



Professional decision-making by psychologists under stress: Psychological mechanisms and influencing factors

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◆ **Abstract.** This article presents a theoretical analysis of the psychological mechanisms underlying professional decision-making by psychologists under stressful conditions, particularly in the context of military operations and combat stress. The aim of the article was to identify the main psychological factors and mechanisms influencing the process of professional decision-making by psychologists in situations of heightened psychological strain, including crisis and combat conditions. The methodological basis of the study consisted of methods of theoretical analysis, generalisation and systematisation of contemporary scientific works on the issue of decision-making under stressful conditions. The results of contemporary studies on the influence of emotional, cognitive and personality factors on the decision-making process were analysed. The main groups of factors influencing a psychologist's professional decision-making were identified: cognitive, emotional, moral and value-based, professional and situational. An original model of professional decision-making by psychologists under stressful conditions is proposed, which reflects the interaction between external stress factors (in particular, combat situations) and the specialist's internal psychological mechanisms. A classification of the types of professional decisions made by psychologists in crisis situations (diagnostic, interventional, ethical, situationally operational and reflective-corrective) has been developed, enabling a systematic description of professional activity in the military sphere. Particular attention has been paid to the role of professional experience, empathy, conscience, reflection and the specialist's sense of personal responsibility in the decision-making process under crisis and combat conditions. It was emphasised that the combination of analytical and intuitive thinking contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of a psychologist's professional activity and to providing psychological support to military personnel. The practical significance of the findings lies in their potential application to improving the system of psychological support in wartime, and to developing programmes to enhance psychologists' stress resilience and professional reliability

◆ **Keywords:** professional activity; wartime conditions; combat operations; empathy; conscience

◆ Introduction

Contemporary social realities are characterised by an increase in the number of crisis and stress-inducing situations caused by military events, socio-economic instability, emergencies and a general rise in the psychological strain

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on professionals in support roles. Under such conditions, the professional activity of psychologists becomes particularly relevant, as they are required to work with people who have experienced psychological trauma, are in a state of acute stress or are facing crisis life circumstances. The military-psychological context of a psychologist's professional activity deserves special attention. Studies by C. Sousa & G. Veronese (2022), I.C.Z.Y. Lim *et al.* (2022) and M. Palace *et al.* (2024) have highlighted that the conditions of war and combat operations create specific stressors that significantly affect the cognitive processes, emotional regulation and professional functioning of specialists. In particular, they highlight an increased vulnerability to professional burnout, the need to develop stress resilience, and the use of adaptive decision-making mechanisms in crisis situations. Military psychological research, notably that of O. Martsyniak-Dorosh *et al.* (2025), emphasises the importance of integrating knowledge of psychological trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder into the practice of psychologists working with military personnel and civilians who have survived combat.

A psychologist's professional activity involves the need to make responsible decisions regarding the choice of psychodiagnostic methods, forms of psychological support, and psychocorrectional or counselling strategies. In crisis situations, this process is significantly complicated by the influence of emotional strain, time constraints, a high level of responsibility for the client's psychological state, and the risk of professional burnout. Stress can significantly affect a specialist's cognitive processes, in particular attention, memory, the speed of information processing and the ability to analyse a situation rationally. Under such conditions, understanding the psychological mechanisms of professional decision-making, which combine analytical thinking, professional experience, intuitive strategies and the ability to self-regulate, becomes particularly important. O. Martsyniak-Dorosh *et al.* (2025) identified psychological flexibility as a key psychological mechanism for effective decision-making under stressful conditions; this is actively researched within the framework of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). This therapy is a contemporary branch of cognitive-behavioural therapy aimed at developing psychological flexibility by fostering the ability to accept one's inner experience (thoughts, emotions, feelings) without avoidance, whilst acting in accordance with personal and professional values. This is particularly relevant to the work of psychologists in emergency situations, where high levels of emotional stress can impair decision-making and lead to the use of ineffective coping strategies. As noted by O. Martsyniak-Dorosh *et al.*, the application of ACT principles helps to minimise the impact of stress by overcoming experiential avoidance and increasing awareness of professional choices.

