



Substantiation of a programme for developing mental resilience in Marine Corps service personnel through coping strategies

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◆ **Abstract.** The relevance of the study is determined by the considerable psychological strain experienced by Marine Corps service personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, who perform tasks in complex littoral zones under conditions of intensive artillery fire, extensive use of unmanned systems and electronic warfare assets, resulting in prolonged logistical and communication isolation of small tactical groups. This study aimed to provide a theoretical substantiation, conceptualisation and structural modelling of a specialised programme for developing mental resilience, designed to transform maladaptive spontaneous defensive responses in service personnel into conscious, proactive and existentially meaningful strategies for coping with combat stress. The methodological basis of the study rested on the integration of the personality-activity approach, the salutogenic paradigm, and methods of existential analysis and logotherapy, which makes it possible to view the combatant as an active agent in managing their own condition. To develop the model of psychological intervention, a set of methods was applied, including systematic and comparative analysis of contemporary doctrines of combat stress management, in particular, Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness, as well as structural and functional modelling. The study found that classical Western protocols for combat stress control, in particular the doctrine of Combat and Operational Stress Control and the principles of Brevity, Immediacy, Contact, Expectancy, Proximity and Simplicity, are insufficient and require substantial adaptation to the conditions of a conventional conflict with disrupted evacuation chains. In response to these challenges, the architecture of a 36-hour training programme has been substantiated. The programme comprises four modules: psycho-emotional stabilisation based on an adapted iCOVER protocol (8 hours), cognitive reappraisal with heuristic modelling of crisis scenarios (8 hours), behavioural adaptation (8 hours), and existential-meaning integration (6 hours). The specific tactical value of reappraising coping strategies has also been substantiated: emotional distancing and fatalism, which are traditionally classified as maladaptive, have been shown to perform a critical compensatory function under conditions of a prolonged, uncontrollable macro-stressor. The practical value of the study lies in the development of an implementation-ready algorithm for autonomous psychological training. Its introduction by personnel psychological support structures can enhance the combat reliability of service personnel, prevent the development of moral injury, and ensure the sustained functioning of units

◆ **Keywords:** combat stress; resilience; mental health; Armed Forces of Ukraine; adaptation; self regulation; psychological readiness

◆ Introduction

The current stage in the development of armed conflicts, exemplified by the full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, has fundamentally changed the paradigm for understanding the nature of combat stress

and has created entirely new and unprecedented requirements for the psychological training of service personnel. At the present stage, combat operations are characterised by a shift from low-intensity asymmetric conflicts to

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large-scale conventional confrontations between adversaries of comparable strength. This battlespace is marked not only by the use of precision-guided weapons and continuous massed artillery strikes, but also by the extensive presence of unmanned systems, particularly FPV drones, constant visual and fire control of the line of contact, and the widespread use of electronic warfare systems. The latter factor leads to the digital and communication isolation of combat units, as emphasised by I. Frankova *et al.* (2025). Under these conditions, Marine Corps service personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), who perform specific tasks in complex littoral zones, conduct river assault landings and hold forward defensive lines, are exposed to psychological pressure of considerable intensity and duration. According to V.A. Pavlovska-Kravchuk (2025), military psychology is actively seeking preventive mechanisms to counteract this exhaustion, with empirical evidence confirming the high effectiveness of specialised resilience-building programmes during the basic and professional training of service personnel. Moreover, as noted by J.D. Bremner & M.T. Wittbrodt (2020), the cumulative impact of combat trauma not only depletes cognitive resources but also causes profound neurobiological shifts, including persistent disruption of neurotransmitter expression and hormonal imbalance, making full psychological recovery impossible without the introduction of intensive methods of psychophysiological self-regulation. At the global level, the issue of maintaining the mental resilience of combatants is the subject of extensive study by leading research institutions. The study by J.F. Tornero-Aguilera *et al.* (2024) emphasised the need to introduce institutionalised systems of psychological support based on the principles of continuity and integration into the combat training process. However, a critical analysis of combat stress management doctrines, in particular the Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) doctrine, reveals certain limitations in the Ukrainian context. COSC programmes were historically developed for the conditions of expeditionary campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the principles of Brevity, Immediacy, Contact, Expectancy, Proximity and Simplicity (BICEPS) predominated. These principles critically depended on an uninterrupted aeromedical evacuation system and access to safe rear areas (Hukovskyy *et al.*, 2024). Under conditions of positional warfare and disrupted evacuation chains, where a unit may remain isolated for weeks or even months, classical Western protocols prove insufficient. Contemporary concepts of Marine Corps development, such as the United States' Force Design 2030, have emphasised the need to shift towards dispersed, autonomous operations conducted from expeditionary advanced bases (Yeadon, 2025). In these conditions, mental resilience emerges not only as a means of physiological survival but also as a key condition for the exercise of the warrior's agency and the unit's ability to operate autonomously without external support.

