

Psychological specificity of police officers' professional actions under martial law

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Abstract. The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has significantly transformed both the nature and conditions of police duties. This necessitates an examination of the psychological factors influencing police officers' professional actions under martial law, in order to ensure their effectiveness, resilience to stress, and appropriate response to wartime threats. This study aimed to analyse the current state of scholarly research into the impact of psychological characteristics on police officers' professional performance in conditions of martial law. The research applied both general scientific and sector-specific methods, including systems analysis, the method of alternatives and grouping, structural-functional analysis, comparative analysis, and hermeneutics. A synthesis of a wide range of academic studies has revealed that police work under martial law is marked by psychological tension and specific risks associated with the execution of both shock-assault and search-and-assault operations in populated areas, as well as in mitigating the consequences of armed conflict or emergencies. As part of the study, a systematic analysis of academic research was conducted concerning the specifics of performing professional duties in extremely challenging conditions, closely resembling combat situations. The real and immediate threat to police officers' lives and health in such contexts leads to the severe depletion of their psychological resources, resulting in stress, depression, and emotional exhaustion. It was found that police officers, who carry out professional duties in locations where people have died, conduct exhumations, and document the atrocities committed by Russian aggressors, are exposed to traumatic experiences that go beyond ordinary perceptions of life circumstances. Scholars emphasise that the psychological transformation of police officers during wartime affects the performance of their professional duties both directly and indirectly. The findings of this study may be used in future academic research on the topic and to develop practical recommendations aimed at reducing the impact of stressors on police officers' mental health, enhancing their self-control, improving decision-making in complex wartime conditions, and facilitating adaptation to rapidly changing combat environments.

Keywords: stressor; psychological readiness; mental health; psycho-emotional tension; stressful and hazardous activity; extremity

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Introduction

Professional activity under martial law exerts a profound influence on the lives and occupational sphere of police officers, at times manifesting in changes to their personal traits and qualities, established behavioural patterns, and the nature of their social interactions and relationships. Simultaneously, the transformation of an individual police officer during wartime affects the performance of professional duties both directly and indirectly. War imposes stricter demands not only on the professional knowledge, skills, and competencies of every officer but also on the deeper capacities of their personality and physical endurance, as well as on their integrity and strength of will. In such critical conditions, the ability to engage in effective “psychological processing” of both external and internal processes becomes especially important.

According to S. Boychuk (2022), during wartime, police officers often carry out their professional duties under conditions of complete or partial operational uncertainty. Their work frequently involves difficult and high-pressure situations, the development of which is extremely hard to predict but nevertheless requires appropriate and immediate responses. According to S. Boychuk (2022), the performance of police duties related to resisting the aggressor requires a high level of psychological adaptability, with tolerance of uncertainty being a particularly important factor. This refers to the ability of an individual to withstand unexpected and unpredictable circumstances, to make decisions in the absence of complete information, and to function without despair in unstructured and ambiguous situations where outcomes cannot be reliably anticipated.

R. Bera (2021) rightly notes that the challenging circumstances arising in the course of police officers’ professional duties may lead to a sense of overwhelming pressure. These situations demand significant dedication, engagement, and the capacity to act decisively, which in turn becomes an additional source of emotional tension. This emotional strain is often accompanied by a diminished sense of personal security and balance and may trigger internal value conflicts. Prolonged exposure to such stress may result in chronic fatigue, reduced efficiency and quality of work, professional maladjustment, and, ultimately, resignation from police service.