Another important factor determining the effectiveness of decision-making under stressful conditions is the nature of an individual's coping strategies. Research by

N. Mateiko *et al.* (2025) demonstrated that the use of constructive coping strategies, in particular a problem-focused approach, emotional regulation and seeking social support, helps to maintain psychological well-being and enhances the ability to respond appropriately in extreme situations. In contrast, destructive strategies, such as avoidance or denial, have a negative impact on cognitive processes and may lead to a decline in the quality of decision-making. Although these patterns were investigated by N. Mateiko *et al.* in a sample of military personnel, they are also relevant to the professional activity of psychologists working in high-stress environments. A key factor influencing the decision-making process in complex and stressful conditions is the subject's motivational and personality characteristics. V.V. Predko *et al.* (2023) confirmed that the level of intrinsic motivation, responsibility and psychological resilience determines the effectiveness of behaviour under high pressure. In particular, the development of internal resources contributes to more conscious and purposeful decision-making, whilst a lack of such resources may lead to avoidance of responsibility or a reduction in the quality of professional choices. An analysis of psychologists' performance under stress, conducted by H. Varina & I. Medvid (2025), highlighted the decisive role of personal and motivational factors, which are integral components of selecting a successful intervention strategy.

Significant attention is also paid to the ethical aspects of professional decision-making by psychologists. Researchers S. Knapp *et al.* (2013) emphasised that an effective professional decision requires a combination of scientific knowledge, professional experience and the specialist's moral and value-based orientations. The work by H.M. Levitt *et al.* (2025) demonstrates that in complex professional situations, psychologists often rely not only on formal ethical standards, but also on professional judgement and reflection on their own responsibility. Similarly, researchers W.B. Johnson *et al.* (2024) noted that models of ethical decision-making in psychology must take into account both cognitive and moral mechanisms regulating a professional's behaviour. Furthermore, contemporary theoretical approaches to decision-making under risk, particularly in the work of X. Wu (2025), have emphasised the significant influence of cognitive biases, subjective perceptions of uncertainty and emotional factors, which determine the specific nature of choices made in stressful conditions. The aim of this article was to provide a theoretical analysis of the psychological mechanisms underlying psychologists' professional decision-making under stressful conditions and to identify the main factors influencing the effectiveness of this process. Research objectives: to analyse scientific approaches to the problem of professional decision-making in psychological practice; to identify the psychological mechanisms of decision-making under stressful conditions; to outline the main factors influencing a psychologist's professional decisions; to examine the role of professional reflection and self-regulation in the decision-making process.

◆ Materials and Methods

The study was theoretical and analytical in nature and aimed to summarise contemporary scientific approaches to the issue of professional decision-making by psychologists in crisis situations. The object of the study was the process of professional decision-making in the work of psychologists. The subject of the study was the psychological mechanisms and factors influencing psychologists' professional decision-making under stressful conditions. The methodological basis of the study was formed by contemporary theoretical approaches to the study of the psychological mechanisms of decision-making and the characteristics of professionals' work under stressful conditions. In particular, the study employed the method of theoretical analysis and synthesis of academic sources on decision-making, the method of comparative analysis of contemporary research, and the method of systematising academic approaches to studying the impact of stress on cognitive and emotional processes. The theoretical framework was based on the transactional model of stress and coping by R.S. Lazarus & S. Folkman (1984), the concept of professional burnout and stress resilience by C. Maslach & M.P. Leiter (2017), as well as contemporary research into the military-psychological context, in particular the publication by M. Palace *et al.* (2024). These approaches were selected due to their relevance to the analysis of cognitive and emotional processes in crisis situations. To synthesise the results of the scientific research, the method of structural-logical modelling was employed, which enabled the development of an original model of professional decision-making by psychologists under stressful conditions. The research procedure was carried out in stages:

- 1) analytical stage – searching for and selecting academic sources according to defined criteria;
- 2) comparative stage – comparing different approaches to decision-making under stressful conditions;
- 3) systematisation stage – summarising the results and identifying key psychological mechanisms;
- 4) modelling stage – developing an original structural-logical model of professional decision-making by psychologists under stressful conditions.

