon of emotional (self-)regulation – management

of emotions in the process of activity or communication, which can be considered as the ability to quickly restore physical and mental strength, adapting to the conditions of the life situation. Such regulation of psycho-emotional states can occur through emotional (other emotions that restore the emotional state), cognitive (cognitive means of regulation) and behavioural (motor-movement means and exercises) components of the psycho-emotional state (Vlasenko *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the ability to interact with personal feelings, overcome negative emotions, and constructively manage the intensity of emotions and their manifestation is substantial for students, especially during martial law in Ukraine. The study established that employed students experience higher levels of stress than those who are not employed. Combining employment and education creates additional stress related to the need to perform professional duties. At the same time, they have higher mental well-being indicators, are more satisfied with life, and have lower anxiety levels compared to those who are not employed. Perhaps employment contributes to the development of additional psychological compensatory mechanisms and develops the personal ability to self-regulate. Thus, students who are employed and studying demonstrated a higher level of (self-)regulation of their psycho-emotional state. In contrast, unemployed students have lower stress levels, but relatively higher anxiety levels and lower life satisfaction, indicating a lower level of psycho-emotional regulation. This highlights the significance of

effective strategies for coping with stress and maintaining psycho-emotional state, which will ensure emotional well-being, support productivity at work and in studies, and preserve mental health.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicated an ambiguous effect of combining work and study on the psycho-emotional state of students. On the one hand, employed students demonstrate higher levels of mental well-being and greater life satisfaction. On the other hand, they face higher levels of stress and anxiety. I. Hural *et al.* (2014) confirmed the significance of the integration of employment and education for the development of key personal qualities, in particular the development of responsibility, independence, and stress resistance. This is especially relevant if the job corresponds to the future speciality, as in this case, it helps to integrate education and professional activity. This study confirmed that students who combine study with employment have higher levels of mental well-being, but as indicated in other studies, this is also accompanied by increased levels of anxiety and stress.

A student's emotional state directly affects how effectively they cope with difficulties in the learning process. A positive emotional background, such as a sense of satisfaction with life or self-confidence, stimulates activity and increases performance. On the other hand, depressive states or feelings of helplessness reduce the ability to concentrate, which negatively affects academic performance, as noted by A. Bondarenko *et al.* (2022). This study demonstrates a tendency for students with a positive emotional background to cope with stress much more effectively and achieve higher academic results. At the same time, the study by A. Bondarenko *et al.* (2022) addressed depressive states, which significantly impair academic performance. However, this study indicates that, despite the increased stress levels among employed students, they generally have higher levels of well-being and academic success. Support from the social environment is substantial in this regard. Students who receive emotional support from friends, family, or teachers cope better with stressful situations in their studies, as confirmed by O. Korobanova *et al.* (2025). The researchers noted that social support helps reduce the risk of emotional exhaustion and promotes self-confidence, which has a positive effect on academic achievement. This was confirmed by the results of this study, in which social support was a substantial factor in helping students cope with increased stress levels. However, this study noted that social support has different effects on employed and unemployed students, and this aspect is considered relevant for further research.

A busy study schedule often causes a lack of physical activity and an unbalanced diet, which negatively affects physical health and increases stress levels, as noted by V. Kyselov & D. Balashov (2023). The researchers

emphasised that such factors can create additional stress for students, reducing their ability to cope with the learning process. This study confirmed that employed students often do not have enough time for physical activity and healthy eating, which increases their stress levels. However, the study found that although unemployed students have lower stress levels, these levels fluctuate more, indicating significant individual differences. As noted by V. Olefir & V. Bosnyuk (2024), the psycho-emotional state encompasses a wide range of emotions, experiences and internal reactions that affect motivation, concentration, performance and adaptability in the learning process. Academic success, in their opinion, is not only a reflection of intellectual abilities, but also the result of effective self-regulation of personal psycho-emotional state. The conclusions made by V. Olefir & V. Bosnyuk (2024) fully confirmed the authors' observations, as this study found that students with better emotional regulation have higher academic results. At the same time, the study emphasises that social and professional factors, such as workload, also influence the ability to self-regulate, which in some cases can either promote or hinder effective self-regulation.