According to O. Sklyar *et al.* (2022), stressors in the professional activity of police officers during wartime are often linked to critical life circumstances, prolonged traumatic experiences, and persistent problems that exert influence over extended periods. The authors emphasise that, since 2022, police officers have been constantly exposed to emotional strain while carrying out duties involving a high degree of danger. The principle of “continuity” in the performance of professional tasks under martial law is being fulfilled at 120%. O. Sklyar *et al.* (2022) note that police officers are consistently equipped with personal protective gear, remain armed, risk their health and lives, rescue civilians from under rubble, provide first aid, and face large numbers of armed individuals. Even routine emergency calls to line 102 are now considered high-risk situations. The exceptional conditions under which these duties are carried out – constant air raid alerts, the potential use of ballistic weapons against police personnel – contribute to physical exhaustion, psychological depletion, emotional and professional burnout, panic attacks, and other mental health issues. Consequently, certain psychological difficulties arise during service and the execution of professional tasks, including a decrease in

professionalism and a general reduction in the desire to perform their duties.

According to Z. Kisil *et al.* (2019), police officers performing their duties during wartime constantly operate in a space between life and death. This reality often leads to the development of both acute and chronic PTSD, unmotivated affective reactions, and depression. N.C. Porter and P. Gavin (2024) rightly observe that police work represents an extremely demanding challenge, as organisational and operational stressors – constantly encountered by officers – have a detrimental effect on their mental health. In their study, the authors provide a comprehensive overview of stress factors directly associated with police work. Reflecting on the potential psychological transformations of police officers in wartime, M. Budanova (2023) notes that the duties of officers in the National Police of Ukraine are carried out in highly specific and psychologically intense conditions, with martial law itself serving as an objective source of strain. Beyond the typical psychological pressures, the full spectrum of wartime realities – experienced by all Ukrainian citizens – also affects the performance of police duties. In summarising findings from research into the psychological effects of armed conflict on law enforcement personnel, the researcher concludes that individual transformations among police officers may be both positive and negative. Some may contribute to professional growth, while others may present difficulties for future reintegration into peacetime service. Military operations have an objectively negative impact on the resilience and professional sphere of any individual, including law enforcement officers. This is reflected in changes to their personality traits and characteristics, familiar patterns of behaviour, and inherent modes of social interaction and relationships. The psychological metamorphoses experienced by contemporary police officers, both directly and indirectly, influence their ability to carry out professional duties, particularly in safeguarding the rights and freedoms of Ukrainian citizens.

M. Lohvynenko (2024) argues that police work is inextricably linked to the increasing diversity and scale of criminal activity, including organised and transnational crime, acts of terrorism, corruption, cybercrime, and arms trafficking. In Ukraine, the armed aggression of the Russian Federation has become an additional aggravating factor. These conditions have led to a rise in fatal incidents, injuries, trauma, disability, psychosomatic disorders, and suicidal behaviour among police officers. The rapid escalation in crime and violent incidents continually threatens the safety and well-being of police personnel while simultaneously increasing risks to their mental health and professional effectiveness.

H. Douglas and A. Gatens (2022) argue that within the context of high-pressure professional duties, police officers may at times experience psychological difficulties specifically linked to stress. Stigma surrounding mental health, entrenched masculinity within police culture that resists change, concerns over confidentiality, and time constraints all serve as barriers that discourage officers from seeking psychological support when dealing with stress. H. Douglas and A. Gatens (2022) rightly point out that, despite these challenges, many departments do offer a range of counselling services aimed at addressing such issues. They also note that professional training for police officers can aid in recognising the symptoms of stress and in strengthening their

resilience to stressors. The research conducted by H. Douglas and A. Gatens (2022) indicates that officers are significantly more likely to seek treatment when they feel encouraged and supported by their peers. Therefore, the development of a police community that does not judge or stigmatise mental health issues is essential.

The above review of scholarly contributions highlights the absence of in-depth, foundational research directly addressing the impact of psychological factors on police officers' professional conduct under martial law. In light of this, the present article aimed to analyse the influence of psychological specificity on the professional actions of police officers in wartime conditions.

To achieve this aim, a range of general and specialised research methods has been applied. The systems method was used to select and organise a body of relevant academic studies in line with the stated research focus. The descriptive method facilitated the exposition of key scholarly positions, outlining the findings and their theoretical significance. The comparative method enabled an analytical approach to synthesising previous research and made it possible to compare viewpoints and results. Grouping and systematisation methods supported the examination of how psychological factors influence professional behaviour among police officers under martial law. Finally, the method of synthesis was employed to formulate the study's conclusions.

