

Volodymyr Novokhatskyi

Vinnitsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University
Postgraduate student of the Department of Psychology and Social Work (Ukraine)

vnavik2@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3660-4784>

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF VETERANS' PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Повномасштабна війна в Україні спричинила появу нових, раніше невідомих для нашого суспільства викликів. Одним із таких викликів є професійна інтеграція ветеранів війни. Сприяння зайнятості ветерана війни має стати ключовими у стратегії переходу від військової кар'єри до цивільного життя. Професійна інтеграція в майбутньому з однієї сторони сприятиме спроможності ветерана війни задовольнити свої потреби, самореалізуватися в різних сферах суспільного життя, а з іншої - зробити внесок у відновлення та розвиток України загалом та конкретної громади зокрема. Затяжний характер російської збройної агресії зумовлює збільшення українських захисників, які у найближчій перспективі матимуть статус «ветеран війни». Воєнні дії погіршують демографічні показники, зростає чисельність інвалідів у працездатному віці. Такі реалії в Україні переконують у неминучості значних втрат робочої сили і погіршенні її якісних характеристик.

Стаття досліджує складні психологічні аспекти, що виникають у процесі професійної інтеграції ветеранів війни. Вона розглядає ключові виклики, з якими стикаються ветерани при поверненні до цивільного життя та на ринок праці, а також пропонує стратегії та підходи для подолання цих перешкод. Автори аналізують психологічні наслідки військової служби та вплив стресових ситуацій на психічне здоров'я ветеранів. Вони розглядають питання адаптації до нових умов життя, зокрема до змін в роботі, соціальних взаємодіях та сімейних відносинах. Крім того, стаття висвітлює важливість психологічної підтримки та психотерапевтичних методів для ветеранів під час переходу до цивільного життя. Вона пропонує різні стратегії, які сприяють успішній інтеграції, такі як професійна підготовка, психологічна консультація та соціальна підтримка. Стаття має за мету підвищити усвідомленість та розуміння психологічних викликів, з якими стикаються ветерани війни під час професійної інтеграції, та надати конкретні рекомендації для їх успішного подолання.

Ключові слова: професійна інтеграція, цивільне життя, військова служба, наслідки військової служби, адаптація, психічне здоров'я, соціальна підтримка.

The full-scale war in Ukraine has led to the emergence of new challenges that were previously unknown to our society. One of these challenges is the professional integration of war veterans. Promoting the employment of war veterans should be a key part of the strategy of transition from military career to civilian life. Professional integration in the future will, on the one hand, contribute to the ability of war veterans to meet their needs and self-realise in various spheres of public life, and on the other hand, contribute to the restoration and development of Ukraine as a whole and a particular community in particular. The protracted nature of Russia's armed aggression is leading to an increase in the number of Ukrainian defenders who will soon have the status of "war veterans". Military operations are worsening demographic indicators, and the number of disabled people of working age is growing. These realities in Ukraine make it inevitable that there will be significant losses of labour force and a deterioration in its quality.

The article explores the complex psychological aspects that arise in the process of professional integration of war veterans. It examines the key challenges that veterans face when returning to civilian life and the labour market, and suggests strategies and approaches to overcome these obstacles. The authors analyse the psychological consequences of military service and the impact of stressful situations on veterans' mental health. They consider the issue of adaptation to new living conditions, including changes in work, social interactions and family relationships. In addition, the article highlights the importance of psychological support and psychotherapeutic methods for veterans during the transition to civilian life. It suggests various strategies that contribute to successful integration, such as vocational training, psychological counselling and social support. The article aims to raise awareness and understanding of the psychological challenges faced by war veterans during professional integration and provide specific recommendations for their successful overcoming.

Keywords: professional integration, civilian life, military service, consequences of military service, adaptation, mental health, social support.

Relevance of research. In Ukraine, which has been de facto at war for more than nine years, the issues of developing effective mechanisms for social adaptation, physical and psychological rehabilitation of combatants and their integration into communities are becoming increasingly relevant. According to the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs of Ukraine, the number of veterans, their families and families of fallen soldiers after the victory will be about 10% of the total population of Ukraine [3]. The policy of returning combatants to civilian life and supporting their families requires joint efforts from the state, civil society and the business community. The success of such a policy depends on the participation of combatants in public life, including their economic activity and a decent level of well-being. Obviously, a significant proportion of combatants are of working age, whose needs go beyond the scope of social protection and the system of benefits.