Research by Ukrainian scholars during 2023-2025 demonstrates a significant conceptual advance in understanding the phenomenology of combat stress and ways

of overcoming it. O. Kokun *et al.* (2023) showed that high levels of self-efficacy, emotional stability and professional resilience are key predictors of maintaining the combat effectiveness of elite combat units. Moreover, it has been confirmed that leadership qualities in service personnel are directly and positively correlated with their psychological endurance and ability to generate constructive coping strategies, even after traumatic experience. An important methodological step in the study by V. Osyodlo & D. Matvieieva (2025) was the examination of resilience as a complex, multilevel system in which social support and deep professional experience play a leading role, as demonstrated using the example of military doctors. The development of specific assessment tools by N.V. Rodina *et al.* (2022), in particular the scale for assessing coping behaviour in dangerous situations, made it possible to identify adaptive and maladaptive responses in combatants precisely under conditions of vital threat, moving away from general civilian concepts of stress. At the same time, the study of innovative methods of heuristic and game-based modelling of worst-case combat scenarios by A. Rotshtein *et al.* (2024) opened new avenues for the preventive cognitive preparation of service personnel for action under conditions of uncertainty. The need for a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation that integrates the family environment and clinical therapy was confirmed in the research of V.V. Stasiuk & Y.A. Fedorenko (2025b) on the socio-psychological recovery of veterans. This issue becomes particularly acute in the context of developing multidisciplinary approaches to supporting service personnel, where the purposeful formation of psychological stress-resilience skills should begin as early as possible and serve as the basis for the subsequent medical and social rehabilitation of wounded combatants.

Despite the existence of a comprehensive theoretical and empirical base, the problem of creating an integrated, pragmatic programme of psychological training adapted to the specific nature of contemporary Marine Corps operations remains relevant. The rationale for developing a specialised programme is based on the understanding that spontaneous mechanisms of psychological defence, which develop naturally in combatants, often prove destructive in the long term. This study aimed to substantiate the conceptual provisions of an original programme for developing mental resilience in Marine Corps service personnel, based on the optimisation of coping behaviour and the deepening of life-meaning orientations. In accordance with the aim, the objectives of the study were to determine the methodological basis of the programme, conduct a comparative analysis of a selected range of approaches, and provide a detailed account of the content of the functional modules in the developed intervention model. This made it possible to provide a scientific rationale for a paradigm shift in the assessment of coping strategies traditionally regarded as "maladaptive", particularly emotional distancing, by conceptualising them as vital tools for protecting the psyche under conditions of extreme fire exposure.

◆ Materials and Methods

Given the conceptual nature of the study, the research design was defined as theoretical and applied modelling based on methods of systematic and comparative analysis. The object of the study was the process of developing mental resilience in Marine Corps service personnel under the conditions of a contemporary high-intensity armed conflict. The subject of the study comprised the theoretical and methodological principles, structure and content of the functional modules of a specialised programme of psychological intervention. The theoretical basis of the study consisted of the integration of scientific paradigms, each of which determines the specific conceptualisation of particular components of the combatant's mental sphere:

1. The personality-activity approach served as the basic methodological framework for designing the architecture of the programme (Maksymenko, 2006). This approach made it possible to view the service member as an active agent of combat activity, capable of voluntary self-regulation and conscious control of their own behaviour.

