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Comparative analysis of contemporary approaches to social and psychological support for combatants and their families

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■ **Abstract.** In the context of full-scale war in Ukraine, the issue of psychosocial support for combatants and their families is becoming particularly relevant. High levels of stress, the risk of developing maladjustment, and problems of resocialisation and adaptation after participating in combat operations necessitate the creation of systematic psychological support programmes. The study was based on a systematic analysis of the literature and a review of the results of previous studies. The methodology was selected in accordance with the outlined objectives and the specifics of the object and subject of the study: comparative analysis, content analysis of scientific publications, and a systematic approach. The methodological tools were selected based on the outlined goal and the specifics of the object and subject of the study: comparative analysis methods, content analysis of scientific publications, and a systematic approach to summarising the social and psychological practices used in different countries. Three main groups of approaches to psychosocial support were compared: psychological (individual and group therapy, work with maladjustment and post-traumatic stress disorder), social (resocialisation, family support, educational and professional programmes), and integrative (multidisciplinary models and case management). Accordingly, the significance of psychological, social, and integrative components in the system of social and psychological support has been established. The study proved that the Ukrainian experience is unique, and the system of social and psychological support is in the process of improvement due to the active phase of repelling military aggression, while the practices of the United States, Israel and Canada have established mechanisms of state and public support due to the absence of a direct threat. The results obtained can form the basis for optimising psychological and social rehabilitation programmes for veterans, as well as for developing integrative support models that address the needs of both combatants and their families

■ **Keywords:** veterans; psychosocial support; rehabilitation; adaptation; social work; mental health

■ Introduction

Military conflicts, in particular the full-scale war in Ukraine, have become a significant challenge not only for the national security system, but also for mental health care and social security. Combatants experience excessive psycho-emotional stress, witness and directly participate in traumatic events, which significantly increases the risk of developing maladaptive conditions, depression and anxiety disorders. Many combatants experience some degree of

change in their psycho-emotional state depending on the duration and intensity of their combat experience. This indicator tends to increase in conditions of prolonged armed conflict. A substantial aspect is the resocialisation and integration of veterans into civilian life, which is accompanied by difficulties in the areas of employment, family relationships and interpersonal interaction, which can hinder post-traumatic personal growth (Nazar, 2024).

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L. Dzhigun *et al.* (2021) proved that returning from war is often accompanied by feelings of alienation, reduced social activity, and a lack of trust in social institutions. This indicates the need for a comprehensive approach that combines psychological assistance with social support measures. Ukrainian researchers are actively studying various aspects of the problem. For example, O. Stoliaryk & T. Semigina (2023) emphasise that psychosocial support for veterans should be provided not only at the level of individual assistance, but also in the context of family support, as the family is often a key resource for adaptation. In their work, T. Gordeeva & A. Lazareva (2023) analyse the forms and methods of social work with combatants and prove that multidisciplinary practices are the most promising. Research by N.V. Pozmogova *et al.* (2024) shows that one of the key challenges in Ukraine remains monitoring the effectiveness of programmes. The lack of an adequate evaluation system complicates the development of long-term support strategies. This significantly distinguishes the Ukrainian experience from the international one, where monitoring and performance evaluation are integral elements of state policy in the field of working with veterans.

D. Bürgin *et al.* (2022) emphasised the role of targeted psychological work with trauma, which requires specialised methods and long-term therapy. The specifics of long-term social support for male and female veterans with complex traumatic histories were highlighted by A.A.J. Scoglio *et al.* (2022). The determinants of traumatic incidents, their common manifestations, disturbances in normal psychological and biological functioning, and negative health effects are highlighted by M. Tahan *et al.* (2021). The results of the study indicate an associative link between social support and psychological trauma through a methodological review. International practices demonstrate a wide range of models of socio-psychological support. In the United States, the Department of Veterans Affairs combines medical, educational, and social services for veterans and their families. In Israel, there are rehabilitation programmes that integrate psychological assistance with social and professional support, ensuring the adaptation of military personnel after combat operations. The Canadian experience is distinguished by the active role of non-governmental organisations cooperating with state institutions to ensure effective case management. M. Halych (2025) emphasises the importance of studying and adapting these practices in the national context.