Psychological specificity of police actions under martial law

The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has significantly heightened the demands placed on police professionalism, particularly their capacity to carry out duties under enemy fire, interact with large numbers of victims, endure prolonged emotional strain, and document the aftermath of war crimes. Following the Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 64 "On the Introduction of Martial Law in Ukraine" (2022), and in response to the military aggression of the Russian Federation, all structural units of the National Police of Ukraine are engaged in measures to repel the invader and safeguard the country's territorial integrity.

Since the first days of martial law, police officers have been performing their duties in all areas affected by enemy incursions, including towns, cities, and settlements liberated from occupation. Certain units of the National Police of Ukraine have taken part in the liberation of Ukrainian territories from the aggressor, while others carry out their tasks amid continuous mortar and artillery fire, consistently assisting affected civilians and documenting war crimes committed by Russian forces. Police actions are conducted by their respective functions, often in territories located close to active combat zones.

Ukraine's Minister of Internal Affairs, I. Klymenko, notes that despite the concentration of a significant number of police officers on carrying out professional tasks related to the implementation and enforcement of martial law measures, the security situation in the country remains at an acceptable level (Department of Communication of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, 2024). This applies both to the overall crime situation and to the fight against criminal activity in specific regions. Police officers deal daily with the consequences of serious war crimes committed by Russian forces against the civilian population of Ukraine. Minister Klymenko highlights that the majority of these crimes

involve executions, the destruction of infrastructure, and the deaths of Ukrainian civilians as a result of artillery or air strikes (Klymenko revealed how..., 2024). In his view, all actions involving the killing of people or the destruction of infrastructure must be regarded as war crimes. From the earliest days of the full-scale invasion, officers of the National Police of Ukraine have been documenting war crimes in cooperation with their colleagues from the Security Service of Ukraine. The structural units of the National Police of Ukraine are deployed across the entire territory of the country, with additional security forces operating in areas close to the front line. As noted by I. Klymenko, the Ukrainian side possesses greater mobility for documenting all war crimes and has a larger number of personnel dedicated to this task. Every missile strike or shelling is recorded by police investigators and forensic experts. As of 10 November 2024, investigators from the National Police of Ukraine had initiated 135,147 criminal proceedings concerning crimes committed on Ukrainian territory by servicemen of the armed forces of the Russian Federation and their accomplices. According to the Office of the Prosecutor General (National Police of Ukraine, 2024a), since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, 16,847 crimes against Ukraine's national security have been documented, and 128,872 war crimes committed by the Russian Federation have been registered. According to juvenile prosecutors, as a result of Russian aggression, 1,812 children have been affected – including 537 killed and 1,275 injured or maimed to varying degrees. I. Klymenko states that approximately 70% of the war crimes documented by police officers are transferred to the SSU, the Office of the Prosecutor General, and the International Criminal Court (Klymenko revealed how..., 2024). The entire process is carried out rapidly and efficiently. In June 2024 alone, police officers recorded over 150,000 war crimes.

As early as the first days of the military invasion, police officers were already engaged in territorial defence tasks, as noted by S. Boychuk (2023). They operated in cities blockaded by Russian Federation forces, escorted humanitarian convoys, evacuated civilians, countered sabotage groups of Russian aggressors, and provided essential assistance to the population.

The President of Ukraine has repeatedly commended Ukraine's police officers in uniform who, despite the war, manage to maintain internal security and bravely serve alongside other units of Ukraine's Security and Defence Forces. On the occasion of National Police Day, V. Zelenskyy praised the work of the police, emphasising their crucial role. He noted that the National Police of Ukraine evacuates civilians from front-line towns and villages and supports those under Russian shelling. Police officers are consistently among the first to arrive at the sites of missile and drone strikes, offering immediate assistance to all affected individuals (NPU Communication Department, 2024).

