



The relationship between decision-making and the professional motivation of military personnel

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◆ **Abstract.** The relevance of this study is determined by the need to examine the psychological mechanisms of decision-making by military personnel under combat stress, since cognitive, emotional, and motivational factors directly determine the effectiveness of the performance of combat duties. The aim of the study was to establish correlations between the decision-making styles of military personnel and their professional motivation. The research methods were based on the comprehensive application of standardised psychodiagnostic techniques and statistical procedures, in particular the Melbourne decision-making questionnaire for assessing decision-making styles (vigilance, hypervigilance, avoidance, procrastination), V. Osodlo methodology for studying professional motivation on the scales of professional aspirations and professional interests and values, as well as Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for analysing the relationships between ordinal scale variables. The study was conducted on a sample of 50 male military personnel aged 26 to 48 in controlled conditions of a military unit, in compliance with ethical principles and confidentiality. The results showed that the dominant decision-making style was vigilance (42% of respondents), characterised by the ability to analyse alternatives, predict consequences and make responsible decisions. Hypervigilance was observed in 26% of military personnel and manifested itself in increased anxiety and impulsivity, while avoidance and procrastination were less common (18% and 14%, respectively), indicating the presence of unproductive behavioural strategies in stressful conditions. Analysis of professional motivation showed high levels of ambition and conscious interest in most participants (48-56%), which correlated with an adaptive vigilant decision-making style. Significant inverse correlations were observed between avoidance and procrastination styles and professional motivation indicators, indicating the influence of motivational insufficiency on the formation of maladaptive choice strategies. The practical value of the study lies in the possibility of using its results to develop psychological training programmes and workshops aimed at forming adaptive decision-making styles, developing professional motivation and increasing the stress resistance of military personnel, which will contribute to the growth of efficiency and safety in the performance of service duties

◆ **Keywords:** dominant decision-making styles; professional aspirations; values; cognitive determinants of choice; self-regulation

◆ Introduction

In modern conditions, scientists are increasingly interested in the problem of psychological mechanisms of decision-making in a military environment, since the effectiveness of official actions largely depends on the cognitive, emotional and motivational characteristics of military

personnel. As noted by R.I. Klymkiv *et al.* (2025), cognitive and emotional resources play an important role in decision-making under combat stress, ensuring adaptability and psychological resilience. The authors emphasised that under conditions of intense stress, it is the ability to

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regulate emotions and maintain concentration that reduces the risk of impulsive and irrational decisions. The study showed that developed cognitive strategies for processing information, in particular analytical thinking and predicting consequences, are associated with higher tactical effectiveness of military personnel. It was also found that a combination of emotional stability and cognitive flexibility contributes to the formation of resistance to combat stress and reduces the manifestations of behavioural disorganisation in critical situations. N.M. Sekel *et al.* (2023) demonstrated that the effectiveness of tactical decisions in a military context largely depends on psychological resilience and mindfulness, which form an adaptive, vigilant decision-making style. Resilience allows military personnel to recover quickly from stressful influences, while mindfulness helps to maintain clarity of thought and evaluate alternatives. The combination of these characteristics ensures prudence, responsibility, and a willingness to take reasonable risks in difficult situations. C. Roanghesi (2024) found that avoidance and anxiety in military personnel are associated with low emotional stability and complicate the analysis of alternatives when making choices. The study also found that the development of emotional regulation and tolerance for uncertainty promotes a transition from maladaptive to more vigilant decision-making styles. A systematic review by S. Lioupi & V. Karamanoli (2025) demonstrated a significant relationship between self-efficacy and decision-making outcomes under pressure in a military environment. R. Qiu *et al.* (2023) showed how self-efficacy and resilience affect the ability to solve complex tactical tasks. A study by V.M. Filonenko (2024) found that the tendency of military personnel to postpone decisions and shift responsibility to others is associated with personality traits such as impulsivity and insufficient cognitive resources.