There is a need to systematise approaches to social and psychological support for veterans, analyse Ukrainian and international experience, and identify integrative models capable of ensuring effective assistance to both military personnel and their families.

Therefore, social and psychological support for veterans and their families is one of the promising tasks of modern science and practice.

The study aimed to conduct a comparative analysis of contemporary approaches to social and psychological support for combatants and their families, as well as to systematise scientific and theoretical developments and practical models applied in national and international practice. Following the goal, the research tasks were outlined, which determined the sequence of its stages: to clarify the conceptual and categorical apparatus used in the field of psychosocial support for military personnel and their families; to analyse modern theoretical and applied research in the field of psychological rehabilitation and social integration of veterans; to identify the fundamental principles of organising social and psychological support; to determine the possibilities for using integrative models of assistance, considering the Ukrainian context and international experience.

■ Literature Review

The issue of socio-psychological support was addressed by many studies of both Ukrainian and foreign researchers. O. Stoliaryk & T. Semigina (2023) emphasised the importance of psychosocial support for veterans in the adaptation process, considered the specifics of the veteran community as a category of social work clients, and revealed methods of providing social support based on an approach focused on the strengths of clients. O.V. Bezsmertna (2024) explored the characteristics of post-traumatic growth in combatants through the lens of vitality and resilience. T.S. Vaida & O.S. Herashchenko (2024) proposed methods for practical psychologists working with psychotraumatic experiences, while M. Halych (2020) analysed the international experience of psychosocial work with military personnel and the possibilities for its adaptation in Ukraine. Practical recommendations for the differential diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of individuals suffering from mental disorders associated with the influence of stressors typical of wartime were analysed by O.S. Chaban *et al.* (2023). The consequences of combat mental trauma during military conflicts, the impact of traumatic events, and post-traumatic stress disorder associated with combat operations were highlighted by O. Blinov (2015), while V. Antonova & N. Pidbutska (2024) emphasised the importance of achieving psychological harmony between the individual and their social environment. General aspects of psychological assistance and rehabilitation of participants in armed conflicts and specialists in high-risk professions were discussed by S.Y. Lebedieva *et al.* (2023). The specifics of rehabilitation work with combatants, which will facilitate the comfortable reintegration of participants in the transition

system into civilian life and their social security, were highlighted by O. Gulbs & A. Kobets (2021) and V. Aleschenko (2025). It is necessary to analyse current approaches to improve psychological and social rehabilitation programmes for veterans, as well as to develop integrative support models that incorporate the needs of combatants and their families.

■ Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of the study was formed by modern concepts of psychological rehabilitation, social support and post-traumatic adaptation, which consider personality recovery in the context of a systemic approach. The theoretical framework was defined at the intersection of the concept of social support by O. Stoliaryk & T. Semigina (2023), the theory of psychological resilience by O.V. Bezsmertna (2024) and the model of the biopsychosocial approach by V. Antonova & N. Pidbutska (2024). Within these concepts, socio-psychological support was considered as a multi-level process that integrates psychological, social, medical, and legal mechanisms to facilitate the adaptation of veterans and their family members.

Research into the regulatory framework was used to assess the legal basis for the implementation of state policy in the field of psychological assistance to veterans, in particular, the analysis of the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of their Social Protection”¹, “On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and their Family Members”² and “On the System of Mental Health Care in Ukraine”³. The empirical basis of the study was the results of the analysis of reports by international organisations (WHO, 2023).