N. Majerová & L. Sokolová (2025) demonstrated that academic stress significantly affects students' mental health and overall well-being, contributing to emotional distress and the risk of academic failure. This is consistent with the authors' data, where employed students have higher levels of stress and anxiety, while exhibiting more developed coping mechanisms, which distinguishes their response to stress from a simple negative psycho-emotional reaction. Similarly, a study by A. Abdul Aziz *et al.* (2024) identified a significant negative relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being in students, where increased stress was associated with lower levels of mental well-being and a decrease in overall emotional stability. These results partially confirmed the authors' conclusions regarding the significance of stress management: in the study, unemployed students with lower stress levels also demonstrated lower average values for life satisfaction and mental well-being, indicating the complexity of the relationships between stress, emotional resources, and overall well-being. Another significant contribution to the discussion was provided by H. Kuswanto (2025), determining that the balance between study and life moderates the negative impact of academic stress on mental well-being: students with a better balance experienced less negative impact of stress on their psychological state. This is consistent with the author's interpretation: the ability of employed students to combine work and study, probably through the development of effective (self-)regulation mechanisms, contributes to the fact that, despite increased stress levels, they have higher levels of mental well-being and life satisfaction.

D. Pérez-Jorge *et al.* (2025) investigated the effects of academic stress on students' well-being and mental health. The study emphasised that academic stress is a significant factor that reduces students' psycho-emotional well-being and increases anxiety levels. This correlates with the findings of a study that employed students who combine study and work experience, high levels of stress and anxiety. However, in contrast to a study by D. Pérez-Jorge *et al.* (2025), these students have higher levels of mental well-being, which may be related to the development of adaptation and emotional regulation skills. Therefore, although Pérez-Jorge confirms that stress harms students, this study highlights the possibility of a positive impact of combining work and study, provided that support and self-regulation skills are available. A study by M. Samaratunga (2025) emphasises the conflict between work and study. The author notes that this conflict is a substantial stress factor that leads to increased anxiety and reduced well-being among students. The results of a study by M. Samaratunga (2025) also confirm the conclusions about the significant stress load that arises in students who combine work with study. However, the author's results indicated that, despite the increased level of stress, employed students show a greater ability to regulate emotions and adapt to stressful situations. This may indicate that the long-term combination of work and study develops stress resistance skills, which in turn have a positive effect on the overall psycho-emotional well-being of students. In contrast, the study by M. Samaratunga (2025) prioritised the negative impact of the conflict between study and work, without indicating the possibility of developing adaptive mechanisms.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the empirical study showed that the psycho-emotional state of students depends on their employment status, in particular, whether they combine work with study. Analysis of indicators of anxiety, stress, mental well-being and life satisfaction reveals differences between employed and unemployed students. The average anxiety scores among employed students ($M = 33.31$) were higher than among unemployed

students ($M = 29.25$), indicating more pronounced anxiety among students who combine study with work. However, in contrast to anxiety, employed students have higher levels of mental well-being and life satisfaction, confirming the presence of compensatory mechanisms in this group. Thus, the average subjective well-being score for employed students is 21.81, which is higher than that of unemployed students (19.70).

These results indicate a positive effect of employment on emotional stability and self-regulation, which improves coping effectiveness among employed students. On the other hand, unemployed students demonstrate lower levels of stress, but they have higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of life satisfaction, which may indicate less effective strategies for regulating their psycho-emotional state. This is confirmed by the wider distribution of indicators in this group, which indicates individual differences in the perception of stress and well-being. Employed students generally demonstrated better psycho-emotional state indicators due to the development of self-regulation skills, despite higher stress levels. At the same time, unemployed students needed additional support to improve their stress management strategies and develop more effective mechanisms for regulating their psycho-emotional state. Given these results, it is necessary to develop recommendations for optimising the educational process and supporting the mental health of students, especially those who combine study with work. Prospects for further research include analysis of the impact of social support and various (self-)regulation strategies on students' psycho-emotional state, as well as exploring intervention options to reduce stress among students who combine study with work.

