The Factor of Mental Health in the Post-War Recovery and Sustainable Development of Ukrainian Society

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ABSTRACT:
The study examines the features and characteristics of mental health among the population of the states, focusing on its importance during wartime and post-war recovery, with particular attention to the situation in Ukraine. It explores the significance of active state involvement in supporting the population by developing appropriate programs and institutions at the regional, national, and international levels. The necessity for the state to recognize its responsibility to society, mitigate the consequences of traumatic events, and ensure the resocialization of affected populations for ensuring the sustainable development of society is emphasized. Special attention in the study is given to the analysis of existing and prospective concepts, programs, and projects aimed at preserving and restoring mental health of populations as a guarantee of the sustainable development of Ukrainian society as a whole. The article compiles data on current informational resources developed within Ukrainian state policy and with international support, aiming to provide preventive assistance and rehabilitation to society affected by war. It also analyzes the dynamics of personal assessment of mental health by the Ukrainian population, highlighting that, over three years of war, the number of people dissatisfied with their mental health has risen by 4% compared to 2022.The study underscores the need to examine international practices and successful case studies in addressing mental health challenges and ensuring the further sustainable development of society. It summarizes global experiences (from the USA, UK, Belgium, Australia, Israel) regarding state support for mental health restoration and identifies key elements requiring implementation in Ukraine's state policy. The results have practical significance for post-war recovery and sustainable development of Ukrainian society.

Keywords: mental health, sustainable development, state policy, post-war recovery, society, universalism.

1. Introduction

At the current stage of societal development, humanity faces a rapid increase in geopolitical "hotspots". This highlights the urgent need to understand the drivers of

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human development, the connection between individuals and the world, and how people survive in a changing environment.

Today, with the advent of the Internet offering cheaper and faster means of communication (messengers, social networks, etc.), society has become more vulnerable, creating effective tools for attacking mass consciousness. Geopolitical adversaries have exploited this, initiating a new type of war–mental war–aimed at destroying national mental health by eroding self-awareness and altering the opponent's mental and civilizational foundation. Armed conflicts, especially large-scale wars, often plunge the majority of the population into existential crises. The process of reducing the consequences of traumatic events and resocializing affected populations during and after conflict requires the joint involvement of researchers, practitioners, and the creation of preventive measures (programs and initiatives at regional, national, and international levels).

The consequences of war inflict prolonged physical and psychological damage on broad segments of the population, therefore, the factor of mental health in the post-war recovery and sustainable development of society, in particular in Ukraine, should become a priority for public authorities. Understanding the psychological impact of war is essential, as wars alter society's relationship with the future. War conditions evoke memories and intensify wounds that will leave marks on politics, economics, art, and personal life for generations (Orkideh, 2013).

The main tasks of post-war recovery include restoring individuals' inner integrity, resocializing affected populations, and integrating crisis experiences into the broader process of rebuilding the state and society. The restoration of human resources can ensure the development of the state in all other spheres since individuals serve as the key drivers of fundamental changes within the country. They play a central role in rebuilding infrastructure, the economy, the financial sector, and scientific and technological potential. Ignoring the mental health issues of the population, linked to the burden of war experience, is just as detrimental as neglecting the destruction of infrastructure, economic setbacks, and scientific and technological stagnation caused by insufficient funding and direct military actions within the country. These processes are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

However, the primary focus in post-war state recovery and sustainable societal development should be on the individual as the key subject of socio-economic transformation. People are not only capable of meeting their own urgent needs as well as those of society as a whole, but they can also create the conditions for the further development of these needs. Addressing these urgent challenges underscores the relevance of this study.

The general aim of this article is to investigate the factor of mental health in the post-war recovery and sustainable development of Ukrainian society.

2. Literature Review

The term "mental health" was first introduced by German psychiatrist Karl Leonhard, known for his classification of personality accentuations (Leonhard, 1976). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022a) defines mental health as a condition of well-being that enables individuals to realize their potential, feel fulfilled, adapt to

environmental changes, cope with life's stresses, work productively, and contribute to society. Researchers often draw parallels between physical and mental health, evaluating their mutual influences. For example, in "Health Psychology", Taylor S.E. (1995) identifies four key indicators of a healthy lifestyle: values, emotions, self-esteem, and mental well-being. Taylor emphasizes that considering health as a personal value effectively regulates citizens' behaviors towards its preservation (Taylor, 1995).