Performing duties in extremely difficult, combat-adjacent conditions – where there is a constant and tangible threat to life and health – significantly depletes police officers' psychological resources. As Boychuk (2023) rightly observes, the ongoing psychological pressure experienced by officers becomes a source of stress, depression, emotional, and mental exhaustion. Those working in areas where people have died, carrying out exhumations, and documenting atrocities committed by Russian aggressors are exposed to traumatic experiences that surpass the limits of ordinary human perception.

The professional duties of police officers in areas near active combat zones are marked by a constant threat of enemy attacks and shelling, involving the use of lethal weapons and posing a continual risk to their lives (Maksymenko & Medvedev, 2018). While in peacetime scholars, such as O. Sashurina (2023) and R. Wijayanti and H. Fauzi (2020) referred to the potential for extreme circumstances in police work, under wartime conditions, such high-risk and dangerous situations have become the routine backdrop against which professional tasks are carried out.

Z. Kisil *et al.* (2019) identify a number of key determinants contributing to the extremity and riskiness of police duties – factors which may, at times, lead to the development of negative personality traits and professional distortion. These include: the high diversity of professional tasks; lack of order and inconsistency in available information sources (including the risk of misinformation); the need to maintain a high level of alertness and rapid concentration; irregular and often unpredictable working hours; restrictions on personal freedom; constant exposure to threats to life and safety (both physical and psychological); the potential use of firearms and protective equipment; ongoing threats – both psychological and physical – directed at officers and their families by offenders; difficult relationships with the individuals involved in their work; and psychological and emotional overload related to the nature of their duties.

According to N. Yarema and I. Pampura (2018), all the key characteristics inherent in police work during peacetime – such as a strong commitment to upholding the rule of law and protecting human rights and civil liberties; the need for rapid decision-making and high levels of accountability; the exercise of official authority; emotional intensity and psychological and physical strain; the presence of both organisational and extreme external factors; the complexity of those involved in professional interactions; tolerance for uncertainty; and the importance of teamwork within structural units – have remained under martial law, but have gained even greater significance and urgency.

In accordance with Paragraph 6 of Resolution No. 76 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2023), conscripts working in the National Police of Ukraine, in state authorities, and other governmental bodies are subject to reservation from mobilisation. At the same time, I. Klymenko notes that from the outset of the full-scale invasion, law enforcement officers have had to cope with additional responsibilities linked to their role in resisting and containing the enemy's armed aggression (Communications Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, 2023). Pursuant to Resolution No. 30 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2023), an interregional territorial body within the National Police of Ukraine was established – the United Assault Brigade of the National Police of Ukraine “Lyut” of the Special Purpose Police Department – with the status of a legal entity. The United Assault Brigade of the National Police of Ukraine “Lyut” currently comprises six thousand personnel.

The Head of the National Police of Ukraine, I. Vyhivskyi, stated that in order to fulfil combat missions aimed at repelling the aggressor's attacks, three brigades were established within the NPU, with a total authorised strength of eight thousand police officers. The first – the Consolidated Special Purpose Police Brigade – was formed based on the Department of Preventive Activities; the second – the Consolidated Brigade of the Patrol Police Department of Ukraine

“Khyzhak”; and the third – the Consolidated Brigade of the Special Purpose Police Units “KORD” (National Police of Ukraine, 2024b).

The Minister of Internal Affairs, I. Klymenko, highlighting the specific nature of police activity under martial law, stressed that if one subtracts from the total 75,000 officers currently serving in the National Police of Ukraine those deployed to the front or likely to be sent, only 30,000 to 35,000 officers remain available to ensure public order, investigate crimes, and carry out all police functions across the entire country. He further stated that, should conditions on the frontline worsen, “we must all be prepared to take up arms” (Klymenko revealed how..., 2024).

Under wartime conditions, the quality of police officers' performance in carrying out their duties can often determine the fate, life, and health of individuals. War imposes harsh and uncompromising demands on members of Ukraine's Security and Defence Forces, compelling them to make extremely difficult decisions in the absence of sufficient time and information – where objective understanding of circumstances and accurate assessment of both one's own resources and the enemy's capabilities become critically important.