Underestimation of the depth and systemic nature of the problems related to the reintegration of veterans may lead to the spread of social and economic risks, including: unemployment; deepening imbalances in the labour market; loss of budget revenues with an increased burden on the budget; lack of conditions for self-realisation, which will contribute to the deterioration of the psycho-emotional state and the spread of social alienation of a significant proportion of the population; the likelihood of destructive forms of social behaviour among veterans in the formation of a model of relations in society.

A sociological study conducted by the Ukrainian Veterans Fund shows that the majority of respondents (65.8%) need adaptation for their return to work. At the same time, 76.2% of respondents reported that their company (at their previous place of work) did not introduce programmes or measures for the adaptation of employees with combat participant status. Surveys among veterans and servicemen and women reveal their needs for employment support, namely: 53.3 per cent of respondents expressed a desire to retrain; 48.2 per cent - to obtain additional education; 39.8 per cent - to extend the adaptation period; 35.8 per cent - to introduce adaptation trainings; 32.5 per cent - career guidance counselling; 14.1 per cent - coaching; 13.7 per cent - need help writing a CV or preparing for an interview [7]. The above makes this topic particularly relevant.

Review of recent research. The analysis of literature sources has shown that the psychology of forming readiness for professional activity, mastering professional knowledge, skills and abilities has been studied by a number of Ukrainian and foreign researchers, in particular: G. Ball, V. Bocheluk, L. Dolynska, G. Kostiuk, T. Kudriavtsev, M. Levchenko, S. Maksymenko, O. Meshko, E. Millerian, V. Moliako, O. Moroz, O. Penkova, P. Perepylytsia, M. Pryazhnikov, V. Rybalka, N. Pobirchenko, M. Savchyn, M. Smulson, etc.

The relevance of integrative trends is confirmed by studies of the philosophical foundations of integration (S. Klepko et al.) and psychological (I. Bex, T. Yatsenko et al.) principles. The study of the theoretical foundations and organisational and methodological aspects of the development of knowledge

integration in the context of professional training is devoted to the works of A. Belyaeva, V. Bepalko, S. Goncharenko, Y. Zhydetskyi, J. Kmit, S. Klepko, E. Kovalenko, O. Shevniuk, etc. [6].

Numerous studies by contemporary scholars point to a number of problems in the process of integrating war veterans into civilian life in general and professional activities in particular. As a rule, active servicemen and women who are engaged in military affairs on a professional level have respect from society, support from volunteer organisations, a sufficient level of financial support, and are engaged in an important nationally important activity. However, after returning from war and obtaining veteran status, the usual and acceptable way of life changes. A war veteran has to integrate into a society that is different from the one before the war; return to a family whose interaction is different from that with their comrades-in-arms; accept themselves and find ways to successfully return to civilian life through the successful use of their own changes that occurred during the war.

The level of involvement in addressing the issues of psychological and professional integration of war veterans will largely determine their future and the effectiveness of their social integration.

The purpose of this study is theoretical analysis of psychological aspects of veterans' professional integration.

Presentation of the main research material. Military service can have a significant impact on the mental health of veterans due to the various stressful situations and experiences they go through. Some of the main psychological consequences of military service include:

— Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): This is one of the most common psychological reactions to traumatic events that can occur as a result of military service. Veterans with PTSD may experience recurrent flashbacks, panic attacks, anxiety and depression.

— Depression and anxiety disorders: Military conflicts can lead to the development of depression and anxiety disorders in veterans due to stress, loss and other traumatic experiences.

— Psychosomatic diseases: Stressful situations and traumatic experiences can lead to the development of psychosomatic illnesses, such as ulcers, heart problems and other physical conditions related to mental stress.

— Sleep problems: Veterans may experience sleep problems, such as insomnia or nightmares, which may be related to stress and traumatic experiences.

— Aggressive behaviour and health problems: Stressful situations can lead to increased levels of aggression in veterans, as well as the development of alcohol or drug problems.