Ukrainian scholar Panina N.V. (1993) examined the psychological condition and lifestyle of citizens undergoing societal transformation. Panina's sociological studies reveal the population's recognition of the interdependence between health and negative societal phenomena, such as economic crises, social tension, and increased conflict.

Recent academic publications demonstrate that mental health, as a multidisciplinary phenomenon, is primarily studied in psychology, medicine, and social work. Researchers focus on methodological approaches to studying stress and mental health. Among Ukrainian researchers, Kravchenko O.O. (2023) and Slyusarevsky M.M. (2022) have dedicated their work to developing effective methods of socio-psychological support for youth during wartime. Panok V.G. (2022) highlights the need to improve Ukraine's psychological services in education to provide effective support to participants in the educational process.

However, the political science dimension remains underexplored, particularly regarding the role of mental health in recovery and sustainable development of Ukrainian society in the post-war period and the political institutions' initiatives in societal recovery during and after conflict. Most studies focus on economic recovery (Oleshko, A.A., Budyakova, O.Yu., Kvas, V.O., 2022), infrastructure restoration, cultural heritage, and legal systems (Kubko A., Turchynov K., Chudyk N., Vladymyrov M., Matviichuk A., 2024). Hence this study aims to address the political science aspects of the state's role in post-war mental health recovery.

3. Methodology

In studying the factor of mental health in post-war societal recovery and its sustainable development, the authors did not focus solely on psychological approaches and concepts but used them primarily to generalize and systematize scientific perspectives on the essence of mental health as a multidisciplinary phenomenon. It is worth noting, however, that to analyze the nature of mental health, its characteristics, and influencing factors, the authors employed the behavioral approach. This approach made it possible to track changes in human behavior based on the "stimulus-response" principle. Considering that proponents of the behavioral approach emphasize that human behavior is primarily shaped and determined by external stimuli and influences rather than internal factors, in this case, military actions act as a powerful catalyst for change. Since these changes often result in negative reactions, it is logical to observe a deterioration in the mental health of populations affected by war.

At the same time, the study placed significant emphasis on incorporating political science approaches and methods, including the neo-institutional approach. This approach focuses on the activities of political institutions, particularly state authorities. The research highlights the leading role of the state, which, due to its responsibilities, bears the burden

of societal recovery, influences resocialization processes, and supports the mental health of the population during and after wartime. Using methods of analysis and synthesis, the authors derived systematic conclusions based on scientific sources and publicly available official information about the concepts, programs, and projects being developed or already implemented by the state to address citizens' mental health needs.

The authors also utilized data analysis methods to study and systematize surveys conducted in Ukraine by the research company "Gradus". These surveys provided additional information on the population's personal assessment of their mental health, levels of trust in state institutions, and trends in these aspects over time.

Historical and analogy methods were applied to analyze the positive experiences of countries that have faced the challenge of post-war mental health recovery or implemented preventive measures in this area. Through the case study method, successful examples of state programs for restoring and supporting the population's mental health were identified and analyzed from international experiences. Based on these findings, the authors formulated universal key elements requiring implementation in Ukraine's state policy.

4. Results and Discussion

In the modern world, wars have acquired a hybrid nature. Combat takes place not only on the battlefield but also in the informational domain, targeting both territories and aspects such as identity, historical memory, and national ideological unity. Within academic circles, the term "mental war" is gaining traction to describe contemporary conflicts. This concept, introduced by German military theorist E. Ludendorff (1935), author of the theory of "total war", focuses not so much on immediate outcomes as on altering the foundational state of systems. Ludendorff's concept entails "resetting historical self-awareness, education systems, upbringing, and, consequently, the fundamental meanings and goals of society, including ideology, rewriting (erasing) history, and undermining traditions, social structures, faith, and core values" (Charlson et al., 2019).