The position of V. Barko *et al.* (2022) is entirely valid, as they characterise police work as “an extremely stressful profession”. They argue that the concept of “stress” in the context of police duties remains under-analysed by researchers, and that the impact of stress on police officers' tactical decision-making has yet to be sufficiently addressed through empirical research. Police work is marked by constant unpredictability and challenges, including acts of violence directed against law enforcement personnel. P. Galanis *et al.* (2021) describe incidents in which suspects threaten officers, actively resist arrest, physically assault them, or even open fire. L. Kryvoruchko *et al.* (2023) distinguish such incidents as “acute police stress”, in contrast to “chronic police stress”, noting that the latter has received far more attention in police studies than the former.

P. Galanis *et al.* (2021) argue that life-threatening situations, such as the use of firearms, are inherently stressful for police officers due to the “...unpredictability and uncontrollability of the environmental challenge”. However, under martial law, for units regularly engaged in armed conflict, such situations may become more predictable and manageable. L. Kryvoruchko *et al.* (2023) reasonably observe that in wartime, life-threatening circumstances are perceived as stressful primarily when “...the burden is acute or chronically intolerable”.

I. Okhrimenko *et al.* (2023) found that “...occupational stress among law enforcement personnel results from an imbalance between an individual's internal resources and the demands of the external environment, which manifest in the specific nature of police work”. C. Porter and P. Gavin (2024) rightly note that “...organisational stress, operational stress, and the occupational impact of the job are negatively affecting most police officers. Even police officers who appear more resilient have reported difficulties with their mental health as a direct consequence of the job”.

P. Gullon-Scott and L. Longstaff (2022), in the context of their study on levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among police officers in the United Kingdom, state that “...policing is considered a highly stressful role, and police officers are at risk of mental health issues during their service. The current results highlight significant levels of stress,

anxiety and depression in serving police officers. The most significant stressors reported were organisational issues such as fatigue, paperwork, need to stay in physical condition, not enough time with friends and family, lack of healthy eating, and shift work".

S. Stevelink *et al.* (2020), based on research involving over 40,000 police officers and staff in the United Kingdom, report that "...9.8% indicated probable depression, 8.5% reported probable anxiety, and 3.9% showed signs of probable post-traumatic stress disorder". A study of 16,857 officers and frontline staff in the United Kingdom, conducted by a team of sociologists from the University of Cambridge in collaboration with the charity Police Care UK, revealed that "...90% of police workers who responded had been exposed to trauma (Police Workforce, 2019). Of these, one in five reported experiencing either post-traumatic stress disorder or what's known as "complex PTSD" – yet over two-thirds of those suffering are unaware".

J. McCanney *et al.* (2022) note that, in relation to police work, "...compassion fatigue or depersonalisation is often associated with high-intensity careers such as policing". In their study, the researchers found that many officers reported becoming desensitised as a result of repeated exposure to trauma. Police officers frequently felt unable to engage with victims or offenders after spending extended periods in this line of work. In a survey conducted among officers in England and Wales, S. Charman and S. Bennett (2022) reported that 65% of respondents who voluntarily left the force cited "...the impact of the job on their personal life" as the reason. C. Porter and R. Lee (2023) rightly observe that "...effective policing is essential for reducing crime and maintaining public safety. In carrying out their role, officers regularly encounter traumatic incidents. Without adequate support, the prolonged impact of such events can lead to the deterioration of officers' mental health. Due to police culture – particularly the stigma surrounding seeking help for mental health issues – many officers suffer in silence. This can result in serious mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)". P. Galanis *et al.* (2021) argue that "...police officers face significant work-related stressors and influences such as violence, occupational injuries, job pressure and demands, lack of support, physical threats in operational settings, long working hours, exhaustion and fatigue. Policing is a stressful and demanding profession, and officers are considered a high-risk group for mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, depression, suicidal ideation, and behaviours".