These psychological consequences of military service can have a negative impact on veterans' mental health and hinder their professional integration.

During the full-scale war, the domestic labour market has experienced unfavourable conditions for the social reintegration of veterans. The war has led to an increase in the number of unemployed people and the expansion of the shadow labour market in Ukraine, including through combat-related activities. According to official statistics, as of 1 September 2023, 103.3 thousand people were registered with the State Employment Centre, including 1.7 thousand combatants. Since the beginning of this year, the number of unemployed people with disabilities has increased by 700 people. At the same time, the number of unemployed combatants who received services from the State Employment Service in January-September 2023 was 4.2 thousand people, including 4.1 thousand registered as unemployed, 672 employed, 92 attending vocational training and 71 receiving a voucher for training. The number of unemployed combatants covered by vocational guidance services in the period under review was 3.5 thousand [1]. Of course, due to a number of organisational, managerial and psychological reasons, these statistics do not fully reflect the real situation in the field of professional integration of veterans.

Veterans' professional integration is the process of successfully integrating them into the civilian professional environment after completing military service. This process can be caused by a variety of factors, such as a lack of experience in the civilian sector, the need for retraining or an underestimation of veterans' skills. The professional integration of veterans is an important step in their transition to civilian life and can be achieved through various strategies and approaches:

- Vocational training and retraining: Providing veterans with opportunities to acquire new professional skills or retrain for successful entry into the civilian labour market.
- Mentoring and counselling: Providing support to veterans through mentoring programmes that provide them with practical advice and assistance in adapting to a new professional environment.
- Leveraging veterans' skills and experience: Recognising and utilising the unique skills and experience that veterans acquired during their military service in the civilian sphere.
- Psychological support: Providing psychological support and counselling to help veterans deal with emotional and psychological issues related to the process of professional integration.
- Facilitating access to jobs: Creating opportunities for veterans to access vacancies and jobs through support programmes or special initiatives.

The professional integration of veterans is an important stage in their transition to civilian life and contributes to their successful development in the civilian professional environment.

In the process of professional integration of war veterans, various complex psychological aspects may arise that affect their ability to successfully adapt to new living conditions and cope with the challenges of the work environment. Some of the most common difficulties include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Many veterans may experience PTSD as a result of traumatic events they experienced during their military service. This can lead to anxiety, depression and other mental health issues that make it difficult to integrate into a new work environment.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychological reaction to a severe traumatic event or series of events, which may include war, assault, accidents, violence, disasters, etc. The main symptoms of PTSD include: torporic reliving of traumatic events (recurrent memories, nightmares), hyperarousal and increased anxiety, avoidance of reminders of events or emotional detachment, and a decrease in interest in life (apathy). PTSD can have a serious impact on veterans' quality of life, relationships, professional activities and overall mental health. Treatment for PTSD can include psychotherapy, medication and support from specialised professionals. It is important that veterans receive adequate support and assistance to overcome this disorder and return to a healthy and satisfying life.

Also, during the process of professional integration, veterans may experience a sense of alienation, especially when they feel their skills and experience are not valued. This can be exacerbated by adaptation to a new work environment, which may be significantly different from the military.

Veterans may have difficulty finding jobs that match their skills and experience, especially if their military experience is not recognised or valued in the civilian market. They may also feel alienated and socially isolated in the civilian environment, especially if they have lost contact with their military comrades or do not find a supportive community. In this case, creative activities can be helpful, as they can help transform the way a veteran views events and situations in his or her life. Creativity can promote the desire and productive overcoming of the veteran's state of personal alienation and increase the level of harmonious life [3].

Insufficient income or financial instability can be serious problems for veterans, especially if they have families or other financial obligations. A separate but particularly important obstacle can be trauma and disability sustained as a result of military operations, which can make it difficult for veterans to find work and integrate into the labour market.

Lack of social support can also act as an obstacle to a veteran's professional adaptation, as they may feel unsupported by colleagues or the work environment, which can undermine their self-confidence and ability to adapt.

These complex psychological aspects can be a challenge for the professional integration of war veterans, and it is important to take them into account when developing support and accompaniment strategies for this group of people. The above challenges require a comprehensive approach to supporting and accompanying veterans in the process of their reintegration into civilian life and the labour market.