2. The salutogenic paradigm, based on the research of A. Antonovsky (1987) shifted the theoretical focus from clinical pathology to the identification of internal resources and the development of mechanisms for maintaining mental health and a sense of coherence under extreme conditions.

3. V.E. Frankl's (1972) logotherapy served to introduce mechanisms of cognitive reappraisal, valuemeaning integration of the personality, and the spiritual-existential dimension of resilience, drawing on the criteria for assessing spiritual health proposed by O. Lazorko (2021).

4. Coping theory involved an analysis of the repertoire of coping behaviour based on the transactional models of R.S. Lazarus & S. Folkman (1984), as well as E. Heim's (1988) adaptive mechanisms of coping strategies.

5. The concept of resilience was applied to determine the target outcomes of the intervention through the constructs of hardiness developed by K.M. Connor & J.R.T. Davidson (2003) and S.R. Maddi (2002).

The logic behind the programme structure was based on conceptual modelling. The architecture of the programme was designed as a sequential transformation at the regulatory, cognitive, behavioural and existential levels. In modelling the regulatory component, which determines the capacity for autonomous behavioural control, contemporary approaches to the style of self-regulation proposed by M.V. Yatsiuk (2023) were conceptually considered. Validated models of psychological assessment developed by D.K. Korolov (2019) were used to define the role of personal dispositions. The total duration of the developed programme is 36 hours. This amount of training time was determined as sufficient to achieve the objectives of each module, from the acquisition of theoretical knowledge to the automation of techniques for psychomotor stabilisation and existential integration, within a standard intensive cycle for restoring combat capability. The scope of the programme is substantiated by the impact of prolonged psychological strain, lasting more than 12 months, under

extreme conditions and is consistent with contemporary approaches, in particular those of O. Kokun *et al.* (2023). The coherence and validity of the developed model were ensured through systematic and comparative analysis. The conceptual elements of the programme were compared with the COSC doctrine and BICEPS algorithms (Department of the Army, 2006). This made it possible to adapt them to the realities of a conventional conflict marked by a high level of tactical group autonomy and complicated evacuation.

This methodological framework led to a principled rejection of the reductionist medicalised model, in which the service member is viewed as a passive patient or recipient of trauma. Instead, in line with the principles of the activity approach, the programme focused on initiating a complex mechanism of shifting motive towards the goal. This mechanism enables the exteriorisation of internal anxiety into organised, conscious and object-oriented combat activity, restoring the individual's status as an agent of control over their own life and the external chaos of combat. To ensure high ecological validity and enable the use of the programme under conditions of autonomous action by small tactical groups, in accordance with the requirements of contemporary concepts of dispersed operations, peer-to-peer mutual support algorithms were incorporated into the methodology. These were based on standardised protocols for providing primary psychological support to service personnel: Military Publication VP 100(160)03.01 (2021) and the six-step iCOVER protocol adapted by O. Hukovskyy *et al.* (2024). The applied systematic approach to theoretical substantiation and conceptual modelling made it possible to develop a structured programme model whose parameters are adapted to the specific requirements of psychological support for Marine Corps units during combat coordination and restoration of combat capability.

◆ Results and Discussion

The central outcome of this study was the detailed theoretical substantiation, conceptualisation, and structural and content-based presentation of an original programme for developing mental resilience in Marine Corps service personnel. The comparative analysis of the collected body of empirical data and the specific features of the contemporary use of combat units showed that the mechanical transfer of civilian psychocorrection protocols, as well as the uncritical copying of Western military models from previous decades, is not only didactically ineffective but also potentially destructive under the conditions of a full-scale conventional war. Doctrines for maintaining the mental health of service personnel include the large-scale Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness programme in the USA, presented by the Department of the Army (2014), and specialised COSC protocols structured around the BICEPS principles (Department of the Army, 2006). These principles provide for assistance as close as possible to the front line, immediate intervention, and the maintenance of an expectation that the combatant will quickly return to duty. However, as noted by O. Hukovskyy *et al.* (2024),

such paradigms were developed for expeditionary asymmetric wars, in which US or NATO forces had substantial air superiority and the aeromedical evacuation system operated without interruption. The Russian-Ukrainian war is a high-intensity conflict in which the mass use of artillery, kamikaze drones and electronic warfare systems disrupts the traditional logistical chains of rescue and evacuation. A Marine Corps unit may remain under total encirclement in a fire pocket for weeks, which requires considerable psychological autonomy at the level of each combatant. The Ukrainian approach embodied in the proposed programme shifts the emphasis from institutional, medicalised assistance to the formation of horizontal “resource caravans” within small tactical groups and to deep existential survival. The developed architecture conceptually complements and extends existing national military developments.