The study by V. Teslyuk & V. Tkachov (2024) analysed the phenomenon of combat stress in military personnel as a complex psychophysiological state that arises under the influence of extreme factors in a combat situation. The authors noted that high levels of combat stress are accompanied by cognitive narrowing, impaired concentration, increased impulsivity, and a tendency to use maladaptive decision-making strategies. At the same time, a sufficient level of stress resistance and psychological preparedness contributes to maintaining vigilance, adequate risk assessment, and the ability to act in conditions of uncertainty. The study emphasised that the decision-making style is not an isolated personal characteristic of a service member, but is formed under the influence of combat experience, level of motivation and the severity of post-stress reactions, which further substantiates the need for a comprehensive analysis of motivational and cognitive determinants of behaviour in military activity. A systematic analysis of scientific sources has shown that the effectiveness of decision-making in a military environment is determined by the interaction of cognitive styles, emotional regulation, and professional motivation, but also highlighted the insufficient integration of motivational factors

into comprehensive models of military psychology, particularly in terms of the relationship between motivation, decision-making styles, and their functional consequences. The relevance of the study was determined by the need for empirical research into the systemic relationships between decision-making styles in the military and their professional motivation in real combat and service conditions. This will contribute to the constructive development of approaches to the psychological training of military personnel, increasing their adaptability and effectiveness in conditions of uncertainty. The aim of the study was to identify and analyse the correlations between the characteristics of decision-making styles among military personnel and their level of professional motivation. The research objectives were to identify the leading decision-making styles and characteristics of professional motivation among military personnel; clarifying the links between decision-making styles and components of professional motivation (professional aspirations, interests and values).

◆ Materials and Methods

The study involved 50 male military personnel aged between 26 and 48 years. Participants were selected on a voluntary basis in accordance with the following inclusion criteria: active military service, absence of acute mental disorders, and consent to participate. Exclusion criteria included the presence of severe somatic illnesses, being in a state of acute psychological crisis, and withdrawal from the study at any stage. The research was conducted within a military unit, which ensured uniform service conditions for the participants. For reasons of personal security, disclosure of the unit's name and the locations of the personnel is unacceptable. Before the start of the study, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality guarantees, and the possibility of refusal without negative consequences. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical requirements of the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki (WMA, 2024). The Melbourne decision-making questionnaire (MDMQ, n.d.) was used to study decision-making styles. The methodology allowed to identify the dominant styles: vigilance, hypervigilance, avoidance, and procrastination. The questionnaire statements were rated on a scale from low to high agreement, and the results were summarised for each individual scale. To study professional motivation, V. Osodlo's methodology was used, in particular two scales: the scale of professional aspirations and the scale of professional interests and values (Dykun *et al.*, 2023). Each scale consists of 16 statements aimed at assessing the level of activity, perseverance, desire for success, as well as the significance of professional activity for the personality of a military serviceman. The results were calculated as a percentage of the maximum possible score, which made it possible to classify the levels of indicators as low, medium and high. The survey was conducted in a group format in a psychological training room. Respondents first completed the MDMQ,

then moved on to the professional motivation assessment methodology. The average time to complete the entire set of methodologies was approximately 40-50 minutes. The researcher was present during the testing to provide instructions and clarify any unclear questions without influencing the respondents' answers.

Statistical data processing was carried out in several stages. At the first stage, the dominant decision-making styles were determined by comparing the indicators on the MDMQ scales. At the second stage, descriptive statistics of the results were performed based on professional motivation indicators. Next, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to identify the relationships between decision-making styles and motivational indicators, since the data were presented on ordinal scales and did not correspond to a normal distribution. The statistical significance of the results was determined at the level of $p < 0.01$. Correlation relationships are presented in the form of a table, which allows to clearly demonstrate the interdependencies between variables. The study combines the principles of activity-based, person-centred and cognitive approaches. The starting point is the idea that decision-making style is formed through the interaction of individual psychological characteristics, conditions of activity and the motivational structure of a military serviceman's personality. The use of standardised psychodiagnostic methods ensured the validity and reliability of the results obtained, and the application of non-parametric statistical criteria ensured the correctness of conclusions regarding the relationships between the variables studied. The methodology used allows the study to be replicated in similar samples of military personnel using the same questionnaires, testing procedures, and statistical approaches to data processing. This creates a basis for further longitudinal and comparative studies in the field of decision-making psychology in a military environment.