In the process of systematising scientific approaches, principles were established for classifying the factors influencing a psychologist's professional decision-making under stressful conditions. The classification was based on three main criteria: cognitive factors – characteristics of thinking, attention and memory that determine the speed and accuracy of situation assessment; emotional factors – the level of emotional sensitivity, stress resilience and the capacity for emotional regulation; socio-professional factors – work experience, professional competence, support from colleagues and organisational conditions of work. The criteria for distinguishing types of decisions were: the degree of certainty of the situation (clearly structured/uncertain, crisis conditions); the level of stress (moderate/high); and the nature of the consequences (short-term/long-term for the client and the psychologist). Based on these criteria, the

following types of professional decisions were identified: diagnostic, intervention, ethical, situational-operational and reflective-corrective, which reflect different strategies employed by psychologists in stressful conditions. The application of these methods has made it possible to systematise contemporary scientific approaches to the problem under investigation and to identify the main factors influencing the effectiveness of a psychologist's professional decision-making in complex professional contexts.

◆ Results

The problem of decision-making under complex and stressful conditions is an active area of research in contemporary psychology. The foundations for analysing decision-making under stress were laid by the approach set out in the model by L. Mann *et al.* (1998), as implemented in the Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire. The authors identified four main patterns of response to decision-making situations: vigilance, avoidance of responsibility, procrastination and hypervigilance. Vigilance is regarded as the most adaptive strategy, involving a systematic analysis of alternatives and consequences, whilst the other styles are associated with maladaptive forms of response under conditions of heightened stress. In particular, hypervigilance is characterised by impulsivity and hasty decision-making, whilst avoidance and procrastination lead to the postponement or delegation of responsibility. Thus, stress levels significantly influence which style predominates, which directly determines the effectiveness of a psychologist's professional decisions.

As the contemporary conditions of a psychologist's professional activity are characterised by increasing levels of stress, uncertainty and responsibility for decisions made, this has led to heightened attention from researchers towards the psychological mechanisms underpinning professional choice. An analysis of academic literature has demonstrated the complex nature of this process. In contemporary research, considerable attention is paid to studying the impact of stress on cognitive processes, in particular on the ability to analyse information, assess risks and select behavioural strategies. Researchers R.S. Lazarus & S. Folkman (1984), J.S. Lerner *et al.* (2015) and A.J. Porcelli & M.R. Delgado (2017) have emphasised that stressors can alter the nature of decision-making, leading both to a reduction in the rationality of situational assessment and to an intensification of intuitive thinking mechanisms. Psychological research also highlights the role of emotional and neuropsychological mechanisms in the decision-making process. In particular, C. Sandi (2013) found that stress can influence the process of evaluating alternatives and risk-taking propensity, as well as alter the nature of an individual's behavioural strategies. Some studies, including a study by L.F. Sarmiento *et al.* (2024), have demonstrated that physiological responses to stress, particularly hormonal changes, may be associated with an increase or decrease in the propensity for risky decisions. L. Pruessner & C.N.M. Ortner (2025) demonstrated that the effectiveness

of decision-making depends to a large extent on the flexibility of emotional regulation and the capacity for cognitive reappraisal, which ensure an adaptive response to stressful conditions and the maintenance of mental well-being.

Metacognitive processes also play an important role, ensuring awareness, control and correction of cognitive activity in conditions of uncertainty and emotional stress (Wang *et al.*, 2024). Alongside this, researchers S. Schubert *et al.* (2023), E. Quinlan *et al.* (2024) and A. Shymanskyi (2024) have emphasised the importance of professional and personal factors, in particular the level of professional identity development, competence and psychological readiness for the role, which act as internal regulators of a professional's behaviour in complex situations. M.H. Rønnestad *et al.* (2024) specifically emphasised the role of supervision as a resource for professional development and for reducing uncertainty in decision-making. At the same time, A. Nordahl-Hansen *et al.* (2024) emphasised the need for critical reflection on research findings and the contextualisation of their interpretation, which enhances the soundness of professional decisions.