A key precursor to the proposed model is the Practical Guide to Developing Service Personnel’s Stress Resilience to Sudden Changes in the Combat Environment by O. Kokun *et al.* (2020), which represents a systematic attempt by Ukrainian specialists to train combatants’ psychological resilience. The programme is also organically integrated with the methodology of institutional psychological

decompression programmes currently being implemented by the Main Directorate for Psychological Support of Personnel of the AFU (A project for psychological support..., 2025). The structural and functional logic of this intervention is also consistent with the algorithms of targeted training courses aimed at restoring the psychological resilience of service personnel of the Defence Forces, which are being scaled up in combat brigades under the coordination of the General Staff and the non-governmental organisation League of Officers (A project for psychological support..., 2025). Unlike universal basic courses, the developed programme offers a specialised logotherapeutic level of processing extreme experience, strictly adapted to the needs of Marine Corps units. The architecture of the programme is designed as an intensive 36-hour training cycle, which is structurally integrated into the process of restoring combat capability or combat coordination. The time budget is strictly and proportionally distributed between psychoeducational activities (7 hours), training activities (21 hours), and simulation and field-based activities (8 hours). The programme is built on the principle of cumulative effect: each subsequent competence is based on the automated skills acquired at the previous level (Table 1).

Table 1. Structural distribution of training time in the mental resilience development programme

Name of the programme module/block	Theoretical sessions (hours)	Training sessions (hours)	Simulation sessions (hours)	Total hours
Introductory part. Formation of motivation, destigmatisation and primary assessment of the current condition	1	2	0	3
Module 1. Psycho-emotional stabilisation and mutual support protocols (emotional-regulatory vector)	2	4	2	8
Module 2. Cognitive reappraisal and heuristic modelling (cognitive vector)	1	4	3	8
Module 3. Behavioural adaptation and proactive coping	1	4	3	8
Module 4. Existential-meaning integration	2	4	0	6
Concluding part. Reflection, effectiveness assessment and individual protocols	0	3	0	3
Total	7	21	8	36

Source: developed by the author

The introductory part of the programme (3 hours) serves to overcome psychological resistance and reduce stigma. In a masculine military environment, seeking help is often perceived as a sign of weakness. Group discussions and the “Tree of Fears” exercise help to legitimise fear. Psychological education is an important element: combatants are given a clear explanation of the mechanisms of emotional capture and acute stress response. Understanding the psychological nature of these states allows service personnel to rationalise their own reactions, such as nervous trembling, acute psychomotor agitation and tunnel vision, by moving them from the category of “personal weakness” to that of a “normal response of the psyche and body to abnormal circumstances”. Module 1. Psycho-emotional stabilisation and mutual support protocols (8 hours) develop the basic level of resilience. In situations of massed fire contact, higher cognitive regulatory mechanisms may be temporarily blocked by intense affective states, making it impossible to use complex analytical coping strategies. For

this reason, it is critically important to move to the level of direct psychomotor and breathing-based self-regulation. Tactical, or box, breathing techniques are used as an effective means of consciously reducing psycho-emotional tension and quickly restoring voluntary control over one’s condition, along with sensory proprioceptive grounding focused on elements of personal equipment. An adapted method of autogenic training developed by J.H. Schultz & W. Luthe (1959) serves as a supplement to the basic stabilisation techniques. From the standpoint of the activity approach, this method functions as a tool for purposeful psychological self-regulation, strengthening the service member’s internal locus of control. Through the sequential concentration of attention on sensations of heaviness and warmth, a conscious reduction in psycho-emotional tension is achieved (Stetter & Kupper, 2002). Mastery of self-suggestion formulas reinforces the combatant’s position as an active agent capable of voluntarily managing their own condition and resisting the stressor. The systematic use of