◆ Results and Discussion

Systematic reviews and empirical studies have demonstrated that decision-making is not only a cognitive process of analysing alternatives, but also a complex interaction of motivational and emotional components that can either facilitate or hinder adaptive choice. Thus, F. Del Missier *et al.* (2012) proved that cognitive personality traits determine personal decision-making styles and information processing strategies. A.M. Parker & B. Fischhoff (2005) investigated decision-making competence and demonstrated how individual psychological differences affect the quality of choice in standardised behavioural psychology tasks. K.C. Appelt *et al.* (2011) also drew attention to individual differences in decision-making processes and argue that decision-making style is a stable psychological characteristic of personality associated with motivational, cognitive, and emotional factors. S. Sümer & O.B. Büttner (2022) emphasised the role of impulsivity and procrastination in impairing choice effectiveness. Research by D. Miao *et al.* (2024) demonstrated how self-awareness supports the stability

of mental processes, and a review by D.S. Levine (2022) integrated emotional and cognitive aspects into a single decision-making model. D.M. Yee's (2024) computational neurocognitive approach revealed the mechanisms of motivational influence on choice. Together, these studies confirm that awareness of motivation, emotional regulation, and cognitive evaluation are important components of adaptive decision-making in complex and stressful conditions. The MDMQ was used to determine the dominant decision-making style of each respondent. The distribution of military personnel across the scales is shown in Figure 1.

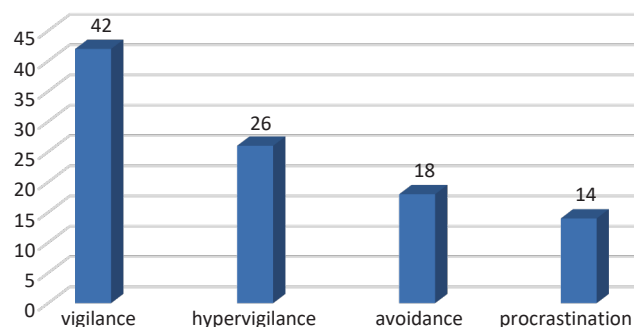


Figure 1. Results of the study of decision-making styles among military personnel according to MDMQ (%)

Source: developed by the author

The results showed that the most common decision-making style among military personnel is vigilance, which was recorded in 42% of respondents. This style is characterised by the ability to adequately assess the situation, recognise risks, analyse alternatives and make decisions taking into account possible consequences. The predominance of vigilance indicates a sufficient level of psychological maturity, responsibility, and self-regulation skills, which are professionally important qualities for military activities in difficult and dangerous conditions. At the same time, 26% of respondents were found to have an hypervigilant decision-making style. This style manifests itself in increased anxiety, hastiness, a chaotic search for a way out of a situation, and a tendency to make impulsive decisions under time pressure and stress. This proportion of hypervigilance may be due to the chronic stress experienced by military personnel, the impact of combat stress, and the high level of responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. Although hypervigilance indicates the mobilisation of mental resources, it also increases the risk of erroneous or ill-considered actions. The avoidance style was observed in 18% of military personnel. It manifests itself in the desire to postpone decision-making, shift responsibility to others, or downplay the significance of a problematic situation. The presence of this style in the subjects may indicate emotional exhaustion, fear of making mistakes, or insufficient psychological readiness to act in situations of high uncertainty. In the context of military service, avoidance can negatively affect the efficiency and effectiveness of managerial and tactical decisions. The

smallest number of military personnel (14%) demonstrated a tendency towards procrastination. This style is characterised by a tendency to delay decision-making even when the necessary information is available. Procrastination in a military environment may be associated with internal conflicts, doubts about one's own abilities, or reduced confidence in the correctness of one's choices. Although this style is the least common, its presence requires special attention from psychological support. Overall, the results of the study showed that adaptive or conditionally adaptive decision-making styles prevail among most military personnel, but a significant proportion of unproductive coping strategies (avoidance, procrastination, hypervigilance) indicate the influence of stressful service conditions.