A separate area of contemporary research concerns the study of individual psychological characteristics of decision-making in complex situations. S. Yilmaz & H. Kafadar (2024) found that the nature of decision-making is influenced by cognitive abilities, personality traits, the level of development of executive functions, and the maturity of self-regulation mechanisms. H.M. Levitt *et al.* (2025) also emphasised the importance of intuition and professional experience in the decision-making process under conditions of heightened operational stress. Contemporary Ukrainian research also devotes considerable attention to the study of the psychological mechanisms of decision-making in complex and crisis situations. In particular, V.Y. Artemov & I.V. Synhaivska (2022) demonstrated that, in conditions of uncertainty and information scarcity, individuals are more likely to employ intuitive and heuristic decision-making strategies, thereby reducing the role of rational analysis of the situation. The study by T.D. Shcherban *et al.* (2025) focuses on the psychological characteristics of managerial decisions in crisis socio-economic conditions, emphasising the influence of emotional factors and cognitive simplifications on the choice of behavioural strategies. It has been established that elevated levels of stress, particularly under martial law, can lead to a decline in the quality of strategic analysis and an increase in impulsive decision-making. Similar results were obtained in a study by A.O. Kononenko (2025), which showed that emotional states and levels of psychological resilience are directly linked to

decision-making styles, determining a preference for rational or impulsive behavioural strategies. It has been established that emotional states significantly influence decision-making styles: increased anxiety is associated with impulsivity and a reduction in cognitive control. The findings of V.V. Plokhikh & D.O. Koverdyuk (2025) demonstrated that even moderate levels of stress alter behavioural decision-making strategies and intensify emotionally oriented reactions in individuals. Furthermore, the work by L.V. Zasiiekina & A.O. Martyniuk (2025) emphasised that prolonged wartime stress is associated with moral distress, secondary traumatisation and professional burnout among support staff. At the same time, studies by Ukrainian researchers highlight the role of psychological resilience as a key resource for adapting to stress and for effective professional performance.

The issue of moral and value-based decision-making mechanisms is examined in the work by L. Pomytkina *et al.* (2020). The researchers emphasised that the process of making important life decisions is linked not only to cognitive analysis of the situation, but also to the operation of an integral psychological mechanism – conscience – which ensures an individual's internal assessment of their responsibility for their own choices. In a psychologist's professional practice, this mechanism is closely linked to empathy, which enables the specialist to gain a deeper understanding of the client's emotional state and to recognise the moral implications of their own professional decisions. L. Pomytkina *et al.* (2024) also drew attention to the role of professionally significant qualities in the decision-making process under challenging professional conditions. In particular, it has been shown that the development of professional competencies, emotional resilience and the capacity for reflection can significantly influence the decision-making strategies of professionals working in situations of heightened responsibility. Consequently, in contemporary psychological science, there are several approaches to studying the phenomenon of decision-making, which focus on different psychological mechanisms underlying this process. A synthesis of the findings of contemporary research allows to view a psychologist's professional decision-making under stress as a multi-level process that integrates emotional-regulatory, cognitive, metacognitive and professional-personality mechanisms. Based on an analysis of contemporary scientific research, the main theoretical approaches to understanding decision-making in a psychologist's professional activity have been identified; a summary of these is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Main scientific approaches to the study of decision-making in psychology

Approach	Main provisions	Representatives	Significance for psychologists' professional activity
Cognitive	Decision-making is regarded as a process of processing information, analysing alternatives and predicting consequences	C. Sandi (2013)	Enables an explanation of the rational mechanisms underlying choice and the assessment of a situation
Emotional regulation	Emotional states and stress levels influence the speed and nature of decision-making	A.J. Porcelli & M.R. Delgado (2017), A.O. Kononenko (2025)	Explains the impact of anxiety, stress and emotional strain on professional decisions

Table 1. Continued

Approach	Main provisions	Representatives	Significance for psychologists' professional activity
Personal	Decision-making style depends on individual personality traits	L. Mann <i>et al.</i> (1998), V.V. Predko <i>et al.</i> (2023), V.V. Plokhikh & D.O. Koverdyuk (2025)	Identifies the role of experience, individual strategies and psychological resilience
Ethical (moral and values-based)	Decisions are made with due regard to moral standards, professional ethics and responsibility	L. Mann <i>et al.</i> (1998), S. Knapp <i>et al.</i> (2013), W.B. Johnson <i>et al.</i> (2024), L. Pomytkina <i>et al.</i> (2020; 2024)	Identifies the psychologist's ethical responsibility regarding professional choices
Integrative	The combination of cognitive, emotional and moral factors in the decision-making process	C. Sousa & G. Veronese (2022), I.C.Z.Y. Lim <i>et al.</i> (2022) ta M. Palace <i>et al.</i> (2024)	Enables a comprehensive explanation of professional decision-making in crisis situations