A collective monograph edited by G. Katolyk (2022) expresses the view that law enforcement officers who are constantly exposed to stress factors often derive little satisfaction from their duties and are more prone to symptoms of psychosomatic illness and maladaptive behaviour (e.g. interpersonal conflict, social withdrawal, breaches of professional discipline, and the development of various addictions). These behaviours may intensify over time, as excessive workloads impair cognitive capacity, narrow worldviews, and reduce behavioural flexibility. Ongoing structural changes within law enforcement agencies, particularly under martial law, are also considered stress-inducing. In carrying out professional duties under hazardous and extreme conditions, police officers may experience negative consequences at physiological, emotional, and behavioural levels. In some cases,

stress reactions may be immediate and short-lived, while in others they may gradually progress over time.

Under wartime conditions, S. Boychuk (2022) argues, an individual's readiness for change takes on exceptional significance in the professional actions of police officers and becomes a vital personal attribute that ensures survival in extreme and high-risk environments. This is because, under martial law, virtually every professional situation involves elements of uncertainty and unpredictability. O. Sklyar *et al.* (2022) contend that the psychological training of personnel within the National Police of Ukraine requires an innovative approach. According to the results of an oral survey conducted among police officers, many were not psychologically prepared for full-scale warfare in the country. Not all were able to make swift and appropriate decisions at the scene, and some were not ready to use lethal force or take another person's life. Most officers reportedly faced a psychological conflict: whether to act strictly in accordance with legal norms or to yield to overwhelming emotional pressure.

M. Budanova (2023) maintains that Military operations exert an objectively negative influence on the viability and professional environment of any individual, particularly law enforcement personnel. This impact manifests in changes to personal traits and qualities, established behavioural patterns, and the inherent nature of social relationships and interactions. M. Budanova (2023) rightly points out that the effects of martial law cause long-term physical and psychological harm to both children and adults, while also diminishing human and material capital. In her view, deaths resulting from military action are merely "the tip of the iceberg".

To comprehend the depth of the issues arising in the actions of police officers under martial law, it is first necessary to identify the unique stress factors involved, including:

1. Cumulative traumatic experience: police officers are constantly exposed to violence, tragedy, and death. While traumatic experience is an inherent part of their duties, it can, at times, have a cumulative psychological impact, potentially leading to post-traumatic stress disorder.

2. High-stakes decision-making: officers are frequently required to make rapid decisions in dangerous, life-threatening situations. The importance of these decisions and their potential consequences can prove extremely challenging.

3. Public scrutiny: in today's digital age, every action taken by police officers can be recorded and thoroughly examined. Operating under such constant surveillance adds an extra layer of stress – particularly when officers feel misunderstood or unfairly judged by society.

Z. Kisil *et al.* (2019) argue that the consequences of professional activity carried out under intense wartime stressors and the psychological trauma experienced by police officers often manifest in tragic forms. Without appropriate psychological support and intervention, stressors associated with operating in high-risk and extreme conditions may manifest in the following ways:

1. Substance abuse: some officers may turn to alcohol, narcotics or other psychoactive substances as a coping mechanism, which in turn can lead to addiction.

2. Depression: the prolonged impact of traumatic incidents, compounded by the internal pressures of law enforcement work, can sometimes result in a depressive state.

3. Burnout: a persistent sense of overload and a lack of adequate support may lead to burnout, characterised by emotional exhaustion, detachment, and diminished productivity.