The results coincide with the conclusions of D. Crivelli *et al.* (2024), who emphasised the role of effective integration of cognitive and emotional processes in decision-making. The data obtained confirmed that a sufficient level of executive functions and the formation of self-regulation skills allow military personnel to make informed decisions even under stressful conditions. The hypervigilance style in this study proved to be a significant indicator of the impact of combat stress on the decision-making process. As noted by G. Gautam *et al.* (2025), affective states, particularly anxiety, can accelerate decision-making while increasing the risk of erroneous actions. The results of the study on the hypervigilance style of military personnel are consistent with theoretical findings on the relationship between decision-making styles and stress. In particular, C.M. Allwood & I. Salo (2012) showed that decision-making styles associated with avoidance and emotional tension correlate with high levels of psychological stress and reduced decision quality. These findings are consistent with the results of the study, which indicates that excessive anxiety and haste in stressful conditions can increase the risk of making wrong decisions. According to the data obtained, the avoidance style is associated with the desire to downplay the significance of a problematic situation or shift responsibility. This result correlates with the findings of M. Gärtner *et al.* (2022), who showed that an individual's information processing style determines the degree of involvement in prosocial or responsible behaviour. In a military context, avoidance can slow down tactical decision-making, confirming the importance of psychological support and the development of cognitive resilience. The lowest percentage was for procrastination, which is characterised by delayed decision-making even when the necessary information is available. This trend correlates with the findings of K. Stanovich *et al.* (2013), who showed that low levels of rational thinking and increased cognitive bias increase the risk of postponing decisions. Although procrastination is less common, its presence indicates possible internal conflicts and doubts about one's own abilities. A meta-analysis by T. Mechera Ostrovsky *et al.* (2022) confirmed that cognitive abilities influence decision errors but do not determine risk propensity. This study confirmed that vigilant military personnel make fewer mistakes, while hypervigilant and avoidant groups demonstrate

an increased frequency of erroneous choices. Thus, adaptive or conditionally adaptive decision-making styles prevail in most military personnel, but a significant proportion of unproductive strategies (hypervigilance, avoidance, procrastination) indicate the influence of stressful service conditions. In general, a comparison of the data obtained with other studies allowed to conclude that decision-making effectiveness is formed in a complex way: cognitive abilities, executive functions, affect, and information processing style interact.

Using the methodology for studying professional motivation developed by V. Osodlo, presented in V.H. Dykun *et al.* (2023), an analysis of the professional aspirations, professional interests and value orientations of military personnel was carried out using the corresponding scales. The scale of professional aspirations contains 16 statements and assesses the desire for success and perseverance. High scores (more than 70% of the maximum possible score) were observed in 24 participants (48%). This indicates that almost half of the respondents show determination in achieving goals, willingness to take responsibility, active participation in professional tasks, and the ability to overcome difficulties. Eighteen military personnel (36%) had average scores (40-70%), indicating a moderate level of ambition and responsibility. Eight people (16%) received low scores (< 40%), characterised by caution, less persistence and a weak willingness to overcome difficult situations. The average score on the professional aspirations scale was 67% of the maximum possible, reflecting a fairly high level of professional motivation among most participants. The professional interests and values scale contains 16 statements and assesses personally significant motives and value orientations in professional activity. High scores (70-100%) were found in 28 participants (56%), demonstrating a strong interest in professional activity and the perception of work as important and meaningful for self-realisation. Average scores (40-70%) were shown by 15 people (30%), who have a moderate level of professional interest and value motivation. Low scores (< 40%) were observed in 7 military personnel (14%), for whom professional activity is not significant. The average score on the scale of professional interests and values was 72% of the maximum possible, which indicates a high level of conscious interest in professional activity among the majority of respondents. The results of the study of professional motivation of military personnel are shown in Figure 2.

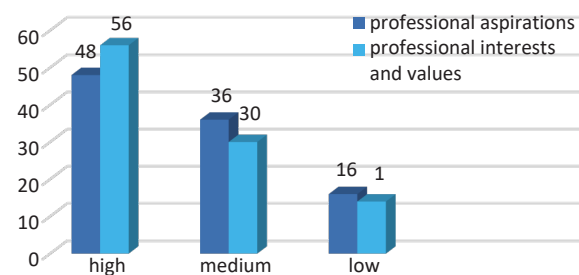


Figure 2. Results of the study of professional motivation according to V. Osodlo's method (%)