Source: compiled by the authors

As can be seen from Table 1, contemporary academic discourse views decision-making as a multi-component process that combines cognitive, emotional and moral-value-based mechanisms of behavioural regulation. Consequently, the results of the analysis indicate the multifactorial nature of the decision-making process under stressful conditions. At the same time, the specific features of professional decision-making by psychologists who work directly with people in crisis situations require further theoretical exploration. This is precisely why it is important to investigate the psychological mechanisms and factors that determine the effectiveness of a psychologist's professional decisions under stressful conditions. Professional decision-making is a crucial component of a psychologist's work, as the effectiveness of the psychological support provided to a client depends to a large extent on the appropriateness and timeliness of the chosen intervention strategies. In professional practice, psychologists are constantly faced with the need to assess a person's psychological state, determine appropriate psychodiagnostic methods, select suitable forms of psychological support, and predict the

possible outcomes of psychocorrective intervention. In the academic literature, the decision-making process is regarded as a complex cognitive process involving the analysis of a situation, the evaluation of alternatives and the selection of the most optimal course of action. In the work of a psychologist, this process has its own specific characteristics, as decisions are made under conditions of uncertainty, time constraints and a high level of responsibility for another person's psychological state.

The issue of professional decision-making takes on particular significance in stressful conditions. Stressful conditions can significantly affect a specialist's cognitive and emotional processes, reduce their ability to analyse information rationally, cause cognitive distortions and complicate the process of selecting optimal solutions. At the same time, under such conditions, intuitive thinking mechanisms based on professional experience and established professional skills may be activated. Based on a synthesis of scientific and practical findings, a psychological model of professional decision-making by psychologists under stressful conditions is proposed (Fig. 1).

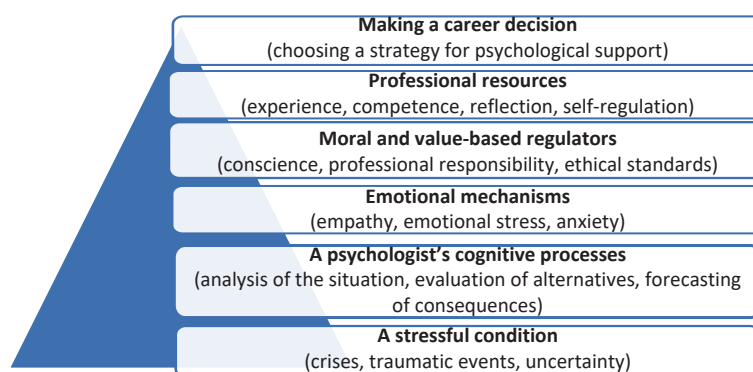


Figure 1. A psychological model of professional decision-making by psychologists under stressful conditions

Source: compiled by the authors

The proposed model reflects the key psychological mechanisms underlying a psychologist's professional decision-making under stressful conditions. It demonstrates the interrelationship between external stressors and the specialist's internal psychological processes. The decision-making process is viewed as the result of the interaction between cognitive processes of situation analysis, emotional experiences, moral and

value-based regulators, and the psychologist's professional resources. Such an integrative model allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the specific nature of a psychologist's professional activity under conditions of heightened psychological strain. To illustrate the proposed model, examples are provided relating to wartime conditions, combat stress and the work of military psychologists:

1. Stressful condition: a military psychologist is working with a soldier who has just survived an artillery attack and is experiencing an acute stress reaction.

2. The psychologist's cognitive processes: the psychologist rapidly assesses the service member's condition, evaluates alternative support strategies (crisis counselling, stabilisation techniques) and predicts possible consequences for his mental health.

3. Emotional mechanisms: whilst working, the psychologist feels empathy for the client, but at the same time must control their own anxiety and emotional tension in order to remain effective.