To achieve this goal, a systematic and comparative approach was used in combination with a dogmatic analysis of regulatory and legal documents and a structural and functional analysis of socio-psychological support. The comparison made it possible to compare the Ukrainian experience with the practices of other countries, such as the United States, Canada, and Israel. This identified differences in the levels of institutional organisation of assistance, programme structure, approaches to monitoring effectiveness,

and the involvement of family resources in the rehabilitation process. The systematisation method was used to organise the information obtained and identify the main groups of approaches (psychological, social, integrative). This formed a generalised model of social and psychological support that considers the multidisciplinary nature of the process. The application of a structural-functional approach addressed social and psychological support as a holistic system, the elements of which (individual psychotherapy, social measures, institutional interaction) perform complementary functions. This approach determined the place of each component in the overall structure of assistance to veterans.

■ Results and Discussion

An analysis of contemporary literature devoted to the issue of socio-psychological support for combatants and their families has identified three main groups of approaches: psychological, social and integrative. Each of these groups has specific conceptual foundations, implementation methods and specific results. First, it is necessary to consider the legal regulation of issues related to the provision of psychological, social and psychosocial assistance to veterans and combatants and their families, which in Ukraine is determined by several laws and subordinate regulatory acts.

Firstly, it is worth noting Law of Ukraine No. 3551-XII⁴, which establishes the legal status of veterans, guarantees them social protection and defines their right to receive psychological assistance, including through state programmes and specialised institutions. Moreover, Law of Ukraine No. 2011-XII⁵ is also relevant, as it establishes a set of social guarantees, including the provision of free psychological assistance to persons who are being discharged or have been discharged from service, as well as to family members of deceased or fallen military personnel.

The Law of Ukraine No. 4223-IX⁶, adopted in 2023, which will come into force in 2025-2026, addresses mental health issues. It defines the legal and organisational basis for the functioning of the mental health care system, including psychosocial support for war veterans and their families. Among the subordinate acts, Resolution of the Cabinet of

¹ Law of Ukraine No. 3551-XII “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of their Social Protection”. (1993, October). Retrieved from <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text>.

² Law of Ukraine No. 2011-XII “On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and their Family Members”. (1991, December). Retrieved from <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2011-12#Text>.

³ Law of Ukraine No. 4223-IX “On the System of Mental Health Care in Ukraine”. (2025, January). Retrieved from <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4223-20#Text>.

⁴ Law of Ukraine No. 3551-XII “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of their Social Protection”. (1993, October). Retrieved from <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text>.

⁵ Law of Ukraine No. 2011-XII “On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and their Family Members”. (1991, December). Retrieved from <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2011-12#Text>.

⁶ Law of Ukraine No. 4223-IX “On the System of Mental Health Care in Ukraine”. (2025, January). Retrieved from <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4223-20#Text>.

Ministers of Ukraine No. 1338¹ is of key importance. This document defines the procedure, conditions and categories of persons who are provided with free psychological assistance, as well as establishes a list of institutions and specialists authorised to provide such services. Another relevant element is Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine No. 2118². The document details the list of services, diagnostic methods and therapeutic approaches that can be used in the rehabilitation of veterans.

Ukraine has been dealing with Russian aggression since 2014. Since then, a range of studies were conducted on the psychological, physical, and socio-economic needs of Ukrainian veterans and their families. In particular, veterans and their family members may face various problems as a result of military service and new experiences. In a guide for veterans and their families, the following groups of problems faced by veterans and their families are highlighted: physical and mental health problems; employment and financial difficulties; relationship problems; housing problems and homelessness; social isolation (Lashko, 2023).

A significant proportion of veterans face physical and mental health problems. Returning from service, they often have serious physical injuries. Along with this, mental health disorders are common, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety. Family members of veterans may also experience secondary traumatic stress as they deal with the consequences of their loved ones' military experiences. The quality of interpersonal relationships has a significant impact. Military experience and the mental and physical consequences of service often cause tension in family life (Halych, 2020). This is reflected in an increase in the number of divorces. In addition, unstable living conditions have a negative impact on the psychological climate of the family and make it difficult to create a comfortable environment for children. After returning to civilian life, combatants often feel alienated from society.