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Анотація. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю вивчення впливу зайнятості студентів на їх психоемоційний стан і ефективність (само)регуляції в умовах воєнного часу, оскільки це дозволяє виявити різницю в рівнях тривожності, стресу та благополуччя між працюючими і непрацюючими студентами. Метою статті було емпірично дослідити психоемоційний стан студентів, порівнявши дві категорії студентів – непрацюючих і тих, хто поєднує роботу з навчанням. Для збору емпіричних даних було використано особистісну шкалу прояву тривоги Дж. Тейлор (MAS), шкалу задоволеності життям Е. Дінера (SWLS), шкалу сприйнятого стресу (PSS), Шкалу психічного благополуччя Ворік-Единбург (WEMWBS) та анкетування для збору відомостей, важливих для інтерпретації отриманих результатів. У дослідженні було виявлено, що працюючі студенти мають вищий рівень тривожності (середнє значення $M = 33,31$), проте більш різноманітні індивідуальні показники цього стану. Їхні середні оцінки психічного благополуччя ($M = 33,90$) та суб'єктивного благополуччя ($M = 21,81$) дещо вищі, ніж у непрацюючих студентів ($M = 30,30$ і $M = 19,70$ відповідно), хоча останні краще контролюють стрес (PSS: $M = 21,25$ у непрацюючих і $M = 23,31$ у працюючих). Працюючі студенти схильні до більш високого рівня стресу, проте ефективніше регулюють свій психоемоційний стан. Загалом, попри підвищений стрес, вони продемонстрували вищий рівень психічного благополуччя, задоволеності життям і нижчий рівень тривоги. Дослідження також показало, що працюючі студенти, незважаючи на високий рівень стресу, мають більш розвинуті навички самоорганізації та адаптації до навчального процесу. Це засвідчило про важливість розвитку стратегій стресостійкості та психоемоційної регуляції для підтримки їхнього благополуччя. Проведене дослідження дозволяє комплексно оцінити поточний психоемоційний стан студентів залежно від їх зайнятості та виявити як можливі ризики, пов'язані з перевантаженням, так і більш ефективну (само)регуляцію ними свого психоемоційного стану

Ключові слова: зайнятість студентів; тривожність; стрес; психічне благополуччя; стратегії стресостійкості

“The 5-step model of self-reflection on choice and adaptation”: Empirical verification of the “Integrative model of existential choice and adaptation” within N. Peseschkian’s transcultural approach in Positive Psychotherapy

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Abstract. Ukraine’s prolonged war crisis creates critical mental health service gaps, with 9.6 million at risk yet <10% receiving adequate support. Guided self-help tools are recognised as priority strategy for addressing this 90% treatment gap. The aim of the study was to present empirical verification and procedural operationalisation of the “Integrative Model of Existential Choice and Adaptation” (Iteration 1.2), applied to Kharkiv residents experiencing continuous traumatic stress. The theoretical framework synthesised N. Peseschkian’s transcultural Positive Psychotherapy approach, continuous traumatic stress theory, and agency restoration principles. The practical implementation – a digital “5-Step Model of Self-Reflection on Choice and Adaptation” – was empirically tested with N > 300 respondents using an 18-item structured feedback questionnaire. The model operationalised five self-reflection modules: Interpretation Module (transforming affect-laden memories into narrative), Existential Choice Module (diagnosing motivation across six bipolar continua with ambivalence validation), Integration Module (identifying war-specific place-identity using extended seven-type typology), Balance Module (assessing resources and “escape spheres” per Peseschkian’s model), and Adaptation Module (evaluating posttraumatic growth/depreciation co-existence). Over 95% of respondents reported new situation awareness; 97% identified place-identity awareness as most valuable outcome. Key innovation lied in integrating cross-cutting psychoeducation

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enabling cognitive reframing, symptom depathologisation, and secondary stress reduction. The model addresses critical wartime mental health gaps, combining clinical rigor with independent-use accessibility

Keywords: posttraumatic growth; posttraumatic depreciation; war trauma; guided self-help; psychoeducation; continuous traumatic stress; place identity

INTRODUCTION

This article continues research aimed at developing and empirically specifying the Integrative “Model of Existential Choice and Adaptation” for Kharkiv residents under prolonged war-induced traumatic crisis (Iteration 1.0 and 1.1). The main findings from that foundational study are presented in a separate manuscript currently under editorial review. This current work (Iteration 1.2) focuses on procedural operationalisation and empirical verification through development of a practical digital tool. Transitioning from theoretical modeling to practical implementation represents a critical stage in any psychological concept’s development. While the “Integrative Model of Existential Choice and Adaptation”, grounded in N. Pesechian’s transcultural Positive Psychotherapy approach, demonstrated strong capacity for interpreting Ukrainian wartime adaptation strategies, theoretical validity alone does not guarantee accessibility for populations needing psychological support amid limited specialist access.

The relevance of creating a practical toolkit (full title: “5-Step Model of Self-Reflection on Choice and Adaptation: An Author’s Guided Psychological Self-Help Tool”) based on the theoretical model is necessitated by Ukraine’s crisis specifics, characterised by continuous traumatic stress (CTS) amid critical resource deficits. According to the “Humanitarian Response Plan for Ukraine” (2025), approximately 9.6 million people are at risk of developing mental disorders. Simultaneously, per latest World Health Organization (2025) estimates less than 10% of those affected in conflict zones and resource-limited conditions receive adequate assistance. This indicates the mental health treatment gap reaches critical 90%. In this context, guided self-help (GSH) tools are recognised by international organizations as priority strategy for addressing this imbalance (World Health Organization, 2022).