4. Suicide: certain police officers may feel unable to escape their emotional pain and begin to contemplate suicide.

S. Dixon (2021) notes that numerous studies indicate that, due to the hazardous and stressful nature of their working environment, police officers are at particularly high risk of suicide. The researcher points out that the suicide rate among law enforcement officers is two to three times higher than that of the general population. At the same time, L. Rabbing *et al.* (2022) point out that police officers are constantly confronted with "...some of the most complex, traumatic, and horrific tragedies experienced and inflicted on people – events that most of the population are entirely unaware are taking place in society". P. Galanis *et al.* (2021) explain that officers "...may indeed arrive at work physically and psychologically healthy, but these atrocities can affect some officers more severely than others, leading to stress-related disorders, substance abuse, and sleep disturbances". A. Purba and E. Demou (2019), A. Maran *et al.* (2022), and D. Lawrence and V. Carleton (2023) argue that the stress-inducing nature of police work results in a range of negative psychological consequences, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and psychological and emotional exhaustion. According to the authors, adverse behavioural outcomes include substance and alcohol abuse, uncontrolled displays of aggression and violence, family difficulties, and reduced professional performance (Violanti *et al.*, 2018).

M. Anoop (2023) argues that the challenges currently faced by police officers extend far beyond the realm of physical danger, which they encounter on a daily basis. In the researcher's view, psychological and emotional burdens can be equally hazardous. Acknowledging and addressing these issues is of critical importance for the personal well-being of police officers and for safeguarding the overall mental health of their departments. As society becomes increasingly aware of the importance of mental health, it is time for police departments to make it a central priority, ensuring protection for those who protect and serve.

Another aspect of police work that gains particular significance during wartime is the unique nature of performing professional duties on the boundary between life and death. R. Mukherjee (2022), in a scholarly study, emphasises that fear is an automatic response to a stimulus that triggers the brain's fight-or-flight mechanisms. When individuals anticipate future events within the context of negative scenarios, these thoughts provoke fear and heighten anxiety. The brain then produces harmful emotional hormones that affect both physical and mental health. At the same time, fear is a necessary emotion, serving as a defence mechanism against present risks and dangers. Moreover, R. Mukherjee (2022) considers it undeniable that being a police officer means risking one's life daily, with the constant threat of being injured or killed while performing professional duties.

O. Sklyar *et al.* (2022) rightly argue that war takes place not only on the front line – it also unfolds within each individual, affecting both physical and psychological states. At times, in the course of carrying out professional duties, something terrifying and unfamiliar to everyday life happens: explosions, air raid alerts, artillery shelling, mass casualties and deaths, among other things. According to the authors, such events leave individuals in shock, shaken by what they have witnessed and endured. The human mind instinctively refuses to accept such experiences as reality and

instead attempts to interpret future trajectories, searching for answers to the question: "What lies ahead?" This triggers a survival response – an instinct for self-preservation – often accompanied by a state of numbness, sadness, or emotional paralysis. One police officer from the Main Department of the National Police in Kharkiv Region recalled in an interview: "I knew what I had to do when I heard the explosions and gunfire, but my body froze. My legs wouldn't move – only one thought kept echoing in my head: get up and run". After the initial shock, hours may pass before feelings of despair and horror set in. A kind of "psychological war" begins – an internal conflict with the personal ego and inner self – sparked by an emotional rebellion concerning one's identity under martial law. Questions arise: "Who am I?", "What should I do?", "What is my role?", "Should I use force or not?", and most critically, "What place does my identity occupy in this chaos?".

Under martial law, the actions of the National Police of Ukraine bring urgent attention to the need for enhanced psychological preparedness, ongoing psychological support for personnel, professional training, and cohesion in the execution of operational duties. To be effective in these conditions, police officers must possess a wide-ranging set of skills, including the ability to reassure the public by maintaining calm, and to carry out the duties outlined in Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine No. 580-VIII "On the National Police" (2015), even in the most challenging wartime circumstances. To uphold high standards of professional conduct while remaining psychologically resilient, police officers must demonstrate endurance and adaptability in the face of every challenge that their duties entail.

Conclusions

The present academic investigation aimed to conduct a systematic analysis of a broad range of literary sources – both comprehensive and monographic in nature – concerning the psychological specificity of police officers' professional conduct under martial law. Particular attention was paid to the impact of stress factors on their operational duties, as well as the theoretical and practical dimensions of servicerelevant stress in policing. The study yielded results that provide a coherent understanding of the current state of scholarly inquiry on the subject and outline the principal directions for further research in this domain. At the same time, it enabled the organisation of empirical findings and allowed for the development of significant theoretical generalisations based on them.