4. Moral and value-based regulators: an example is a situation where the psychologist decides on the priority of assistance for several service personnel simultaneously, guided by professional responsibility and ethical standards.

5. Professional resources: the use of specific crisis intervention protocols, experience of working with PTSD, self-regulation skills and support from colleagues in the military unit.

6. Professional decision-making: based on analysis and available resources, the psychologist selects a strategy – for example, conducting a brief stabilisation conversation with

a soldier and then referring them to a specialist centre for further support.

The process of professional decision-making by a psychologist in stressful conditions is determined by a combination of various factors, which can either contribute to the effectiveness of professional activity or complicate it. Cognitive factors include characteristics of thinking, attention and the ability to analyse information. In stressful conditions, there may be a reduction in concentration and a simplification of the process of analysing the situation. Emotional factors are linked to the processes of empathy, anxiety and responsibility for the outcomes of psychological support. In some cases, this may lead to secondary traumatisation or professional burnout. Professional factors include the specialist's level of training, practical experience, the development of professional competencies and self-regulation skills. Situational factors are linked to the specific conditions of professional activity: time constraints, the complexity of the psychological situation and the level of responsibility for the consequences of professional intervention. The combination of factors and the nature of their influence on a psychologist's decision-making are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors influencing psychologists' professional decision-making under stressful conditions

Factor group	Characteristics	Influence on the decision-making process
Cognitive	Thinking patterns, analysis of information, evaluation of alternatives, forecasting of consequences	They determine a psychologist's ability to analyse a situation rationally and select the optimal strategy for providing support
Emotional	Empathy, emotional strain, anxiety, empathy with the client	They can both enhance understanding of the client's psychological state and compromise the objectivity of the assessment of the situation
Moral and value-based	Conscience, professional ethics, accountability for the outcomes of support	Ensure the ethical regulation of professional decisions and an awareness of their possible consequences
Professional	Level of training, practical experience, professional competencies	Facilitate faster and more informed decision-making in complex psychological situations
Situational	Time constraints, complexity of the case, level of risk and uncertainty	May limit the scope for in-depth analysis of a situation and require rapid decisions
Psychological resources	Stress resilience, self-regulation, professional reflection	Help maintain the effectiveness of professional activity even in crisis situations

Source: compiled by the authors

Thus, the process of professional decision-making by a psychologist in stressful conditions is determined by the complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, moral and value-based, and professional factors. It is important to take into account that the effectiveness of this process largely depends on the professional's level of training, psychological

resilience and ability to self-regulate under conditions of heightened psychological strain. Based on an analysis of contemporary research and a generalisation of psychological approaches to the problem of decision-making, a provisional classification of the types of psychologists' professional decisions under stressful conditions is proposed (Table 3).

Table 3. Classification of the types of professional decisions made by psychologists under stressful conditions

Type of professional decision	Content of the decision	Examples in a psychologist's practice
Diagnostic	Aimed at assessing the client's psychological state, identifying the problem and determining the direction of psychological support	Initial assessment of psychological and emotional state; determining the level of stress or trauma; for example, assessing the condition of a service member following artillery attack
Interventional	Relate to the selection of methods, techniques and strategies for psychological support, depending on the situation	Selection of crisis intervention; application of stabilisation or support techniques; for example, a stabilisation conversation with a soldier following a combat engagement
Ethical	Involve the selection of professionally and ethically acceptable actions, taking into account ethical standards and the principles of professional activity	Decisions regarding the limits of confidentiality; balancing client support with professional responsibility; for example, informing the command of a soldier's critical condition whilst upholding ethical standards
Situational-operative	Made under conditions of time pressure and a high level of uncertainty, when a rapid response is required	Responding to a crisis event; decision-making during a client's acute psychological reaction; for example, providing rapid assistance during a panic attack in a military unit

Table 3. Continued

Type of professional decision	Content of the decision	Examples in a psychologist's practice
Reflective-corrective	Aimed at analysing one's own professional activity and adjusting future actions	Reviewing the chosen support strategy; changing the approach to working with the client; for example, adjusting methods after working with a group of military personnel who have survived a combat incident