Mental war has the potential to reshape the landscape of social memory in modern societies. The primary target in mental war is the opponent's worldview, perception, and understanding of reality, making ideology and mentality the main points of impact. Mental war involves capturing the opponent's consciousness, imposing new meanings and values, and forming a new paradigm of self-identification. The reinterpretation of historical facts in the context of current political agendas leads to transformations in national identity across both space and time.

Mentality, as a key category, represents unconscious images, perceptions, attitudes, and values inherent to a particular social community. It creates a framework of meaning-forming patterns that influence decision-making processes.

Directly influencing mentality is quite challenging, but mental disposition is more susceptible to external influence. It manifests through a set of assessments, preferences, views, norms, knowledge, and beliefs. This is precisely what an adversary targets in mental war, using tools such as bribery, rumors, discreditation, propaganda, and persuasion. By altering mentality and identity in the present, an opponent seeks to induce changes in the future structure of society.

While classical wars required defeating the enemy's army and occupying its territory, today's conflicts can dismantle states by altering their self-awareness, worldview, goals, values, and priorities. Rebuilding armies and infrastructure may be achievable, but reversing the evolution of societal worldviews is an extremely challenging task. As a result, modern wars have particularly severe consequences for societies, which may lose their developmental orientations and sink into existential crises.

No individual who has directly or indirectly encountered war remains unchanged. War acts as a litmus test, revealing hidden emotions and instincts, genuine attitudes toward others, and the maturity and stability of civil society.

During wartime or armed conflict, the population becomes more vulnerable, especially in socio-political and psychological dimensions. According to a WHO report, 22% of individuals who have experienced war or military conflict in their residential areas over the past decade face mental health issues (World Health Organization, 2022b). This presents a significant challenge for governments and state representatives, particularly in the post-war period, where alongside rebuilding the economy and infrastructure, attention must be given to restoring and sustainable developing of society.

Before addressing solutions to mental health challenges, it is essential to understand its essence and impact on societal behavior. British social psychologist Marie Jahoda (1958) proposed six fundamental characteristics of mental health:

1.   Personal autonomy. The individual recognizes responsibility for their decisions basedon experience and interests and is prepared to accept the consequences.

2.   Adequate perception of reality. Personal beliefs and values align with socially accepted principles and traditions, fostering coexistence within society.

3.   Positive self-esteem. The ability to objectively evaluate one's abilities, defend personal opinions, and respond calmly to criticism.

4.   Stress resilience. Experiencing discomfort in stressful situations without succumbing to aggressive or overwhelming emotions, with a controlled approach to tension release.

5.   Adaptability. The capacity to adjust to changing circumstances without distress, maintaining flexibility and calmness.

6.   Self-actualization. Continuous self-reflection and development, enhancing professional and personal skills through socialization (Tengland, 2001).

Acknowledging mental health issues is often difficult in practice. This challenge stems from several factors. First, the lack of a cultural norm for seeking psychological help, rooted in historical experiences where psychiatric contact carried negative connotations and societal stigma. Second, societal norms discourage open expression of emotions, especially negative ones, which hinders self-awareness and deprioritizes mental health in socio-political discourse. Third, fear of the unknown leads to stigmatization of mental health issues.

To promote mental well-being, it is essential to respect individual boundaries and values, foster mutual respect in resolving conflicts–particularly those involving socio-political views– and address public antagonisms (Kotsan, Lozhkin&Mushkevich, 2011).

In response to external negative influences on mental health, citizens can build defensive barriers through informational and emotional control. Informational control

involves regulating the consumption of information, which is especially relevant during wartime. Overexposure to negative news has a destructive impact on mental health, necessitating measures to limit exposure to war-related content. Emotional control requires minimizing the intake of negative emotions from circumstances such as war or death, adhering to an "information diet", and managing emotional stress (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023).

February 24, 2022, changed the lives of Ukrainians. Undoubtedly, a significant portion of Ukraine's citizens understood that the war had been ongoing since 2014. However, for the vast majority, it remained "somewhere out there", far from their homes and, consequently, their awareness. Starting from February 24, the war became a reality for all Ukrainians, and their perception of events acquired a black-and-white tone.