Most Ukrainian people have a lack of awareness about mental health, healthy lifestyle, constructive conflict resolution, meeting personal needs, and supporting others. A lack of awareness of the processes that occur in a person after returning from war and ignorance of how to respond to these changes are characteristic not only of veterans and their families, but also of service providers and local government officials. This situation leads to prejudice against veter-

ans in communities and makes it difficult to create an atmosphere of goodwill, mutual care and psychological support both within families and at the community level. Low public awareness significantly affects the demand for psychosocial services, determining their content and the quality of satisfaction. An additional barrier is the prevalence of stigma and prejudiced attitudes towards mental health, as well as fears related to confidentiality issues when seeking help. All this hinders the development of an effective system of psychosocial support for veterans and their families in communities (Klymchuk & Tsarenko, 2021).

Providing psychological assistance is one of the key factors ensuring the successful adaptation of military personnel to peaceful living conditions after the end of hostilities. Its main task is not only to overcome the individual psychological trauma caused by war, but also to restore and strengthen the individual's relationship with their natural, social and cultural environment. This integrated approach not only eliminates the consequences of physical and mental trauma but also increases the individual's resilience to possible repeated crises. The social aspect of support is also essential, as it involves the creation of favourable conditions for the resocialisation and adaptation of veterans to the new realities of civilian life. One of the most effective mechanisms for achieving this goal is the operation of specialised rehabilitation centres. Such institutions provide comprehensive assistance, including psychological, medical and social services, and help veterans to re-establish their social roles, build interpersonal relationships and solve a wide range of problems related to their integration into peaceful life (Stasiuk & Fedorenko, 2025).

Psychological assistance to military personnel and veterans primarily aims to overcome the individual psychological trauma caused by war, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and adjustment disorders. Cognitive-behavioural therapy, desensitisation, and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) are most commonly used in individual psychotherapy. According to international studies, it is the cognitive-behavioural approach that demonstrates the highest effectiveness in treating PTSD among veterans in the United States and the United Kingdom (Halych, 2020). The effectiveness of the cognitive-behavioural approach in treating post-traumatic stress disorder has been confirmed by numerous empirical studies and meta-analyses. In particular, according to the American

¹ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1338 "Some Issues of Providing Free Psychological Assistance to Persons Discharged or Discharged from Military Service, War Veterans, Persons Who Have Made Special Merits to the Fatherland, Family Members of Such Persons and Family Members of Deceased War veterans and Family Members of Deceased Defenders of Ukraine in Accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans". (2022, November). Retrieved from <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1338-2022-n#Text>.

² Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine No. 2118 "On the Organisation of Providing Psychosocial Assistance to the Population". (2023, December). Retrieved from <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0126-24#Text>.

Psychiatric Association (PTSD Treatments, 2025) and the World Health Organisation (2023), cognitive-behavioural therapy is one of the first-line treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder. It provides a sustained reduction in the frequency of flashbacks, nightmares, and hyperarousal, and also contributes to improved emotional stability, social functioning, and overall quality of life. Group programmes help reduce feelings of isolation and promote the formation of new social connections, as confirmed by the practice of Ukrainian volunteer psychological assistance centres O. Stoliaryk & T. Semigina (2023). Early intervention aimed to prevent acute psychotraumatic reactions in soldiers who have just returned from the front is also particularly relevant.

Social support for veterans covers a wider range of measures aimed to restore social functioning, integration into civilian life and improving the quality of life of their families. A significant proportion of military personnel face employment and alienation problems in civilian life after their return. Therefore, resocialisation programmes include career guidance, educational courses and involvement in community initiatives. M. Halych (2025) demonstrated that effective assistance to veterans is impossible without addressing the needs of their family members. In many cases, it is the family that becomes the main resource for adaptation, but at the same time, it experiences high psychological and social stress. There are a number of state programmes in Ukraine, but it will take some time to assess their effectiveness.