autogenic training forms a stable behavioural pattern of autonomous restoration of psychological resources, which is vital under conditions of logistical isolation among small tactical groups. The second component of the module is simulation-based practice of peer-to-peer assistance protocols for acute reactions, such as panic attacks, psychomotor stupor and aggression. The basic framework is the iCOVER protocol, adapted for Ukraine by O. Hukovskyy *et al.* (2024), which consists of six steps: identifying a fellow service member in an affective state (identify), establishing firm physical and visual contact (connect), offering support (offer choice), verifying the facts of reality (verify), establishing the chronology of events (establish order), and requesting a specific tactical action (request action). Repeated practice of this algorithm has been shown not only to stabilise the affected individual but also to restore the rescuer's own sense of full control, blocking the reflexive response of dissociative freezing.

Module 2. Cognitive reappraisal and heuristic modelling. The cognitive vector (8 hours) is aimed at overcoming the phenomenon of "tunnel thinking". The specific nature of contemporary combat lies in its radical uncertainty. To increase tolerance of the unknown, the module draws on the innovative method of heuristic scenario modelling proposed by L. Chernobai & O. Khairulin (2022). In a brainstorming format, service personnel collectively develop action algorithms for the worst, catastrophic scenarios, such as complete loss of radio communication, the death of commanders, or encirclement. The process of mentally rehearsing these critical situations in advance forms pre-prepared cognitive and behavioural response patterns. As a result, when a real critical situation arises in combat, the shock of suddenness is reduced, while the paralysing fear of the unknown is converted into a specific, structured operational task. Skills in distinguishing zones of control are also practised, teaching combatants to concentrate 100% mental energy only on objects they can control, such as weapon cleanliness, the quality of tourniquet application, or the observation sector.

Module 3. Behavioural adaptation and proactive coping (8 hours) involves a thorough revision and optimisation of the individual repertoire of coping strategies. This approach is consistent with contemporary views of mental resilience as a dynamic adaptive mechanism capable of responding flexibly to adverse factors in the combat environment through the continuous optimisation of behavioural patterns (Chernobai & Khairulin, 2022). According to S.E. Hobfoll's (2011) Conservation of Resources Theory, combat stress is initiated by the threat of losing critical resources. The module teaches marines to consciously map their resources and stop the "loss spiral" by forming proactive communication patterns and horizontal social support. The scientific innovation of this module lies in a radical reappraisal of the classical maladaptive coping strategies described in the transactional model of R.S. Lazarus & S. Folkman (1984). Traditional psychology often views emotional distancing or the suppression of affect as

exclusively maladaptive responses, while overlooking the physiological context. By contrast, the study by R. Zueger *et al.* (2023) showed that targeted resilience training helps combatants reappraise the stressor, which is accompanied by a faster return to normal cortisol levels and the generation of positive affect even after intense strain. However, analysis of the conditions of positional warfare shows that, in situations involving an uncontrollable macro-stressor, such as prolonged artillery shelling of a position or a mass FPV drone attack, where a direct problem-solving strategy is tactically impossible, strict emotional distancing acquires a life-preserving compensatory function. The programme teaches combatants to differentiate between situations and consciously apply distancing as a tactical tool for conserving mental energy until active assault or defensive actions once again become appropriate. This is fully consistent with the study of responses to danger by N.V. Rodina *et al.* (2022), which demonstrated the validity of passive strategies under certain critical conditions.