The ongoing stress among Ukrainians, lasting for three years, is directly linked to the full-scale invasion. The war has profoundly impacted the emotional condition of Ukrainians. However, this issue is not a pressing part of the national agenda, as society remains overly focused and mobilized on other pressing matters. Nonetheless, mental health is critical in the context of the nation's future (Fedoryshyn, Chepurna, Lunchenko, Pichurin&Nyzovets, 2024).

More than half of Ukrainians have either experienced or are currently experiencing war-related stress. The long-term consequences of such stressful situations will likely remain a topic of discussion for decades. Current stress levels among Ukrainians cannot be addressed with "homeopathic remedies". Over 77% of respondents reported feelings of anxiety, fear, or panic after February 24 (Gradus, 2022). Despite this, 78% did not seek psychological assistance, although 40% of them do not rule out doing so in the future (Gradus, 2024). According to WHO representative in Ukraine Jarno Habicht, nearly one in four Ukrainians faces mental health challenges and may suffer from psychological disorders after the war ends–about 10 million people (Reuters, 2022). Ukrainian experts estimate that 40-50% of the population may need assistance after the conflict concludes (Ukrinform, 2023).

It is worth emphasizing that, to ensure the objectivity of the data used, perspectives and research from both international specialists and Ukrainian experts were involved. This approach aimed to compare the obtained data and the way the issue of mental health among Ukrainians is presented. Naturally, it is hardly possible to completely eliminate subjectivity in expert judgments. However, the presence of not only qualitative but also quantitative data helps to verify information obtained from official sources and use it as a foundation for research.

Moreover, the use of indicators based on self-assessment by the Ukrainian population regarding their own mental health has increased the study's value. After all, no one can describe the state of mental health among Ukrainians more accurately than the people themselves. Nevertheless, in this case, it is necessary to take into account potential limitations in self-reported data and possible interpretations of the information.

The military aggression has triggered profound and fundamental mental shifts in the collective consciousness of Ukrainian citizens. Ukrainian society has undergone a tremendous traumatic experience from the conflict with Russia, resulting in mental exhaustion–a condition of extreme emotional and intellectual fatigue where individuals struggle to function normally, feeling weak and depressed.

For those living under occupation or near the frontlines, their challenges often differ significantly from those in safer regions, sometimes being entirely incomparable. While one group may face the challenge of surviving an approaching blackout, others are fighting to simply survive. The most difficult situation arises when individuals must reconcile with their conscience – a so-called moral injury. Another critical factor involves direct threats to life, including missile strikes, captivity, and torture. Such circumstances create intense feelings of helplessness. Often, this results in psychological narrowing, such as an unwillingness to leave dangerous zones because of a perceived lack of welcome in safer areas, despite available resources and support programs. This cognitive narrowing focuses people on immediate threats, leading to frustration and limited perception of alternatives. These reactions are not indicative of personality traits but rather stem from extreme circumstances that heighten psychological mobilization. Naturally, in more intense situations, the likelihood of developing disorders such as PTSD, emotional numbness, or chronic anxiety increases (Benyuk, 2022).

Ukrainian society faces a series of challenges and tasks that need to be addressed even before the war ends. Despite citizens' active involvement in war efforts, most lost a sense of control over the situation following the full-scale invasion. At the same time, feelings of solidarity and unity have grown among Ukrainians. There is an understanding that citizens are interconnected rather than isolated. For instance, Ukrainians weave camouflage nets, react calmly to power outages, empathize, and provide mutual support. Such collective resilience is a positive indicator in overcoming societal trials. Moreover, this reaction helps prevent the development of long-term mental health disorders, as trauma is often shaped more by perception and self-identification within these events than the events themselves (Ostapovych, 2022).

While individuals strive to cope, they must understand that they are not alone in facing these challenges. The state has a responsibility for the moral and psychological well-being of civil society (Lavrynenko & Donaj, 2023b). The state, led by representatives of the governing elite, plays a pivotal role in maintaining citizens' mental health and the sustainable development of society as a whole. This is achieved through a series of national and international programs and initiatives.

Ukraine has adopted the Mental Health Development Concept for Ukraine until 2030, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on December 27, 2017 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017). Efforts to strengthen the mental health system are supported by UNICEF (2022) and USAID (2023).