In international practice, social approaches are implemented through state agencies in cooperation with non-governmental organisations. For example, the United States has a Veterans Affairs system that combines medical, educational, and social services. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs implements the Veterans Rehabilitation Program¹, whose main areas of focus are: medical rehabilitation (treatment of injuries, amputations, prosthetics), psychological support (PTSD therapy, depression, group and individual counselling), employment and professional adaptation programmes, as well as individual initiatives such as the Wounded Warrior Project, which assists wounded veterans, and Vet Centres, which are places for informal support for veterans. Another feature of the American model is the systematic monitoring and evaluation of programme effectiveness. This provides timely improvement of existing practices, implementation of new methods, and adaptation of programmes to the needs of veterans and their families. Thus, the American system of psychosocial support is characterised by its comprehensiveness and institutional diversity, and its effectiveness is

largely ensured by the inclusion of a family component (Tahan *et al.*, 2021; Halych, 2025).

In Israel, the Beit Halochem rehabilitation centre provides professional psychological and psychiatric assistance in the form of cognitive behavioural therapy, social adaptation through joint activities and training courses, and physical rehabilitation through sport (Paralympic programmes). A distinctive feature of the programme is its focus on family support and extensive sports and cultural programmes. It provides a space for processing combat experiences, using both individual and group work formats, emphasising adaptation to civilian life, including family support components, and is often combined with other areas of assistance (social, medical, professional). A substantial component of the Israeli model is the creation of a safe environment for collective work with traumatic experiences. Programmes such as Peace of Mind are designed to process through the effects of combat experience in groups while involving their families in the process of psychosocial support. The integration of family counselling and educational sessions fosters a shared perception of the specifics of post-traumatic experiences, reducing isolation and conflict within the family. Alongside group therapy, national initiatives aimed to prevent and treat post-traumatic disorders are substantial. Programmes such as Shields of Resilience combine psychotherapeutic interventions with social support, creating conditions for stabilising the emotional state of not only military personnel but also their immediate relatives. This helps reduce secondary trauma in family members, who often bear the brunt of their loved ones' war experiences (Halych, 2025).

A group of American scientists, E.A. Prosek *et al.* (2021), developed "Exemplary Practices for Military Populations" (EPMP) with civilian psychologists and identified the necessary competencies. The EPMP structure consists of seven main components: military culture, identity development, system characteristics, assessment of existing problems, treatment, ethics, and protection (Kokun *et al.*, 2023). The Canadian psychosocial support programme is designed for veterans who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, including veterans who need support. Family members and caregivers of veterans, relatives living with veterans, or those who provide care, also have access to physical, mental, and social health support programmes. The programme highlights information for military personnel who are about to complete their service and need an action plan for transitioning to civilian life, education, and employment. A separate section provides information for individuals with

¹ Instruction of the Department of Defense of USA No. 6490.05 "Maintenance of Psychological Health in Military Operations". (2011, November). Retrieved from <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/649005p.pdf>.

somatic health problems (compensation, treatment or support services, etc.). It also provides a list of specialists and organisations working with veterans, including social workers, psychologists, clinicians and non-governmental organisations. The Canadian psychosocial support programme for veterans is a comprehensive government system implemented through Veterans Affairs Canada and aimed to provide veterans and their families with a wide range of services, including psychological, social, medical and professional assistance. Its main goal is to create conditions for full resocialisation, adaptation to civilian life and the preservation of mental health for those who have participated in military operations. The support programme is complemented by a system of rehabilitation measures that combine medical, psychosocial and professional components. It involves the development of individual rehabilitation plans that include both physical and mental health recovery, as well as professional reorientation, training and employment assistance. Thus, the support has not only a therapeutic but also a socio-economic dimension, aimed to ensure the stability and well-being of the veteran and family. The Canadian psychosocial support programme is based on an integrated model that combines medical, psychological and social resources into a single system. Its distinctive feature is its focus on comprehensive assistance, covering both the veteran and their family, as well as the active involvement of community initiatives and volunteer networks. This approach ensures long-term effectiveness, reduces the stigma associated with mental disorders, and contributes to improving the quality of life of veterans after completing military service (Veterans Affairs Canada, 2025).