As noted by A. Wasil *et al.* (2019), the context of digital solutions in mental health (mHealth) is characterised by exponential growth, offering over 20,000 applications. However, systematic reviews indicate significant fragmentation of this market and the dominance of approaches that have limited relevance to the context of protracted war. According to observations by K. Fitzpatrick *et al.* (2017) and B. Inkster *et al.* (2018), the largest segment of evidence-based tools is based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) protocols, emphasising the restructuring of cognitive distortions. Among them are artificial intelligence chatbots such as Woebot and Wysa, which are effective in reducing symptoms of

depression and anxiety in controlled studies. Moodgym, one of the oldest web platforms for depression prevention, is also widely known. However, J. Torous *et al.* (2021) noted that such tools often implement a mechanistic “symptom-correction” approach, ignoring the existential dimension of suffering and the search for meaning, which is critical to traumatic experiences.

The second dominant cluster is relaxation and meditation apps, led by Headspace, Calm, and Insight Timer. According to meta-analyses by É. Gál *et al.* (2021) found that mindfulness-based tools can be effective in reducing stress. However, despite their positive impact, such apps are often criticised for commercialising mindfulness practices. As emphasised by M. Mani *et al.* (2015), the lack of in-depth therapeutic processing limits their effectiveness, as these tools do not always incorporate the complex aspects of mental health and do not promote adequate psychological adaptation in conditions of constant stress. In the trauma treatment field, tools based on PTSD Coach and derivatives (CPT Coach, PE Coach), developed by the National Centre for PTSD (USA), are considered the standard of excellence, as noted by K. Possemato *et al.* (2016). These tools have a substantial evidence base, but their effectiveness is limited by their strict adherence to DSM-5 clinical protocols for PTSD treatment. According to G. Eagle & D. Kaminer (2013), their structure involves working with a past event (“post-trauma”), which makes them less effective in conditions of continuous traumatic stress, where trauma is a constant part of life. Thus, existing tools do not cover the specifics of adaptation to constant stress, characteristic of war or other prolonged crises.

One of the main problems that reduces the effectiveness of such tools is low audience retention. According to J. Torous *et al.* (2018) and A. Baumel *et al.* (2019), over 90% of users discontinue the use of mHealth applications within the first two weeks. The main reason for this phenomenon, according to the researchers, is the lack of proper psychoeducation that would reveal the essence of interventions and determine why these exercises are crucial for users, rather than simply offering a set of techniques. As noted by J. Bäuml *et al.* (2016), psychoeducation is the foundation that transforms situational self-support practices into a structured process of self-reflection. It provides a “cognitive framework”, reduces anxiety about uncertainty, and creates a sense of control. The absence of this component in most popular tools creates a scientific and practical gap that the proposed model is designed to fill.

Therefore, the study aimed to operationally define and empirically verify the "Integrative Model of Existential Choice and Adaptation" using the example of Kharkiv residents in the context of a prolonged traumatic crisis (Iteration 1.2) caused by the war, implemented as an electronic resource – the author's "5-step model of self-reflection of choice and adaptation. A tool for guided psychological self-help". The study involves adapting the theoretical core of the model (developed based on the "Kharkiv case") to the national context and assessing its heuristic value for Ukrainians in the context of a prolonged war.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was implemented as part of the volunteer project "Facets of Life/Life on the Edge", initiated by researchers from the Ukrainian Association of Psychotherapists (UAP). The initiative arose at a UAP meeting, where the personal experience of staying in Kharkiv shared by Olga Antoshkina (head of the Kharkiv branch of UAP) became a catalyst for initiating the research by one of the authors, I. Gordienko-Mitrofanova. Five researcher-practitioners (UAP members) responded to the open call, forming a diverse team of interviewers: N. Bondarenko, O. Dokunina, V. Sukhan, S. Sauta, and S. Bezkorovainy. The developer of the electronic version of the "5-Step Model of Self-Reflection on Choice and Adaptation" is S. Sauta, PhD in Psychology, Basic Consultant in Provocative Psychotherapy, AI Director of FRACTAL group of companies.