In May 2022, First Lady Olena Zelenska initiated the creation of the National Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Program. Its primary goal is to establish a uniquely Ukrainian model of mental health and psychosocial support based on the best global and domestic practices. This model aims to address war-related stress and the consequences of traumatic experiences. The initiative, supported by WHO and coordinated by Ukraine's Ministry of Health, has led to the formation of the Interagency Coordination Council on Mental Health to oversee the program's implementation (Official website of the President of Ukraine, 2022).

The program includes several key measures (Government portal, 2022):
– conducting expert audits with WHO specialists to develop a system model for assistance;

– creating a step-by-step implementation plan after consultations with professionals, experts, and community leaders;

– establishing a system for training, certification, and monitoring the quality of psychologists, psychotherapists, and mental health practitioners across various ministries;

– training family doctors, psychologists, social workers, and educators in rapid psychological support techniques;

– developing a registry of specialists and methodologies, systematizing data, and creating models for retraining and professional development.

As part of the National Program, the Operational Roadmap for Priority Multisectoral Actions on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support during and after the War in Ukraine was launched in December 2022. Developed with WHO consultations, this roadmap outlines key principles and measures for mental health and psychosocial support across sectors, including healthcare, social work, and education. It also identifies actions targeting specific population groups, including veterans and their families, internally displaced persons, individuals with disabilities, survivors of gender-based violence, and others (World Health Organization, 2022c).

As part of the extended meeting of the Interdepartmental Coordination Council on Mental Health Protection and Psychological Assistance for individuals affected by the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, held on May 10, 2023, seven priority projects in the field of mental health were presented (Official website of the President of Ukraine, 2023):

1. The Ministry of Health's project "Mental Health Protection in the Structure of Medical Care", aimed at improving access to mental health services through primary and secondary care providers, starting with family doctors and extending to specialized professionals if necessary.

2. The Ministry of Social Policy's project "Establishing Resilience Centers in Ukraine", which proposes providing psychosocial support to community residents, first-contact professionals, and volunteers.

3. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs' project "Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life (Psychological Assistance)", which includes developing a mobile application to support veterans and their families in reintegrating into civilian life.

4. The Ministry of Defense's project "Creating a Psychological Recovery System for Armed Forces Personnel (RECOVERY)", which involves the establishment of specialized centers for psychological rehabilitation of military personnel, their families, and individuals released from captivity.

5. The Ministry of Internal Affairs' initiative to develop an "Algorithm for Providing Psychological Assistance and Support in Crisis and Emergency Situations", detailing the step-by-step process for helping victims after providing on-site emergency psychological aid and ensuring subsequent psychosocial support.

6. The Ministry of Education and Science's project "Psychosocial Support and Psychological Assistance at All Levels of Education", focusing on integrating psychological resilience skills into all educational levels and reforming the psychological support system within education.

7. The Ministry of Youth and Sports' project "Youth Centers and Active Parks as Part of the Mental Health Ecosystem".

Additionally, several informational resources have been developed under the National Mental Health Program and in cooperation with international organizations to promote mental well-being among Ukrainians and ensure the sustainable development of society. Key initiatives include (Barrier-free, 2021):

– a guide titled "Basic Skills for Self-Care and Caring for Others";

– a section on "Ethics of Interaction During Stress" in the "Barrier-Free Handbook";

– the series of videos featuring Ukrainian celebrities titled "Be Honest, How Are You?";

– animated video series explaining the nature of stress, emotional suppression, and recommendations for psychological self-support and support for others;

– special podcast seasons of "In Simple Words";

– an illustrated WHO manual with new techniques for self-help during stressful situations;

– the mobile application BetterMe: Mental Health for comprehensive mental health care;

– the series of webinars in collaboration with the Israeli trauma and resilience center NATAL;

– group and individual consultations provided by UNICEF.