Module 4. Existential-meaning integration (6 hours) forms the spiritual and philosophical core of the programme. Studies of combatants' psychological status show that high levels of extraversion or self-efficacy may be insufficient to preserve identity when faced with the death of comrades and the need to make difficult ethical decisions. The module is based entirely on V.E. Frankl's (1972) logotherapeutic paradigm. The key resource for meaning integration is provided by practices of deep introspection, including meditation and individual prayer. From the standpoint of the activity approach, these practices are conceptualised as purposeful inner activity aimed at restoring spiritual support. Depending on their worldview beliefs, service personnel independently choose the most relevant tool. Meditation develops skills of voluntary concentration and intentional direction of attention. During this practice, the individual purposefully observes their own thoughts and emotions, learns to identify destructive states at the early stages of their development, and consciously distances themselves from them. At the same time, both meditation and prayer function as forms of deep inner dialogue that help overcome the existential vacuum. They allow service personnel to restore an integral connection with the transcendent, whether God or higher powers, or with their own authentic inner state. This variable approach directly strengthens the combatant's agency by providing tools to protect identity from the destructive impact of war. Through Socratic dialogue, the psychologist helps the group distinguish objective guilt from existential guilt, the latter arising from the objective impossibility of being omnipotent in war. Narrative reconstruction is then carried out: the destructive discourse of "I am a victim of circumstances" is transformed into the heroic narrative of a conscious warrior. This approach is substantially complemented by the Combat Path Debriefing methodology, which has been implemented in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and focuses on identifying the unit's combat path as a resource for continuing the struggle in memory of the

fallen (Hukovskyy *et al.*, 2024). Acquiring a deep sense of meaning in one's actions functions as a profound protective mechanism that shields the combatant from dehumanisation and provides a foundation for post-traumatic growth.

The results of the theoretical conceptualisation and structural modelling of the mental resilience development programme demonstrate the need for a paradigmatic shift away from universal civilian models of stress coping towards highly specialised algorithms of combat self-regulation. The proposed 36-hour architecture of the intervention is closely aligned with current empirical findings by international and Ukrainian researchers, while offering a fundamentally new perspective on assessing the adaptability of coping strategies in the realities of conventional warfare. The findings on the critical need to develop autonomous mechanisms of psychological support directly at the level of small tactical groups resonate with the conclusions of I. Frankova *et al.* (2025), who examined the impact of digital, communication and logistical isolation on combatants' mental state in hybrid trench warfare. Unlike doctrinal approaches to supporting the mental health of NATO service personnel, in which A.B. Adler *et al.* (2024) emphasised primary prevention and continuous expert support for leaders under relatively stable conditions of expeditionary deployment, the developed programme proceeds from the presumption of a radical vital threat and the impossibility of receiving external assistance. This conceptual opposition is confirmed by the findings of O. Hukovskyy *et al.* (2024), who, in developing the Combat Path Debriefing methodology, convincingly showed that the classical principles of the COSC doctrine, in particular rapid intervention and the proximity of professional evacuation-based psychiatric assistance, are difficult to implement or physically impossible under conditions of massed use of electronic warfare systems and continuous FPV drone attacks.

A key aspect is the fundamental reassessment of behavioural adaptation strategies. As noted above, prolonged exposure to a high-intensity combat zone leads to the total depletion of resources, initiating S.E. Hobfoll's (2011) "loss spiral". The accumulated impact of combat stressors not only gradually depletes the service member's mental and cognitive resources but also causes profound changes in the functioning of the nervous system. In particular, prolonged combat stress may disrupt the natural balance of important neurobiological mechanisms by reducing the activity of brain-derived neurotrophic factor, which is responsible for psychological adaptation, recovery and stress resilience, and by altering the functioning of enzyme systems involved in the regulation of the psycho-emotional state (Romash *et al.*, 2023). The use of cognitive constructs alone against the background of such physiological exhaustion is ineffective. The study by A. Shvalb *et al.* (2025) indicated a stable negative correlation between avoidant coping strategies and the level of combat stress, traditionally defining them as maladaptive mechanisms requiring psychocorrection. However, the developed theoretical model significantly refines this proposition, drawing on the innovative