Source: developed by the author

Thus, most military personnel demonstrate a high level of ambition, determination and perseverance. This indicates their readiness to act effectively in difficult and stressful conditions, which is particularly important for decision-making in military activities. A small proportion of respondents with low scores may need additional motivational support. The high level of professional interest and value motivation among most participants indicates their internal orientation towards professional self-realisation. Military personnel with high scores are more inclined towards a constructive approach, initiative and engagement in their work. Low scores in some individuals signal the need for professional counselling or the development of value orientations to increase motivation. The results indicate that most military personnel are predominantly internally motivated to achieve professional goals and have a high value orientation towards service. These indicators are important for assessing the psychological characteristics of decision-making in difficult conditions, as they reflect the willingness to take responsibility, show perseverance and act effectively under pressure. O.M. Borysiuk (2024) studied the motivational component of the managerial competence of future officers and determined that they are dominated by internal motives and the desire for success,

and also established correlations between high professional motivation and behavioural effectiveness, which is consistent with data on high indicators of professional aspirations and interests. That study included a broader range of motivational factors (such as life goals, social desirability and overall activity in the work of police cadets), rather than only aspirations and interests, which were examined in the present research. This indicates the difference between the specialised approach of this study and broader motivational models. In their own study, O. Nykonenko & V. Horiatchka (2025) analysed the motivational sphere of military personnel during wartime using several motivation techniques. It was confirmed that the motivation of military personnel is multidimensional and related to stress, burnout, and value orientations, which partly resonates with the findings of this study regarding internal motives and the importance of professional interest. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to establish links between decision-making styles and indicators of professional motivation, as the variables under study are represented by ordinal scales and do not meet the requirements of parametric statistics. The results of the analysis showed statistically significant links between decision-making styles and individual components of professional motivation, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlations between decision-making styles and the professional aspirations, as well as the professional interests and values, of military personnel

Decision-making styles	Vigilance	Hypervigilance	Avoidance	Procrastination
Professional aspirations	+0.47	+0.12	-0.38	-0.42
Professional interests and values	+0.52	+0.09	-0.41	-0.45

Source: developed by the author

The most pronounced direct correlations were found between vigilance style and indicators of professional aspirations and professional interests. This means that military personnel with a high level of ambition, responsibility and focus on professional growth tend to make decisions based on all available information, analysing possible consequences and weighing alternatives. The hypervigilant style also showed a positive correlation with professional aspirations, but this correlation was moderate. This result can be interpreted as evidence that high self-expectations and achievement orientation may be accompanied by increased anxiety, excessive control, and a tendency to doubt when making decisions. At the same time, the relationship between overachievement and professional interests and values was weak or statistically insignificant. The inverse correlations between avoidance and procrastination styles and indicators of professional motivation were particularly pronounced. A decrease in the level of professional aspirations and the value significance of activities is associated with a tendency to avoid responsible decisions, shift them to others, or postpone decision-making indefinitely. These results indicate that insufficient internal motivation and low belief in one's own abilities lead to the formation of maladaptive behavioural strategies in situations of choice. Summarising the data obtained, it can be argued

that there are systemic interrelationships between the decision-making styles of military personnel and the characteristics of their professional motivation. High professional aspirations, conscious interests, and meaningful value orientations are associated with the formation of an adaptive, rational decision-making style – vigilance. On the other hand, low levels of professional motivation are associated with avoidance and procrastination styles, which complicate responsible behaviour in complex and risky service conditions. The results also agree with psychological ideas about the role of motivation in regulating behaviour: higher levels of conscious professional aspirations and values contribute to the formation of more adaptive forms of decision-making, while motivational insufficiency is associated with avoidance of responsibility and procrastination in making choices. Thus, V. Osodlo (2025), analysing the motivation of military personnel, showed that conscious internal motivation is closely related to psychological readiness to act in military conditions, which is consistent with the conclusions about the importance of high aspirations for adaptive decision-making styles. N. Shortland *et al.* (2020) showed that individual differences affect the complexity and speed of choice, which also resonates with the data from this study on the moderate relationship between hypervigilance and motivational indicators, where excessive

demands for achievement can complicate decisions under pressure. S.G. Scott & R.A. Bruce (1995) identified different decision-making styles (rational, intuitive, unique, etc.), which allows to compare the categories of vigilance, hypervigilance, avoidance, and procrastination with the typical international classification of styles and confirm that decision-making styles are related to motivational characteristics of personality. The results obtained emphasised the importance of developing professional motivation as a psychological resource that ensures more effective and balanced decisions in the activities of military personnel.