Furthermore, ongoing research on the mental health of Ukrainians is being conducted in the country. On behalf of the government, the research company "Gradus" carried out three waves of interviews in 2022, 2023, and 2024 under the study titled "Mental Health and Attitudes of Ukrainians Toward Psychological Assistance During the War" (2024). The research involved self-administered questionnaires completed via a mobile application by men and women aged 18–60 living in Ukrainian cities with populations exceeding 50000 before and after the full-scale invasion. Each wave included over 2000 successful interviews. The findings reveal a negative trend in the subjective assessment of mental health among the Ukrainian population during the full-scale war (see Figure 1).
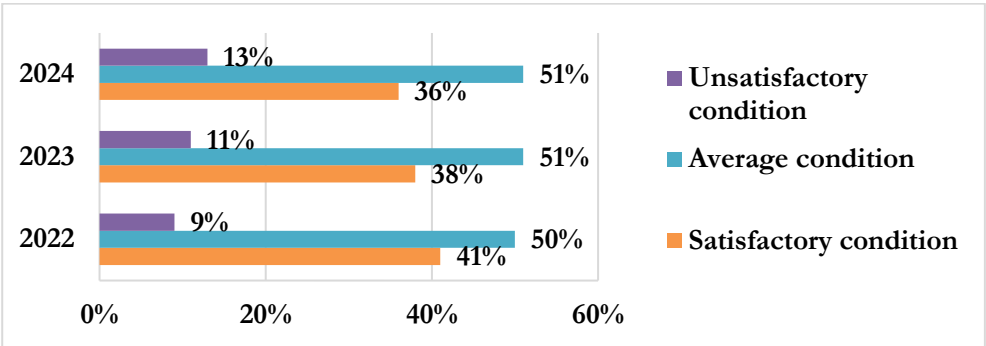

Figure 1. Personal assessment of the mental health condition by the population of Ukraine.
Source: Authors' development based on Gradus research data(2024).

As shown in the Figure 1, the most negative trend in personal assessing by the population's mental health is observed in the "satisfactory" category. In 2022, 41% of

Ukrainians rated their mental health as satisfactory, but this percentage decreased to 38% in 2023 and further to 36% in 2024. The proportion of those assessing their mental health as "average" remained almost unchanged, standing at 50% in 2022 and slightly increasing to 51% in both 2023 and 2024. However, the proportion of respondents rating their mental health as "unsatisfactory" showed a notable upward trend. In 2022, only 9% assessed their mental health as unsatisfactory, but this figure rose to 11% in 2023 and 13% in 2024.

The study (Gradus, 2024) also highlights that military personnel, individuals who have experienced war-related psychological trauma, and internally displaced persons tend to evaluate their mental health more critically. These groups are also more likely to seek professional psychological assistance. While Ukrainians who have left the country also face mental health challenges, the nature of their experiences differs. Emigrants often report feelings of guilt and concerns about instability and uncertainty, whereas for those who remain in Ukraine, safety is the primary concern (Lavrynenko & Donaj, 2023a).

Moreover, the findings reveal that many Ukrainians fail to recognize mental health issues or underestimate their condition, relying primarily on their own perceptions rather than expert opinions (Gradus, 2022). Trust in state institutions, organizations, and media plays a significant role in this context. While trust in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the President has improved since the start of the full-scale war, similar progress has not been observed concerning the Ministry of Health and medical professionals. Notably, 17% of the population only trust their own opinions, disregarding professional advice (Gradus, 2022).However, it should be noted that the issue of increasing public trust in psychiatric services and state institutions in general, as well as developing strategies to enhance public awareness of this issue, deserves a separate discussion.

Given that restoring the mental health and well-being of citizens should be a global priority for Ukraine in the post-war period, leveraging the positive experiences of other countries could enhance the effectiveness of this effort. Countries that have faced similar challenges or implemented preventive measures can offer valuable insights.

For example, in the United States, mental health has been declared a priority in the development of the healthcare system. Urgent psychiatric care is available for adults, alongside a specialized government program for supporting child psychiatry. All information regarding individuals seeking assistance is protected by medical confidentiality. The USA was also one of the first nations to actively promote early diagnosis of mental disorders. The key message is that caring for mental health should be as routine as caring for physical health. Consequently, seeking professional help, undergoing therapy, or using medication is no longer stigmatized. This information campaign has utilized videos, informational materials, flash mobs, and even online games designed to teach people how to recognize symptoms of mental health problems. The campaign's visual style mirrors advertisements for common illnesses, encouraging the perception that anyone can face such issues and that early treatment is beneficial. These efforts have successfully challenged stereotypes that mental health issues diminish a person's societal value. Typically, mental health problems provoke distrust and isolation, prompting individuals to conceal their issues until they become apparent to others. Consequently, breakdowns and complications often arise that could have been prevented with earlier intervention (Bondar, 2020).