five-factor model proposed by N.V. Rodina *et al.* (2022), which examined the specific nature of coping directly in situations of extreme danger. Under conditions of an entirely uncontrollable macro-stressor, for example, during several days of artillery shelling of positions, when active action is physically impossible, strict emotional distancing, fatalism, and passive waiting temporarily function not as manifestations of professional burnout but as critical, evolutionarily determined life-preserving mechanisms for conserving mental energy. Thus, the developed programme (Module 3) does not aim to eradicate these reactions indiscriminately. On the contrary, it teaches combatants to differentiate them consciously and apply them flexibly according to context. This represents a significant scientific contribution in comparison with existing linear psychocorrection protocols. For this reason, the autogenic training and firm proprioceptive grounding techniques integrated into Module 1 are designed to have a direct and immediate effect on reducing hyperreactivity of the sympathoadrenal system. This is fully consistent with the findings of recent studies of the Swiss Armed Forces: R. Zueger *et al.* (2023) and M. Niederhauser *et al.* (2023) empirically established that targeted resilience training not only ensures a significantly faster return to normal cortisol levels after exposure to a stressor, but also enables cadets to generate positive affect and cognitively reframe the situation. The programme extends this practice by adapting it to battlefield conditions, where physiological stabilisation is carried out not by a specialist in a safe environment, but by a fellow service member directly in shelter, in accordance with the iCOVER protocol.

The aspect of intra-group leadership and cohesion, which is actively addressed during the simulations in Module 1, is supported by empirical data from other researchers. According to the findings of O. Kokun *et al.* (2023), there is a direct and significant relationship between the leadership qualities of service personnel and their personal hardness during prolonged deployments. Moreover, further studies by the same research team clearly showed that the formation of a strong microsocial support environment within the combat group acts as a powerful buffer, substantially reducing rates of somatic complaints and PTSD symptoms in elite combat units compared with isolated wounded service personnel. This social buffer is impossible without deep individual meaning-making. The developed Module 4, existential-meaning integration, draws on V.E. Frankl's (1972) logotherapeutic paradigm and is supported by contemporary measures of spiritual health. By prioritising the tools of intentional meditation, inner prayer and narrative reconstruction of lived experience, the study is oriented towards the validated indicators of O. Lazorko's (2021) SHAS scale, which measure the capacity for selftranscendence. The transformation of traumatic and chaotic experiences of combat losses into a meaningful supranational and heroic narrative is the main effective safeguard against the development of destructive moral injury, as noted by B.T. Litz *et al.* (2009). As emphasised

by M. Reva & T. Titova (2024), successful mastery of proactive coping skills and the preservation of deep personal meaning during combat create a lasting foundation for post-traumatic growth. Finally, preventive psychological work conducted directly in the combat zone has significant implications for post-war psychological recovery. According to the conclusions of V. Stasiuk & Y. Fedorenko (2025a), who examined a comprehensive approach to reintegration, and T. Shapovalova (2023), who analysed the experience of the USA and the United Kingdom, the success of a veteran's return to civilian life and functioning in the family environment is directly proportional to the extent to which their psyche has retained the capacity for flexible self-regulation. By preventing severe psychotic disintegration while the unit is still on the line of contact, the programme minimises the future clinical burden on the national healthcare system. Thus, the comparative analysis shows that the proposed holistic model of psychological intervention conceptually and pragmatically fills the existing gap between general standards of preventive psychology and the stringent demands of contemporary armed conflict.

◆ Conclusions

The in-depth theoretical and methodological substantiation and conceptualisation of a specialised programme for developing mental resilience in Marine Corps service personnel made it possible to formulate several key conclusions. It has been shown that the conditions of a contemporary high-intensity conventional conflict, characterised by considerable uncertainty, massed fire exposure, the dominance of unmanned systems and the disruption of logistical evacuation chains, require a fundamentally new paradigm of psychological training. Classical protocols for combat stress control, in particular the COSC doctrine and BICEPS principles, which are oriented towards expeditionary operations with air superiority, have proved insufficient in the realities of trench warfare. This has created the need to develop autonomous, multilevel survival algorithms. The proposed original programme is a holistic, ecologically valid and pragmatic system whose architecture is based on the integration of the personality-activity approach, the salutogenic paradigm and methods of existential analysis. The structural and logical organisation of the intervention in the format of four interrelated modules – psychoemotional stabilisation, cognitive reframing and heuristic modelling, behavioural adaptation, and spiritual-meaning integration – ensures the gradual, ecologically grounded and sustainable transformation of spontaneous maladaptive responses to combat stress into a conscious repertoire of productive coping strategies. A contemporary view of the use of individual coping strategies at the epicentre of the