Professional activity plays a leading role in the development of a person as a personality. Personality is usually formed, revealed and improved in professional activity. According to scientists B. Ananiev and

B. Lomov, the peculiarities of a specialist's personality have an impact on the process and result of professional activity at the same time, the formation of a person as a personality largely takes place in the course of professional activity and under its influence - here we observe the existence of a two-way inseparable link between personality formation and professional activity [6], which plays an important role in the improvement of a professional.

Analysis of the scientific literature on professional development and professional training emphasises that this process is closely linked to human socialisation, which involves mastering new social roles and developing the qualities and abilities necessary to perform social functions. Their interconnection lies in the fact that in the course of professionalisation, a person masters the most important social role from the point of view of the interests of society - a profession with a certain status and prestige. Its mastering takes place mainly within the framework of the same institutions where the most important qualities of a person are acquired and improved (school, vocational school, higher education institution, professional community, etc.). However, the stages of socialisation often coincide with the stages of professionalism in terms of time and content.

In the context of working with veterans who are gaining experience in a new profession or updating their knowledge in the profession they were engaged in before the war, a component of military experience, the ability to survive, command, make difficult decisions, take risks, obey, etc. is added.

22% of employers surveyed believe that most veterans acquire new competencies during their military service that can be useful in the labour market. Regarding the skills of veterans that will facilitate their employment and career development in organisations or companies: 23% of the employers surveyed mentioned teamwork skills, 15% - critical thinking, 11% - responsible leadership, 11% - technical skills, and 8% - computer systems skills. Employers also noted the importance of acquired skills in engineering and construction, logistics, management of communication systems, quadcopters, and drones.

These skills and abilities are in line with the requirements of the modern labour market and should be rationally implemented in the process of post-war economic recovery, which will actualise the creation of a favourable environment for the barrier-free reintegration of combatants and will contribute to the competitiveness of Ukrainian enterprises with global ones in accordance with modern ethical trends. The competition policy involves, first of all, increasing the competitiveness of an enterprise. And this is possible only through the application of fundamentally new (different from traditional) approaches to understanding and assessing the competitiveness of an enterprise, the development and implementation of a comprehensive competitiveness management system, the choice of a competitive market strategy in the commodity and technology markets, focused on a modern and correct path that will meet the level of environmental variability at the current stage of Ukraine's development [2].

The support of civil society is important in addressing the challenges of expanding employment opportunities for war veterans. According to the interviewed veterans and servicemen, civil society can help to employ veterans through community centres for veterans (68.8%); public employment platforms (50.1%); adaptation trainings for veterans (47.9%); career guidance activities by NGOs (41.3%); free coaching consultations (32.6%); and job fairs (26.2%).

In the overall context of countering the risks of a reduction in the size of the workforce in Ukraine and its underutilisation, it is important to take into account the prospects of mass demobilisation and the return of a significant number of previously mobilised workers, and to develop the most effective measures to stimulate their employment. Ukrainian businesses are already experiencing a shortage of employees. Experts predict that in the coming year, if the current rate of recovery continues, Ukraine will face a labour shortage. The industrial sector expects that there will be an average of 0.75 applicants per vacancy in the summer of 2024. At the same time, Ukraine is facing structural unemployment and a staff shortage at the same time. In the labour market, a significant number of the unemployed have a university degree, and sometimes more than one. At the same time, there is a severe shortage of skilled workers [4]. The spread of such risks can be stopped by creating a favourable environment for the employment of veterans of the

Russian-Ukrainian war, introducing transparent and effective mechanisms of information and financial support, starting a new business and developing existing ones.

Adapting a veteran to new living conditions, including changes in work, social interactions and family relationships, can be a difficult process. Veterans may face challenges in finding a new job or adapting to changes in their professional environment. It is important to provide support in job search, job search skills and adaptation to new working conditions. It is important to create opportunities for veterans to join new social groups and support networks that will help them adapt to civilian life. Veterans' adaptation may also include redefining family roles and interactions with family. It is important to provide support and resources for veterans and their families in this process. Providing accessible psychological support and counselling can be helpful for veterans who are working to adapt to new living conditions. Psychologists can help veterans to deal with emotional and psychological problems they may encounter along the way. A veteran's adjustment to a new environment can take time, support and resources, but with the right support, it can be successful and contribute to their positive transition to civilian life.