This study employed a sequential mixed-methods design comprising three consecutive phases: (1) conceptualisation and empirical specification of the "Integrative Model of Existential Choice and Adaptation" (Iteration 1.2) based on narrative interview corpus ($N > 100$); (2) operationalisation of model constructs into digital format ("5-Step Model of Self-Reflection on Choice and Adaptation"); (3) empirical piloting using structured feedback questionnaire ($N > 300$). Research was conducted within the volunteer project "Facets of Life/Life on the Edge" by Ukrainian Association of Psychotherapists (UAP) research team. Project initiative emerged at UAP meeting where Olga Antoshkina's (UAP Kharkiv Branch Head) personal Kharkiv experience catalysed research initiation by author I. Gordiyenko-Mytrofanova. Five researcher-practitioners (UAP members) formed diverse interviewer team: N. Bondarenko, O. Dokunina, V. Sukhan, S. Sauta, and S. Bezkorovainy. Electronic version developer: S. Sauta, PhD Psychology, Basic Consultant Provocative Psychotherapy, AI Director FRACTAL company group.

Sampling occurred at two levels. Qualitative stage (empirical specification, Iteration 1.2): corpus of over 100 semi-structured narrative interviews with Kharkiv residents analysed using purposive (criterion-based) sampling ensuring representation of all migration choice types (stay, leave, return). Testing stage: adult

Ukrainian citizens ($N > 300$: online version respondents and workshop participants) engaged in tool piloting. Procedure involved obtaining informed consent for data processing per ethical standards. Procedure entailed independent completion of full self-reflection cycle via digital "5-Step Model" algorithm: (1) Interpretation Module (I), (2) Existential Choice Module (C_1-C_6), (3) Integration Module (G), (4) Balance Module (R_1-R_4), (5) Adaptation Module (PTG/PTD co-existence). Tool validity assessment employed author-designed structured 18-item feedback questionnaire (16 core items plus 2 demographic; see Appendix A) measuring cognitive comprehensibility, emotional safety, and subjective utility parameters. Quantitative data processing included descriptive statistics calculation (frequency analysis, central tendency measures) from questionnaire results. Qualitative stage involved reflexive thematic analysis of open-ended questionnaire comments plus oral feedback generalisation from workshop group discussions.

The first block assessed the usability and cognitive accessibility of the tool. It aims to measure the ease of use of the tool and includes indicators that assess the subjective comprehensibility of instructions, the accessibility of terminology, and the adequacy of time expenditure. To this end, binary questions were used to identify complex terms, as well as a 5-point Likert scale to assess the perception of instructions. The time required to complete the 5-step model was also assessed, with the ability to determine whether there was excessively rapid completion, which may indicate superficial completion, or a significant excess of time, which is an indicator of cognitive load. The second block examined the content validity of the instrument by assessing the relevance of each of the five modules of the model. Respondents were asked to evaluate the heuristic value of each stage of the instrument, in particular the modules related to structuring memories, differentiating choice motivation along the axes of existential choice, typology of belonging identity, diagnosis of the balance model, and conceptualisation of adaptation patterns (growth, depreciation, coexistence, avoidance). The third block assessed effectiveness and behavioural activation, which made it possible to measure the integral impact of the model on the cognitive, behavioural and reflective state of respondents. This included assessing the model's ability to structure chaotic experiences, the respondents' readiness to perform the formulated action, and the value of the insights gained. The social validity of the tool was also measured through a consumer loyalty index, which assessed the respondents' willingness to recommend the tool to others. completion, or significantly exceeding the time, which is an indicator of cognitive load. The fourth block focused on ethics and safety, as the study deals with traumatic experiences. This block assessed the usefulness of psychoeducational inserts, in particular, crisis warnings and the possibility of pausing while completing the tool.

Respondents also self-assessed their emotional state after completing the model, which identified potential risks of retraumatisation and assessed the extent to which the model provides an emotionally safe space for self-reflection.

Data collection was conducted in several stages. First, respondents independently completed a full cycle of self-reflection using an electronic version of the 5-step model. After completing each stage, respondents completed a feedback questionnaire. In addition, qualitative data were collected through open-ended questions and oral discussions during group workshops. Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistical methods, in particular frequency analysis and calculation of central tendency indicators. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were subjected to content analysis to identify typical difficulties, barriers to interpretation, and to obtain feedback on further improvements to the tool. The study included respondents of different ages and with different experiences of adapting to war. More than 300 adult citizens of Ukraine participated in the study. The sample was formed in two stages: at the qualitative stage, more than 100 narrative interviews with residents of Kharkiv were analysed, and at the testing stage, respondents who used the electronic version of the tool and participated in master classes were involved. The study was conducted in strict compliance with ethical standards, in accordance with the principles of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research (1979), which include ensuring the informed consent of participants, their voluntary participation and the protection of their confidentiality throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Architecture and procedural operationalisation of the 5-step model

The main result of the study was the development of an algorithmic tool for guided self-help and self-reflection, which transforms the theoretical constructs of the “Integrative Model of Existential Choice and Adaptation” into a consistent procedure for cognitive structuring of experience. The tool was developed in response to the specifics of continuous traumatic stress, which requires constant adaptation during a crisis, facilitating intervention specifically in conditions of ongoing traumatisation. The model is structured in the form of five self-reflection modules, each of which is based on a specific psychotherapeutic mechanism that helps users adapt to stressful situations and find ways to overcome mental stress.