Despite differences in structure and approach, all three systems combine medical, psychological and social components into a single care package. The American model is notable for its scale and systematic approach, the Israeli model for the depth of its psychotherapeutic work and family focus, and the Canadian model for its social inclusiveness and cross-sectoral interaction. The synthesis of these elements could form the basis for an effective model of psychosocial support for combatants and their families.

The psychological and social components form an integrative approach to supporting combatants and their families, which includes the involvement of a multidisciplinary team, the use of case management, and cross-sector partnerships. Each component will be analysed below. Multidisciplinary teams include psychologists, social workers, doctors, and lawyers, developing an individual assistance plan for combatants. Case management involves appointing a specialist to coordinate all types of assistance for a specific veteran and their family. As noted by O. Stoliaryk & T. Semigina (2023), elements of case management are already being implemented in Ukraine as part of some projects of international organisations. Cross-sectoral partnerships involve the integration of state, public and international resources, which is considered key to a sustainable support system, as confirmed by the experience of Canada and Israel.

An analysis of the Ukrainian regulatory framework related to the provision of psychological, social and psychosocial assistance to combatants and their families, and the identification of international experience, made it possible to compare the types of approaches used in their implementation, the main aspects of which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Ukrainian and international experience in providing social and psychological support to combatants and their families

Approach	Ukraine	USA/Canada/Israel
Psychological	local initiatives, volunteer programmes	government programmes, large-scale mental health centres
Social	benefits, educational programmes, volunteer initiatives	integrated systems (Veterans Affairs, Ministry of Defence), focus on employment and education
Integrative	individual pilot projects supported by international organisations	established multidisciplinary teams, developed a case management system

Source: compiled by the author

The results show that Ukraine still prioritise psychological and social measures, while integrative models are only beginning to be implemented. When working with families of combatants, two main aspects are usually highlighted: cooperation with them as one of the most significant factors in the psychological rehabilitation and psychological support of

combatants returning from war, and the provision of direct psychological support to family members of military personnel.

The results of the study demonstrated that successful socio-psychological rehabilitation of veterans has positive correlations with factors of family well-being, and changes in family relationships can

be substantial in the process of providing psychological assistance to veterans. The family as a system contains the following elements: basic elements (men and women, adults and children); purpose (raising the younger generation and further development of all its members); order of functioning of the system elements (rules by which the family lives, type of communication between its members, characteristics of their self-esteem); system energy (food, water, air, activity and life positions of family members in combination with each other); interaction with the outside world (change in the family's attitude to life) (Hrynzovskyi *et al.*, 2022).

Notably, a significant proportion of veterans who need social and psychological support are often unable to access it. This leads to isolation from family and friends. Analysing this phenomenon, it is possible to conclude that veterans create a kind of barrier around themselves to maintain control over their own intimate experiences related to relevant people and events (McCarroll *et al.*, 2007). After transferring negative events and experiences of war to peaceful conditions, veterans continue to control the depth of their own experiences and relationships, fearing to feel the emotional pain associated with stressful situations again (Newby *et al.*, 2005).

Conclusions regarding the need for a comprehensive approach to supporting veterans are consistent with the findings of O. Stoliaryk & T. Semigina (2023), emphasising that only a combination of psychological assistance and social integration can ensure sustainable results. The work of a psychologist with trauma must be complemented by social support for the family. The study by O. Stoliaryk & T. Semigina (2023) confirms the results of the analysis, as it focuses on the problems of resocialisation of military personnel, which remain the least addressed in Ukraine. In this regard, the experience of the United States, where special programmes for professional adaptation and retraining are in place, may be particularly useful.

In contrast to American models, the Ukrainian support system is in a stage of active development and involves coordination between state and public institutions. Analysis shows that existing programmes are difficult to evaluate, which complicates their improvement. In the US and Canada, on the contrary, monitoring results are an integral part of government policy in the field of veteran support. Another difference is the role of the family. In international models, the family is viewed as a key source of support.