Several strategies and approaches exist to overcome the obstacles veterans may face when returning to civilian life and the labour market:

— Psychological support and counselling: providing accessible and effective psychological support, including therapy, counselling and support from professionals specialised in working with veterans.

— Vocational training and retraining: providing veterans with the necessary skills and competencies to successfully enter the civilian labour market through vocational training or retraining.

— Mentoring and community support: establishing mentoring programmes that provide veterans with support and assistance from experienced professionals or colleagues to successfully integrate into their new workplace.

— Psychosocial rehabilitation: providing psychosocial rehabilitation services, including psychological support, stress management training and adaptation skills development.

— Social support and mutual assistance: creation of specialised social support and mutual assistance programmes for veterans, which provide an opportunity to share experiences and resources.

— Public awareness and education: raising public awareness and working to eliminate stigma associated with veterans through educational campaigns and information events.

These strategies and approaches are aimed at creating a favourable environment for the successful integration of veterans into the civilian labour market and civilian life in general.

Conclusion. Veterans face a number of challenges in their transition to civilian life, including a lack of professional skills, social isolation and psychological difficulties such as post-traumatic stress disorder. For successful integration of veterans into civilian life, it is important to ensure that they have access to effective psychological support and counselling to overcome emotional and psychological difficulties. Establishing psychological rehabilitation programmes, mentoring, vocational training and social support can contribute to the successful integration of veterans into civilian society. The public and governmental structures play an important role in creating a favourable environment for the integration of veterans by developing social programmes and policies aimed at supporting this group. It is important to work on raising public awareness and eliminating the stigma associated with veterans to create conditions for their successful integration into society. The overall goal of researching the psychological aspects of veterans' professional integration is to understand and address the challenges they face, as well as to develop effective strategies and support programmes to facilitate their successful transition to civilian life.

Prospects for further research include, researching psychological factors that will contribute to the successful professional integration of veterans and developing strategies to support them.

References

[1] Derzhavnyi tsentr zainiatosti. Derzhava pidtrymuie profesiine navchannia dlia UBD ta liudei z invalidnistiu. URL: <https://vol.dcz.gov.ua/node/7548>

[2] Palamarchuk O. M. Orhanizatsiino-ekonomichniy mekhanizm upravlinnia konkurentospromozhnistiu pidprijemstva / O. M. Palamarchuk // Ekonomichniy visnyk universytetu. - 2017. - Vyp. 35(1). - S. 59-66. - Rezhym dostupu: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/ecvu_2017_35%281%29_11

[3] Palamarchuk O.M., Podorozhnyi V.H. Tvorchyia diialnist yak zasib podolannia osobystisnoho vidchuzhennia liudmy pokhlyoho viku. Teoriia i praktyka suchasnoi psykholohii : zb. nauk. pr. / Klasych. pryvat. un-t. Zaporizhzhia. Katehoriia B Vypusk №1 2020. S. 88–92. http://www.tpsp-journal.kpu.zp.ua/archive/1_2020/part_3/17.pdf

[4] Piat holovnykh faktiv pro liudskyi kapital Ukrainy. URL: <https://rubryka.com/blog/human-capital-ua/>

[5] Pohorilov S. Pislia viiny veterany ta yikhni rodychi skladut 10 % naselennia Ukrainy. Ukrainska pravda. 2022. 22 hrud. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/12/22/7381862/>

[6] Psykholohichni aspekty profesiinoi pidhotovky konkurentozdatnykh fakhivtsiv: monohrafiia / [Dehtiarova H. S., Koziar M. M., Matiikiv I. M., Rudenko L. A., Shydelko A. V.; za red. Rudenko L. A.]. – Kyiv:, 2012. – 170 s.

[7] Ukrainskyi veteranskyi fond za pidtrymky Lobby X ta Work.ua. Potreby ta pereshkody veteraniv pry pratsevlashtuvann. Sotsiolohichne doslidzhennia. Cherven – lypen 2023 roku. URL: https://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Zvit_pereshkodi_p...

Review received 29.12.2023