The architecture of the 5-step model involves a step-by-step process of self-reflection, consisting of the following stages: Interpretation, Existential Choice, Integration, Balance, and Adaptation. Each of these stages corresponds to a specific stage of psychotherapeutic work and aims to help the participant cognitively

comprehend the traumatic experience, make an existential decision, integrate a new identity, restore the balance between resources and stress, and facilitate adaptation to new conditions. This model was developed in the context of the theoretical foundations of the “Integrative Model of Existential Choice and Adaptation”, which includes six continuums of existential choice (C_1-C_6) and an expanded typology of identity. Specific stages, including interpretation, motivation assessment, identity integration, resource diagnosis, and adaptation patterns, create a sequence that can be used for systematic analysis of the personal experiences and resources of the respondent.

Step 1, the Interpretation Module, actualises and systematises traumatic experience. This stage transforms chaotic affective traces – fragmented sensory imprints – into coherent narrative form. The mechanism operates through transforming affect-laden memory fragments into structured narrative, constituting a clinically validated strategy for reducing anxiety and PTSD symptomatology based on Dual Representation Theory (Ehlers & Clark, 2000; Brewin, 2014). Step 1 operationalises the theoretical construct “Interpretation (I)”, which describes meaning-making of lived experience within the Integrative Model: value reassessment, establishing causal-value connections, and embedding experience into personal temporal perspective (past-present-future).

The second stage, the Existential Choice module, consists of diagnosing the motivation behind decisions regarding further actions in a crisis – to stay, leave or return. Motivation is analysed using a system of six bipolar continua, each of which assesses the relevance of various factors influencing decision-making. An innovation at this stage is the use of a scale to record ambivalence – a state in which both poles of choice are relevant. This approach correlates with research, which indicates that emotional ambivalence is not a mistake in choice, but a sign of cognitive complexity and adaptability in crisis conditions (Larsen *et al.*, 2001). Validating ambivalence at this stage helps reduce secondary stress by alleviating the pressure to make an unambiguous decision. The procedural operationalisation of this approach is implemented through the evaluation of each continuum using a special 4-point scale (0-3), where respondents are asked to determine the degree of influence of factors on decision-making: 0 – neither one nor the other: this axis is insignificant for the respondent's choice; both factor-poles are weakly expressed; 1 – left pole: the choice was determined by the factor indicated on the left; 3 – right pole: the choice was determined by the factor indicated on the right; 2 – both left and right poles: a marker of ambivalence, indicating that both factors were equally important and created high internal tension.

Step 2 is the operationalisation of the theoretical construct “Continuum of Existential Choice (C_1-C_6)”, which moderates the adaptation process. Six bipolar

axes of existential tension moderate the transition from Interpretation (I) to Integration (G) and further Adaptation (PTG/PTD) (detailed descriptions are shown below), answering the question: "Under what conditions, in what direction and with what intensity does the integration of experience take place?". Example continuum: C1 Security-Belonging: orientation toward risk reduction and safety vs. orientation toward social engagement, sense of "one's place" and community.

Step 3, the Integration Module, determines place-identity type transformed by war (War-specific Place Identity). The proposed seven-trajectory typology differentiates states by attachment quality. This approach aligns with contemporary environmental psychology trends moving beyond binary oppositions to consider "multiple belonging" and "liminality" as key to understanding mental health in forced migration contexts (Scannell & Gifford, 2017; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2021). The seven post-crisis place-identity types: Transformed Local Identity – stayed; Alienated Local Identity – stayed; Multilocal Identity – left; Temporary Evacuation Identity – left; Monolocal (Assimilated) Identity – left; Liminal Identity – left; Reintegrated Identity – consciously returned.

Step 4, the Balance Module, implements resource diagnostics based on N. Peseschkian's balance model through a two-stage algorithm. Stage one: respondent works with structured resource registry (R1-R4), identifying actual supports across four spheres: Body/Sensations (somatic regulation, sleep, sport), Activity/Achievement (structuring routines, work), Contacts/Traditions (emotional intimacy, group belonging), and Fantasies/Future (values, faith, future plans).