Source: compiled by the authors

The classification of types of professional decisions made by a psychologist in stressful conditions presented here allows for the systematisation of various aspects of their work and highlights the specific nature of their role. Diagnostic decisions are fundamental, as the effectiveness of subsequent support depends on the accuracy of the initial assessment. In a military context, this may involve the rapid determination of the level of combat stress or the identification of signs of an acute stress reaction in a service member. Intervention decisions reflect the choice of specific methods and techniques for psychological support, in particular the use of stabilisation techniques immediately following a combat incident or the provision of crisis counselling to prevent the development of PTSD. Ethical decisions take on particular significance in military contexts, as psychologists often face a dilemma between maintaining confidentiality and the need to inform the command of a service member's critical mental state. Situational and operational decisions demonstrate the psychologist's ability to act quickly under conditions of uncertainty, for example, by responding promptly to a panic attack in a military unit during combat operations. At the same time, reflective and corrective decisions ensure the psychologist's professional growth and adaptation, involving an analysis of the effectiveness of the techniques used after working with a group of military personnel and the corresponding adjustment of approaches in future practice. The proposed classification reflects various aspects of a psychologist's professional activity and demonstrates that the decision-making process in crisis situations involves not only cognitive analysis of the situation, but also ethical, emotional and reflective mechanisms of behavioural regulation. The practical significance of the study lies in the potential to use the proposed model and classification of professional decisions in the training of psychologists, as well as in the practice of psychological support in crisis and stressful conditions.

◆ Discussion

The results of the theoretical analysis revealed the complex and multi-faceted nature of the process by which psychologists make professional decisions under stressful conditions. The analysis of scientific research carried out suggests that the effectiveness of decision-making in crisis situations is determined by the interaction of cognitive, emotional and personality factors. The data obtained are consistent with the findings of recent studies, which have confirmed that stress can significantly influence human cognitive processes, in particular the ability to analyse information rationally and evaluate alternatives. In particular, the works of J.S. Lerner *et al.* (2015) and A.J. Porcelli

& M.R. Delgado (2017) show that elevated stress levels can alter decision-making patterns, leading to an increase in intuitive or impulsive behavioural strategies. These findings are consistent with the data obtained, as well as with conclusions regarding the impact of stress on risk-taking and the assessment of uncertainty.

The present study has demonstrated consistency with contemporary Ukrainian research, which emphasises the importance of emotional and personality factors in the decision-making process. In particular, the findings of A.O. Kononenko (2025) indicated a close relationship between emotional states and decision-making styles, whereby heightened anxiety may contribute to the formation of impulsive behavioural strategies. The work of V.V. Plokhikh & D.O. Koverdyuk (2025) established that stress alters the nature of decision-making, can intensify emotional reactions and reduce the effectiveness of rational analysis of a situation. Research by T.D. Shcherban *et al.* (2025) has shown that heightened levels of uncertainty and risk can alter behavioural decision-making strategies and contribute to the development of more cautious or conservative patterns of behaviour.

The model of professional decision-making by psychologists under stressful conditions proposed in this article reflects the integrative nature of this process and demonstrates the interconnection between external stressors and the internal psychological mechanisms underlying the specialist's activity. Unlike the approaches of E.J. Kim & J.J. Kim (2023), W.B. Johnson *et al.* (2024) and L.F. Sarmiento *et al.* (2024), the proposed model places particular emphasis on moral and value-based mechanisms of behavioural regulation, specifically the role of professional responsibility and conscience in the psychologist's decision-making process. The classification of types of professional decisions made by psychologists in crisis situations, developed in this study, allows for a more systematic description of the structure of a specialist's professional activity and is consistent with contemporary approaches to the analysis of cognitive, emotional and moral-value-based decision-making mechanisms. The model of a psychologist's professional decision-making under stressful conditions could form the basis for the development of training programmes for military psychologists, with particular emphasis on developing cognitive skills for rapid situation analysis, building stress resilience and emotional regulation, as well as raising awareness of the moral and value-based aspects of professional activity. The classification of types of professional decisions has made it possible to structure the practical work of a military psychologist and to identify priority

areas of work in crisis situations – ranging from assessing a service member's condition to making operational decisions in a combat environment. This helps to improve the effectiveness of psychological support, reduce the risk of professional burnout and ensure greater coherence between the psychologist's individual actions and the overall system of psychological support within military units. Thus, the results of the theoretical analysis conducted confirmed that the effectiveness of a psychologist's professional decisions under stressful conditions depends not only on the cognitive processes involved in analysing a situation, but also on the level of emotional resilience, the development of professional competencies, and the moral and value-based regulators of behaviour.