Europe has also made progress in prioritizing mental health. Although European governments have not fully elevated mental health to a matter of national significance, important steps are being taken, particularly by civil society organizations, which are pushing this issue to the forefront of governmental consideration. These organizations have conducted studies showing that mental disorders of varying severity account for up to 20% of all illnesses in Europe, affecting one in five residents (Bondar, 2020).

In Ukraine, however, mental health disorders are among the highest in Europe. According to the Ministry of Social Policy, 3% of the population suffers from mental health issues (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, 2017). Yet, considering the prevailing social stigmas in Ukraine, actual figures may be significantly higher. This discrepancy can be attributed to two main factors.

First, the legacy of Soviet psychiatry, which was used as a punitive tool by the totalitarian regime, continues to affect societal perceptions. The psychological trauma of this era has been "inherited" by generations born after the USSR's collapse.

Second, Ukraine has yet to overcome the "wild capitalism" era, where overworking is normalized, and social partnership ideas are slow to take root. A person's value is often equated with their earning capacity, leading to physical exhaustion and emotional burnout. The lack of a culture of self-care and mental health awareness frequently results in delayed responses to symptoms of mental disorders.
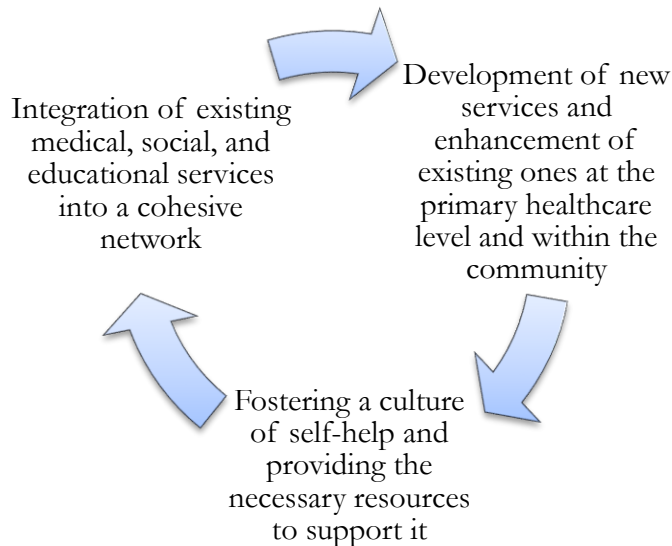
"In Ukraine, it's unfortunately common for individuals to suffer from depression for months without even realizing it, – says psychiatrist Oleksandr Ivanov. – When psychosomatic symptoms appear, they tend to consult therapists, gastroenterologists, or cardiologists, undergo unnecessary tests, and search for non-existent illnesses, all while ignoring the possibility of seeing a psychiatrist" (Bondar, 2020).

Summarizing the international experience in state support for mental health careand ensuring the sustainable development of society, it is important to identify the key elements of state policies in the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Australia, and Israel. These elements have been implemented to varying extents in these countries and could be adapted for incorporation into Ukraine's state policies. The main elements are as follows (USAID, 2024):

– national mental health strategy and action plan;
– involvement of service users at all decision-making levels;
– provision of psychological services within primary healthcare and at the community level;
– a needs-oriented approach in the development of services and policies;
– family doctors or general practitioners as the primary point of contact;
– integration of medical and social services into a unified network;
– performance indicators to measure system effectiveness;
– data-driven management and decision-making;
– a national online resource for self-help and low-intensity consultations.

This list emphasizes the significant role of the state in supporting the mental health of the population. Only a systematic and step-by-step implementation of these measures can effectively restore and preserve the mental health of society, particularly in the aftermath of severe traumas such as war.