battlespace has been scientifically substantiated. It has been shown that strict emotional distancing and the suppression of affect, which are classified in traditional psychology as maladaptive and destructive mechanisms, acquire a critically important compensatory and life-preserving function under conditions of an uncontrollable macro-stressor, such as prolonged exposure to massed artillery fire, by preventing immediate psychotic disintegration of the personality. In addition, the need to implement logotherapeutic tools in combat training programmes has been confirmed: only in-depth work with existential meanings, the transformation of the victim narrative into the narrative of a conscious warrior, and the processing of survivor's guilt can effectively block the development of moral injury and ensure the stable post-traumatic growth of combatants. It has been shown that training personnel in peer-to-peer mutual support skills and the formation by leaders of horizontal "resource caravans" of support radically increase the overall combat reliability and controllability of small tactical groups. The implementation of this programme by officers of personnel psychological support structures, military psychologists and chaplains directly during combat coordination or restoration of combat capability is a tool for preserving the human capital of the AFU. Prospects for further research lie in conducting longitudinal studies on the influence of formed existential coping strategies on the success of the sociopsychological reintegration of Marine Corps service personnel after demobilisation or return to civilian life. Further synchronisation of such preventive military programmes with the best international and Ukrainian practices of veteran adaptation will make it possible to create an integrated system for preserving the nation's mental health.

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◆ Conflict of Interest

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Обґрунтування програми розвитку психічної резильєнтності військовослужбовців морської піхоти за допомогою копінг-стратегій

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✦ **Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження зумовлена значним рівнем психологічного навантаження військовослужбовців морської піхоти Збройних Сил України, які виконують завдання у складних літоральних зонах в умовах масованого застосування артилерії, безпілотних систем та засобів радіоелектронної боротьби, що спричиняє тривалу логістичну та комунікаційну ізоляцію малих тактичних груп. Мета статті полягала у теоретичному обґрунтуванні, концептуалізації та структурному моделюванні спеціалізованої програми розвитку психічної резильєнтності, спрямованої на трансформацію неадаптивних стихійних захисних реакцій військовослужбовців на усвідомлені, проактивні та екзистенційно осмислені стратегії подолання бойового стресу. Методологічний фундамент дослідження базувався на інтеграції особистісно-діяльнісного підходу, салютогенетичної парадигми та методів екзистенційного аналізу і логотерапії, що дозволяє розглядати комбатанта як активного суб'єкта управління власним станом. Для розробки моделі психологічного втручання застосовано комплекс методів, що охоплює системний і порівняльний аналіз сучасних доктрин управління бойовим стресом, зокрема Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness, а також структурно-функціональне моделювання. У результаті дослідження з'ясовано, що класичні західні протоколи контролю бойового стресу, зокрема доктрина Combat and Operational Stress Control та принципи Brevity, Immediacy, Contact, Expectancy, Proximity, Simplicity, виявляються недостатніми та потребують глибокої адаптації до умов конвенційного конфлікту з розірваними ланцюгами евакуації. У відповідь на ці виклики обґрунтовано архітектоніку 36-годинної програми підготовки, яка охоплює чотири модулі: психоемоційну стабілізацію за адаптованим протоколом iCOVER (8 годин), когнітивне переосмислення з евристичним моделюванням кризових сценаріїв (8 годин), поведінкову адаптацію (8 годин) та екзистенційно-смыслову інтеграцію (6 годин). Додатково обґрунтовано специфічну тактичну цінність переосмислення копінг-стратегій: доведено, що емоційне дистанціювання та фаталізм, які традиційно класифікуються як дезадаптивні, в умовах тривалого неконтрольованого макростресора виконують критичну компенсаторну функцію. Практична цінність дослідження полягає у створенні готового до імплементації алгоритму автономної психологічної підготовки, впровадження якого структурами психологічної підтримки персоналу здатне підвищити бойову надійність особового складу, попередити розвиток моральної травми та забезпечити стійке функціонування підрозділів

✦ **Ключові слова:** бойовий стрес; життєстійкість; психічне здоров'я; Збройні Сили України; адаптація; саморегуляція; психологічна готовність