Stage two implements didactic function: teaching distinction between chronometric time and psychic energy (emotional investment intensity). Mastering this skill enables respondent to independently construct individual visual model of 100% life-energy distribution. This visualisation facilitates automatic disproportion identification: "Escape Sphere" (significantly >25%): defined as pseudo-resource and hypercompensation defense mechanism (e.g., workaholism as escape from loneliness); "Deficit Sphere" (significantly <25%): zone of ignored needs, marking burnout or psychosomatisation risk. Such imbalance, particularly hypercompensation, qualifies as ineffective long-term adaptation strategy leading to exhaustion per Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018).

Step 5, the Adaptation Module, assesses crisis consequences through the lens of co-existing independent processes: posttraumatic growth (PTG) and posttraumatic depreciation (PTD). The model identifies the full spectrum of adaptation patterns: from dominant growth or depreciation vectors to their combination or cognitive avoidance state (emotional numbing). This approach grounds in the orthogonality (independence) concept of PTG and PTD constructs (Cann *et al.*, 2010;

Taku *et al.*, 2008), avoiding "toxic positivity" traps while ensuring diagnostic process ecology.

Four adaptation pattern types based on process interaction: (1) growth (PTG), (2) depreciation (PTD), (3) simultaneous combination of growth and depreciation (PTG and PTD), and (4) cognitive avoidance/emotional numbing. Unlike traditional diagnostic instruments, this model's key innovation is integrating cross-cutting psychoeducation directly into diagnostic process structure. It accompanies respondents at each stage, functioning not as passive information transfer but as active cognitive reframing method. The toolkit thereby accomplishes key therapeutic tasks – ambivalence validation, symptom depathologisation, and agency restoration – implemented through comprehensive instruction system following this algorithm:

1. Step 1 (Interpretation): Memory Structuring

Respondent learns to structure fragmented affective memories into coherent narrative. Psychoeducation explains this as temporal "relocation" mechanism ("that was then, not now"), facilitating anxiety reduction and cognitive control restoration over memory.

2. Step 2 (Existential Choice): Ambivalence Validation

Toolkit explains that simultaneously choosing opposite poles (score "2") marks depth of situational understanding, not error. This directly validates ambivalence, reducing secondary stress from pressure to make "unambiguous" decisions.

3. Step 3 (Integration): Place-Identity Identification

Through describing place-identity types, methodology provides terminological apparatus for naming experiences regarding different place-attachment feelings. This destigmatises "unrootedness," helping see it as adaptation stage.

4. Step 4 (Balance): Resource Management

At this stage, respondent learns distinguishing physical time from psychic energy. "Escape Sphere" concept (pseudo-resource) is introduced, interpreting hypercompensation (e.g., workaholism) as avoidance defense reaction against painful experiences, traumatic memories, etc., helping respondent differentiate productive adaptation from exhaustion.

5. Step 5 (Adaptation): Reaction Depathologisation

This stage implements PTG/PTD co-existence model. Methodology normalises paradoxical pain-development combination. Also provides explanation of "emotional numbing" phenomenon as protective "freezing", removing guilt for emotion absence. Final stage: cycle completion through behavioral activation (formulating "one concrete action"), closing process by restoring sense of agency, returning person to active subject role in their own life.

Empirical testing results and comparison with existing evidence

The 5-step model testing (N > 300) employed author-designed 18-item feedback questionnaire implemented

via Google Forms with subsequent spreadsheet export and descriptive statistics analysis. Summary results indicated over 95% of respondents reported new situation understanding (insight, “chaos structuring” sensation), while nearly 97% identified place-identity awareness (“where I feel at home now”) as most important outcome. A separate 30-participant group requested model completion with team member accompaniment. This work documented typical difficulties, semantic barriers, and interpretive requests, forming basis for in-depth tool refinement. Based on obtained data: resource block expanded, balance model construction instructions reformulated, “escape spheres” and “deficit spheres” described in psychoeducational format, adaptation patterns (PTG/PTD co-existence and cognitive avoidance) detailed. Overall, approximately one-quarter of model formulations and instructions underwent review and refinement, substantially increasing clarity, clinical sensitivity, and independent-use suitability.