Self-care for mental health and the well-being of loved ones requires learning self-help and self-support skills. This primarily involves the ability to be attentive to personal inner states, listen to bodily signals and emotions, and trust existing self-regulation mechanisms developed throughout life. A substantial

element is the practice of self-acceptance and the development of the ability to adequately assess and accept personal feelings without judgment. A further awareness of personal emotions creates the conditions for effective management of them. In situations of increased anxiety, panic or emotional tension, it is advisable to use special techniques and exercises to regulate your psycho-emotional state. In most cases, each person already has some individual experience of coping with stress; therefore, it is necessary to refer to those strategies that have previously helped to restore inner balance.

An equally significant factor in maintaining psychological well-being is one's social environment. Support from family, friends, colleagues, peers, and associates is essential in strengthening one's inner resources. The presence of an empathetic and attentive circle of communication contributes to a sense of security and acceptance. At the same time, it should be emphasised that the absence of such an environment is a completely natural phenomenon, and in such cases it is worth seeking help from professional psychologists, social workers, counsellors or volunteers who provide psychosocial support.

Psychological support and mutual support groups have also proven to be effective. In particular, peer-to-peer programmes, which assist veterans to other veterans and their families, have become widespread. Such groups not only provide emotional relief but also create a space of trust where participants can share their experiences with people who have had similar experiences. At the same time, the psychologist provides emotional support and creates an atmosphere of acceptance, caring and empathy. This contributes to the individual feeling validation, value and entitlement to personal experiences (Lashko *et al.*, 2023).

At the same time, social and psychological support for combatants and their families in Ukraine must be based on the specific nature of the Russian-Ukrainian war, considering the unique experience of Ukrainians. A critical condition for improving the effectiveness of the system is reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, raising public awareness, and creating clear pathways to assistance and accessible services for veterans and their families. Families deserve special attention as a key resource for recovery: expanding the range of family and parental support, programmes for children, and training modules on stress management and constructive communication skills. The results obtained formulated several substantial conclusions regarding the further development of theory and practice: a combination of psychological and social approaches should form the basis of future support programmes; it is necessary to create a single state centre to coordinate the activities of various institutions and organisations; family participation in support programmes is key to the successful

adaptation of veterans. Drawing on the experience of countries with a long history of supporting the military will accelerate the development of the Ukrainian system, but when integrating this experience, it is essential to consider the uniqueness of the Ukrainian experience. In addition, some Ukrainian programmes are still in the implementation stage, so there are no long-term results on their effectiveness.

A summary of the results of comparing international experience in providing social and psychological support to combatants and their families identified several key areas.

- Firstly, individual psychological counselling for family members is a substantial component. Such counselling helps to reduce anxiety levels, learn emotional self-regulation, restore a sense of security and develop internal resources to support combatants.

- Secondly, family and group therapy are efficient. It can be used to address all family members simultaneously, reducing tension in relationships, establishing new patterns of interaction, and preserving family unity. Through group work, families can receive support from other families experiencing similar difficulties.

- Thirdly, social support is becoming increasingly significant. This includes educational and upbringing programmes for children of military personnel, financial assistance for families of those killed in action, and the organisation of leisure and rehabilitation activities. A substantial component of social support is also the development of communities and volunteer initiatives that unite families of veterans and create an environment of mutual assistance.

- Fourthly, an essential element is the development of stress management skills among family members. This may include special training courses aimed to develop effective communication skills, constructive conflict resolution, emotional stability and the ability to adapt to new circumstances.

- Fifth, legal and informational assistance is a substantial component. Families of combatants need access to information about social benefits, legal protection mechanisms, educational and medical programmes. The creation of specialised counselling centres and resource platforms greatly facilitates the process of obtaining such assistance.