◆ Conclusions

The theoretical analysis carried out has led to the conclusion that professional decision-making by psychologists under stressful conditions is a complex, multi-level process determined by the interaction of cognitive, emotional and moral-value mechanisms. It was found that stress factors can significantly influence a specialist's cognitive processes, reducing their ability to analyse a situation rationally. At the same time, professional experience, along with established skills in self-regulation and reflection, contributed to enhancing the effectiveness of the psychologist's professional activity even in complex crisis situations. A synthesis of contemporary scientific approaches has made it possible to identify the key factors determining the effectiveness of decision-making: cognitive (analysis, forecasting, evaluation of alternatives), emotional (empathy, anxiety, emotional regulation), moral and value-based (conscience, professional responsibility, ethical standards)

and professional resources (experience, competence, self-regulation skills). Based on these factors, an original classification of types of professional decisions made by psychologists in crisis situations was developed: diagnostic, intervention, ethical, situational-operational and reflective-corrective. Each of these types reflected the specific nature of the psychologist's work and demonstrated different strategies for responding to stressful conditions. The proposed psychological model of a psychologist's professional decision-making under stressful conditions reflected the integrative nature of this process. It demonstrated the interconnection between external stressors and the specialist's internal psychological mechanisms, as well as the phased nature of decision-making: from the initial assessment of the situation to the selection of the optimal strategy for providing assistance. Particular attention was paid to moral and value-based regulators, which ensured the psychologist's professional responsibility and ethical conduct even under extreme conditions, particularly in the military sphere. A promising direction for further research has been identified as a more in-depth study of specialists' psychological resources and the development of intervention programmes aimed at supporting their effectiveness in crisis situations.

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Прийняття професійних рішень психологом в умовах стресу: психологічні механізми та фактори впливу

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♦ **Анотація.** У статті здійснено теоретичний аналіз психологічних механізмів прийняття професійних рішень психологом у стресових умовах, зокрема у контексті військової діяльності та бойового стресу. Метою статті було визначення основних психологічних чинників та механізмів, що впливають на процес прийняття професійних рішень психологом у ситуаціях підвищеного психологічного навантаження, включаючи кризові та бойові умови. Методологічну основу дослідження становили методи теоретичного аналізу, узагальнення та систематизації сучасних наукових праць з проблеми прийняття рішень у стресових умовах. Проаналізовано результати сучасних досліджень, присвячених впливу емоційних, когнітивних і особистісних чинників на процес прийняття рішень. Визначено основні групи факторів, що впливають на прийняття професійних рішень психологом: когнітивні, емоційні, морально ціннісні, професійні та ситуативні. Запропоновано авторську модель прийняття професійних рішень психологом у стресових умовах, яка відображає взаємодію зовнішніх стресових чинників (зокрема бойових ситуацій) та внутрішніх психологічних механізмів діяльності фахівця. Розроблено класифікацію типів професійних рішень психолога у кризових умовах (діагностичних, інтервенційних, етичних, ситуативно оперативних та рефлексивно корекційних), що дозволяє системно описати професійну діяльність у військовій сфері. Особливу увагу приділено ролі професійного досвіду, емпатії, совісті, рефлексії та внутрішньої відповідальності фахівця у процесі прийняття рішень у кризових та бойових умовах. Підкреслено, що поєднання аналітичного та інтуїтивного мислення сприяє підвищенню ефективності професійної діяльності психолога та забезпеченню психологічної підтримки військовослужбовців. Практичне значення отриманих результатів полягає у можливості їх використання для вдосконалення системи психологічного забезпечення в умовах війни, розроблення програм розвитку стресостійкості та професійної надійності психологів

♦ **Ключові слова:** професійна діяльність; умови війни; бойові дії; емпатія; совість