As previously noted, Ukraine has begun addressing the issue of mental health recovery and support at the state level. However, these efforts have not yet acquired a universal and systematic character. To enhance and improve their effectiveness, Ukraine's state policies should incorporate the following interconnected and complementary elements based on international experience (see Figure 2).

Integration of existing medical, social, and educational services into a cohesive network

Development of new services and enhancement of existing ones at the primary healthcare level and within the community

Fostering a culture of self-help and providing the necessary resources to support it

Figure 2. Key elements requiring implementation in Ukraine's state policy.
Source: Authors' development based on USAID research data (2024).

The implementation of the aforementioned key elements into Ukraine's state policy will allow for the systematization of existing achievements in the field of mental health support and recovery. This approach will enhance the capacity of state institutions and increase public trust in both the state and interpersonal relationships within society.

5. Conclusions

The results of the study indicate that caring for mental health, alongside physical health, is essential for maintaining a healthy nation. The state must play a leading role in this matter, with its primary task being the preservation and restoration of human capital by creating appropriate conditions and specialized institutions. The next step should be ensuring the long-term commitment of state institutions to the established mental health initiatives to promote sustainable development and public trust, particularly in the post-war period. The implementation of this task can be facilitated through a series of measures: developing and enforcing long-term strategies with oversight from authorized bodies; utilizing incentive-based measures alongside ensuring the principle of the inevitability of

punishment; and engaging international partners and organizations to enhance dual accountability.

Particularly in the context of military actions, the population tends to underestimate the consequences of post-war trauma, especially those without obvious physical manifestations but leaving a significant impact on mental health. This situation is currently observed in Ukraine. As of 2024, only 13% of the population assessed their mental health as unsatisfactory, while expert estimates indicate that nearly 50% of citizens will require mental health recovery support after the end of the war.Furthermore, Ukraine faces additional challenges due to the lack of a long-standing tradition of mental health care, both from the state and through personal practices of self-care and seeking professional assistance. This is primarily linked to the historical legacy of the Soviet era and the weak implementation of social partnership principles within Ukrainian society.

After the war, alongside rebuilding the state, restoring the economy, and reconstructing infrastructure, the Ukrainian government will face the global task of restoring the mental health of the population. The decline in mental well-being is a consequence of active military operations and post-war traumatic syndrome affecting over half of the population. Over three years of full-scale war, a sharp negative trend has been observed in the personalassessment of mental health by Ukrainians. From 2022 to 2024, the number of people dissatisfied with their mental health increased by 4%, while the number of satisfied individuals decreased by 5%. It is becoming increasingly evident that overcoming the existential crisis among the population is impossible without active state involvement.

Currently, Ukraine is developing and implementing a range of concepts, programs, and projects aimed at preserving and restoring mental health. These include the Concept for the Development of Mental Health Care in Ukraine until 2030**, the** National Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Program, and several projects under the auspices of various ministries. There is active cooperation with international partners such as UNICEF Ukraine and USAID. In addition, several informational resources have been developed within the framework of state policy and with the support of international organizations to provide preventive assistance and rehabilitation for Ukrainian society affected by military actions.

However, state authorities must recognize that as the number of people affected by the war increases, so must state support for the population. Due to limited resources, in addition to the existing developments and practices in providing psychiatric services in response to the growing number of those in need, the state could engage civil society organizations, volunteers, and interns as part of their professional training. Special attention should be given to promoting programs and initiatives, as a significant portion of the population remains unaware of the projects currently in operation. Therefore, it is necessary to utilize the most popular and accessible information platforms for the state, such as social networks, Telegram channels, other messaging services, television, radio, and similar media outlets.It is crucial for the state to fully assume responsibility and take the initiative to address this issue after the war by developing universal practices for mitigating the consequences of traumatic events and the overall resocialization of the affected population for ensuring the sustainable development of society.

For more effective management of the mental health situation in Ukrainian society, it is also advisable to draw on international practices and successful cases, particularly in state support for mental health care in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Australia, and Israel. These examples should be adapted and integrated into Ukraine's state policy. Overall, the findings of this research are intended to encourage government bodies to actively develop and implement effective and innovative state programs and projects in the context of post-war recovery and the sustainabledevelopment of Ukrainian society.

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