◆ Conclusions

The study identified systemic relationships between military personnel's decision-making styles and their professional motivation. The most common style was identified as vigilance (42% of respondents), characterised by the ability to analyse alternatives, predict consequences and make informed decisions, indicating a high level of psychological maturity, responsibility and well-developed self-regulation skills. Hypervigilance was observed in 26% of military personnel, accompanied by increased anxiety, impulsiveness, and a tendency to make hasty decisions, which highlights the impact of combat stress on cognitive processes. Avoidance (18%) and procrastination (14%) styles are associated with insufficient internal motivation, low self-confidence, and limited ability to make responsible choices in difficult situations. An analysis of professional motivation showed high levels of ambition and conscious interests in most participants (48-56%), which directly correlates with an adaptive vigilant

decision-making style. Inverse correlations between avoidance and procrastination styles and professional motivation indicators showed that motivational insufficiency contributes to the formation of maladaptive choice strategies. The results of the study emphasised the importance of internal motives, value orientations, and conscious striving for professional development as key factors that ensure rational and effective decision-making in the military environment. Thus, the effectiveness of decision-making in the military depends on cognitive abilities, emotional self-regulation, and the level of professional motivation. The results confirmed the conceptual importance of integrating cognitive, emotional, and motivational aspects into the psychological training of military personnel. The limitations of the study are related to the selection of only men aged 26-48 and the conduct of the experiment in the homogeneous conditions of a single military unit, which may limit the generalisation of the results to broader groups of military personnel. Further research may focus on studying the dynamics of decision-making styles during combat training, including representatives of various military specialties, and analysing the influence of additional motivational and emotional factors.

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◆ Conflict of Interest

None.

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Взаємозв'язок прийняття рішень із професійною мотивацією військовослужбовців

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♦ **Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження зумовлена потребою вивчення психологічних механізмів ухвалення рішень військовослужбовцями в умовах бойового стресу, оскільки когнітивні, емоційні та мотиваційні чинники безпосередньо визначають ефективність виконання службово-бойових завдань. Метою дослідження було встановлення кореляційних зв'язків між стилями ухвалення рішень військовослужбовцями та їхньою професійною мотивацією. Методи дослідження ґрунтувалися на комплексному застосуванні стандартизованих психодіагностичних методик і статистичних процедур, зокрема Melbourne decision making questionnaire для оцінювання стилів ухвалення рішень (пильність, надпильність, уникнення, прокрастинація), методики В. Осьодло для вивчення професійної мотивації за шкалами професійних домагань і професійних інтересів та цінностей, а також рангового коефіцієнта кореляції Спірмена для аналізу взаємозв'язків між змінними порядкових шкал. Дослідження проводилось на вибірці з 50 військовослужбовців чоловічої статі віком від 26 до 48 років у контрольованих умовах військової частини, із дотриманням етичних принципів та конфіденційності. Отримані результати показали, що домінуючим стилем ухвалення рішень була пильність (42 % респондентів), що характеризується здатністю аналізувати альтернативи, прогнозувати наслідки та приймати відповідальні рішення. Надпильність спостерігалася у 26 % військовослужбовців і проявлялась підвищеною тривожністю та імпульсивністю, тоді як уникнення та прокрастинація були менш поширені (18 % та 14 % відповідно), що засвідчило про наявність непродуктивних стратегій поведінки у стресових умовах. Аналіз професійної мотивації показав високі рівні домагань та усвідомлених інтересів у більшості учасників (48-56 %), що корелювало з адаптивним пильним стилем ухвалення рішень. Значущі обернені кореляції спостерігалися між стилями уникнення та прокрастинації і показниками професійної мотивації, що вказує на вплив мотиваційної недостатності на формування дезадаптивних стратегій вибору. Практична цінність дослідження полягає у можливості використання його результатів для розробки програм психологічної підготовки й тренінгів, спрямованих на формування адаптивних стилів ухвалення рішень, розвиток професійної мотивації та підвищення стресостійкості військовослужбовців, що сприятиме зростанню ефективності й безпеки виконання службових завдань

♦ **Ключові слова:** домінантні стилі ухвалення рішень; професійні домагання; цінності; когнітивні детермінанти вибору; саморегуляція