Social and psychological support for families of combatants is a multidimensional process that combines psychological interventions, social services, educational and legal mechanisms. A comprehensive approach not only ensures the stability and well-being of the family but also increases the effectiveness of the rehabilitation and adaptation of combatants. The development of a family support system is an essential condition for the successful integration of combatants into peaceful life and the preservation of social stability in society.

■ Conclusions

The study established that social and psychological support for combatants and their families should be structured as a comprehensive, multi-level system in which psychological interventions are inextricably linked to social programmes, legal mechanisms and institutional coordination. The need for such a system is due not only to the growing number of veterans, but also to the long-term consequences of participation in combat operations, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, social isolation and loss of adaptive skills. In the context of prolonged armed conflict, it is the integrated approach of combining individual and group psychotherapy, family-oriented practices, and targeted social assistance to families that provides the most sustainable results in the recovery and return of combatants to active civilian life.

In the process of analysing international experience, the study demonstrated that countries with long-standing experience of military conflicts (the United States, Israel, and Canada) already have well-established systems of comprehensive support for veterans. These include not only psychological assistance, but also a developed infrastructure of social services, mechanisms for professional reintegration, legislative guarantees and state funding. In Ukraine, however, such programmes are still in the process of being developed, and one of the main distinguishing factors remains the fact that Ukrainian society is in a state of full-scale invasion, which significantly complicates the stable implementation of systemic measures.

Therefore, the development of an effective national model of socio-psychological support should be based on the integration of evidence-based psychological approaches, systemic social measures, institutional coordination, and a family-oriented approach. Such a model can ensure not only the individual recovery of veterans, but also the resilience of communities and society as a whole. Promising areas for further research include large-scale empirical evaluations of the effectiveness of Ukrainian support programmes, the development and testing of integrative models that include a family component, analysis of gender aspects, and the study of the role of community initiatives and volunteer movements in building a comprehensive support system.

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Порівняльний аналіз сучасних підходів соціально-психологічної підтримки учасників бойових дій та їхніх родин

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■ **Анотація.** В умовах повномасштабної війни в Україні питання психосоціальної підтримки учасників бойових дій та їхніх родин набуває особливої значущості. Високий рівень стресових навантажень, ризик розвитку дезадаптаційних станів, проблеми ресоціалізації та адаптації після участі в бойових діях зумовлюють потребу у створенні системних програм психологічної допомоги. Метою статті був аналіз сучасних підходів соціально-психологічної підтримки учасників бойових дій та їх родин, узагальнення наукових напрацювань, виокремлення ключових напрямів удосконалення системи допомоги учасникам бойових дій та їх родинам. Методологічний інструментарій обрано відповідно до окресленої мети, специфіки об'єкта й предмета дослідження: методи порівняльного аналізу, контент-аналіз наукових публікацій, системний підхід до узагальнення соціально-психологічних практик, використаних у різних країнах. Зіставлено три основні групи підходів до психосоціальної підтримки: психологічні (індивідуальна та групова терапія, робота з дезадаптаційними станами та посттравматичним розладом), соціальні (ресоціалізація, підтримка родин, освітньо-професійні програми), інтегративні (мультидисциплінарні моделі та кейс-менеджмент). Обґрунтовано важливість урахування психологічної, соціальної та інтегративної складових у системі соціально-психологічної підтримки. Доведено, що український досвід є унікальним, а система соціально-психологічної підтримки знаходиться на етапі вдосконалення в контексті активної фази протистояння збройній агресії, натомість практики Сполучених Штатів Америки, Ізраїлю та Канади мають сталі механізми державної та громадської підтримки через виключеність компонента прямої загрози. Отримані результати можуть стати основою під час використання для оптимізації програм психологічної та соціальної реабілітації ветеранів, а також для формування інтегративних моделей підтримки, що враховують як потреби учасників бойових дій, так і членів їхніх родин

■ **Ключові слова:** ветерани; психосоціальна підтримка; реабілітація; адаптація; соціальна робота; психічне здоров'я