Comparison with Existing Evidence. Obtained results align with emerging digital mental health tool effectiveness research. S. Lahutina *et al.* (2024) described digital chatbot providing psychoeducation and self-help in war context, with approximately 50,000 users receiving stress regulation knowledge, emphasising early digital support importance in crises – consistent with the model’s accessibility and psychoeducation emphasis. M. Olff *et al.* (2025) systematic review demonstrated psychoeducation improves mental reaction knowledge and help-seeking, though self-application often fails producing stable PTSD symptom reduction without further support. This partially aligns with the model, which integrates psychoeducation not as standalone element but as cross-cutting mechanism aimed at experience awareness increase and secondary stress reduction. Recent studies further validate PTG as a distinct adaptive process. Z. Yang *et al.* (2025) revealed significant heterogeneity in PTG and confirmed social support’s positive impact on adaptation, validating the model’s emphasis on resource-based strategies. Similarly, J.R. Rhodes *et al.* (2024) demonstrated that PTG-oriented programming for veterans yields both short- and long-term improvements, supporting the practical value of integrating growth elements into digital interventions. While many digital tools focus primarily on symptomatic relief (e.g., CBT-based interventions), this study addresses meaningful reinterpretation and the active coexistence of PTG and posttraumatic depreciation

(PTD). A key methodological distinction is that the model treats PTG as an active process available during ongoing stress, rather than a delayed post-event outcome. In summary, contemporary research confirms the utility of digital interventions with psychoeducational and adaptive components while underscoring the need for further randomised long-term studies to ensure consistency and quality of evidence.

CONCLUSIONS

The 5-Step Model of Self-Reflection on Choice and Adaptation, combining cognitive structuring, behavioral activation, and narrative exposure, has demonstrated high effectiveness for psychological support delivery to individuals experiencing prolonged stress in wartime conditions. Empirical testing on expanded sample (N > 300) yielded significant results: over 95% of respondents reported new situation awareness, while nearly 97% identified place-identity awareness as primary outcome. The model facilitated secondary stress reduction through integrated psychoeducation as cross-cutting mechanism. Comparison with other digital mental health tools confirmed that psychoeducation integration is key factor contributing to model effectiveness in prolonged stress contexts, enhancing both self-regulation and overall adaptation.

The scientific-practical novelty lies in creating first Ukrainian-language guided self-help model adapted to prolonged war experience specifics. Unlike existing analogues, the tool integrates cross-cutting psychoeducation/safety component, employs extended seven-strategy identity typology, and diagnoses adaptation through PTG/PTD co-existence model. Future research prospects include extended psychometric verification (reliability, validity, change sensitivity) and longitudinal study of identity dynamics, resource spheres, and adaptation patterns in various war-affected groups. Comparative analysis with other guided self-help tools and effectiveness assessment within stepped-care mental health programs are also warranted.

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**«5-крокова модель саморефлексії вибору та адаптації»:
емпірична верифікація «Інтегративної моделі екзистенційного вибору
та адаптації» на засадах транскультурального підходу
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Анотація. Тривала війна в Україні зумовила критичний дефіцит послуг у сфері ментального здоров'я: 9,6 мільйона осіб перебувають у зоні ризику, проте <10 % отримують належну підтримку. Інструменти керованої самопомогі визнані пріоритетною стратегією для подолання цього 90 % розриву в лікуванні. Метою дослідження було представити емпіричну верифікацію та процедурну операціоналізацію «Інтегративної моделі екзистенційного вибору та адаптації» (Ітерація 1.2), застосованої до мешканців Харкова, які перебувають в умовах тривалого травматичного стресу. Теоретична база синтезувала транскультуральний підхід позитивної психотерапії Н. Пезешкіана, теорію тривалого травматичного стресу та принципи відновлення суб'єктності (агенсу). Практична реалізація – цифрова «5-крокова модель саморефлексії вибору та адаптації» – була емпірично протестована на вибірці N > 300 респондентів за допомогою структурованого опитувальника зворотного зв'язку з 18 пунктів. Модель операціоналізувала п'ять модулів саморефлексії: модуль інтерпретації: трансформація афективно забарвлених спогадів у наратив; модуль екзистенційного вибору: діагностика мотивації за шістьма біполярними континуумами з валідацією амбівалентності; модуль інтеграції: ідентифікація специфічної для війни просторової ідентичності (place-identity) за розширеною типологією з семи типів; модуль балансу: оцінка ресурсів та «сфер утечі» за моделлю балансу Н. Пезешкіана; модуль адаптації: оцінка співіснування посттравматичного зростання та депреціації. Понад 95 % респондентів зазнали нового усвідомлення ситуації; 97 % визнали усвідомлення просторової ідентичності найбільш цінним результатом. Ключова інновація полягала в інтеграції наскрізної психоосвіти, що забезпечує когнітивний рефреймінг, депатологізацію симптомів та зниження вторинного стресу. Модель спрямована на подолання критичних прогалин у системі ментального здоров'я воєнного часу, поєднуючи клінічну строгість із доступністю для самостійного використання

Ключові слова: посттравматичне зростання; депривація; воєнна травма; керована самопомога; адаптація; психоосвіта; безперервний травматичний стрес; ідентичність місця

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