In conclusion, it should be noted that this analysis of Ukrainian and international psychological scholarship confirms that police conduct under martial law represents an exceptionally complex professional challenge. It is marked by the severity of circumstances that must be documented and addressed, by actions carried out at the threshold between life and death, and by frequent contradictions in the expectations imposed upon police officers in such extreme conditions. The intense interaction of identified determinants – when combined with other factors and conditions such as the high-risk and extreme nature of professional duties, and the elevated level of responsibility for one's actions and their outcomes – consistently places police officers operating in extreme circumstances into a state of unprecedented psychological strain and critical testing of their individual capacities.

Theoretical research on policing has highlighted that the specific features of police activity under martial law

include the extreme nature of operational duties; the necessity of employing coercive policing measures; a consistently high level of stress; and the ability to make decisions under conditions of limited information, time constraints, and uncertainty. The daily execution of professional responsibilities by police officers is invariably accompanied by intense psycho-emotional tension, occupational risk, psychological trauma, and conflict-prone situations. The realities of war often intensify this pressure beyond conventional limits, as officers are required not only to confront crime within the country but also to engage directly in combat at the front. Further research should focus on a deeper understanding of

the stress-inducing factors inherent in police work and on the development of practical recommendations aimed at enhancing officers' resilience to stress in wartime conditions.

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Психологічна специфіка виконання професійних дій співробітниками поліції за умов воєнного стану

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Анотація. Збройна агресія РФ проти України суттєво трансформувала характер та умови виконання поліцейських обов'язків, що зумовлює необхідність дослідження психологічних особливостей реалізації професійних завдань співробітниками поліції в умовах воєнного стану для забезпечення їхньої ефективності, стресостійкості та адекватного реагування на загрози воєнного часу. Мета дослідження полягала у тому, щоб здійснити аналіз стану наукових досліджень проблематики впливу психологічної специфіки на професійні дії співробітників поліції за умов воєнного стану. У площині наукової розвідки використано загальнонаукові й галузеві методи, зокрема, системний, метод альтернатив та групування, структурно-функціональний, порівняння та герменевтичний. Узагальнення широкого кола наукових розвідок допомогло встановити, що професійним діям співробітників поліції за умов воєнного стану притаманне психологічне напруження і специфічний ризик, пов'язаний з реалізацією як ударно-штурмових так і ударно-пошукових операцій у населених пунктах; в усуненні наслідків збройного конфлікту чи надзвичайних обставин. В контексті дослідження проведено системний аналіз наукових досліджень стосовно специфіки здійснення професійних дій у вкрай складних, максимально наближених до бойових ситуацій, коли існуюча реальна загроза життю та здоров'ю поліцейських, спричиняє значне виснаження їх психологічних ресурсів, що є джерелом стресу, депресії, емоційного виснаження. Встановлено, що співробітники поліції, котрі реалізуючи професійні учини у місцях гибелі людей, здійснюючи ексгумації, документуючи звірства російських агресорів, отримують важкий досвід, котрий переходить межі ординарного сприйняття життєвих обставин. Ученими констатується, що трансформації особи поліцейського за умов війни як безпосередньо, так й опосередковано чинять вплив на реалізацію ними професійних дій. Результати наукового дослідження можуть бути застосовані для подальших наукових досліджень із позиціонованої проблематики, а також задля розроблення практичних рекомендацій щодо зниження рівня впливу стрес-факторів на психічне здоров'я співробітників поліції; підвищення ступеня їхнього самоконтролю; поліпшення якості прийняття рішень за складних воєнних ситуацій; полегшення адаптаційних процесів до швидко мінливих умов бойових дій

Ключові слова: стрес-фактор; психологічна готовність; психічне здоров'я; психоемоційна напруженість; стресогенна й небезпечна діяльність; екстремальність