

UDC [351.743:355.1]:342.72:305-055.2(477)



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PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE GENDER POLICY IN THE NATIONAL GUARD OF UKRAINE AND POSSIBILITIES OF THEIR SOLUTION

The key problems of implementation of the state gender policy in the units of the National Guard of Ukraine are analysed. Attention is focused on the barriers of a normative, organisational, infrastructural, socio-cultural and educational nature that complicate the implementation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The article also addresses the issues of lack of effective monitoring mechanisms, insufficient institutional capacity, gender stereotypes, limited access to resources and opportunities for professional development. Ways to improve the mechanisms for implementing the state gender policy in the National Guard of Ukraine are proposed. The results obtained can be used to optimise approaches to the implementation of the policy of equal rights and opportunities in the security and defence sector of Ukraine.

Keywords: state gender policy, National Guard of Ukraine, gender equality, military education, readiness, institutional mechanism, discrimination, gender stereotypes.

Statement of the problem. Despite the existence of strategic documents, regulatory framework and international obligations of Ukraine in the field of gender equality, in practice, the implementation of the state gender policy in the National Guard of Ukraine (NGU) remains mainly declarative and does not become systemic. The main factors contributing to this situation are the lack of institutional capacity, insufficient integration of the gender approach into management processes, weak regulatory detailing of procedures for implementing the policy of equal rights and opportunities, as well as the dominance of traditional socio-cultural ideas about the role of women in the military environment.

Against the backdrop of current security challenges and the growing role of women in the defence and national resistance sectors, numerous barriers to access to military education, professional development, resources and command positions persist. The lack of effective monitoring mechanisms, low level of gender awareness among the leadership, infrastructural unpreparedness and formalism in approaches to implementing gender equality policy make it impossible to achieve practical results.

In this regard, there is a need for a comprehensive study of the problems of

implementing gender policy in the units of the NGU, taking into account the specifics of military service, analysis of existing barriers and development of effective institutional, regulatory and educational solutions aimed at ensuring true equality and inclusiveness in the security and defence sector of Ukraine.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Modern research in the field of implementation of the state gender policy in the security and defence sector of Ukraine covers both general theoretical principles and some practical aspects of gender mainstreaming. In particular, A. Ivanchenko and I. Hrytsai in their publication emphasise the relevance of introducing gender-oriented approaches in the educational process, which is the basis for the formation of a new culture of perception of gender equality in the security and defence sector [6].

An in-depth analysis of the importance of forming a gender culture in the education system is presented in the work of H. Dubova, who defines the gender component as one of the key elements of high-quality professional training of future specialists [5]. I. Marinina also adheres to a similar theme, focusing on the need for special training of teachers to implement a gender approach in practice [8].

In their studies, S. Sukonko and L. Tovma draw attention to systemic problems of infrastructure, medical and logistical support, which significantly complicate the process of implementing the state gender policy in military formations. The researchers emphasise that the logistics system in the National Guard of Ukraine is not always adapted to take into account the individual physiological characteristics of servicemen, which reduces its effectiveness in the context of gender integration [2].

The practical aspects of forming the readiness of servicemen to perform service tasks, taking into account psychological factors that have the potential for adaptation in the gender dimension, are highlighted in the scientific study by V. Afanasenko, V. Pasichnyk and A. Zlotnikov. This article substantiates approaches to assessing the effectiveness of psychological training of personnel, which is a significant component of the professional competence of a serviceman in the modern security environment [1].

A significant contribution to the disclosure of the socio-psychological aspects of professional adaptation and motivational sphere of female servicewomen was made in the monograph by I. Prykhodko, N. Yurieva and Y. Matssehora [9]. Based on the results of an empirical study involving 515 female servicewomen of the National Guard of Ukraine, it was found that the dominant motivational factors for their choice of military service are the desire for social security and material stability, the realisation of their professional potential, and the need to strengthen their personal sense of security. The study identified a number of systemic problems, including biased perceptions of women as commanders, distrust of their ability to undergo full combat training, and a lack of equal opportunities for career development. At the same time, the results of the expert assessment indicate a high level of labour discipline, self-discipline, professionalism, and women's adaptive potential to the conditions of military service. The generalised conclusions of the authors emphasise the need to improve the system of professional selection and training with regard to gender specifics, which is an important step in implementing the principles of the state gender policy in the security and defence sector.

The research of O. Chernenko, which examines current trends in the development of military education and highlights the need to adapt curricula

to new socio-cultural challenges, including gender equality, is important for understanding the organisational and educational conditions for the implementation of the state gender policy [16].

However, most of these works are of a general analytical nature and do not take into account the specifics of the units of the National Guard of Ukraine. There are insufficient applied studies aimed at assessing the level of readiness of commanders, ensuring gender-sensitive infrastructure, logistics and gender-sensitive personnel management. These aspects require further development in order to improve the process of implementing the State gender policy in the National Guard of Ukraine in the current context.

The purpose of the article is to systematise the main problems hindering the implementation of the State gender policy in the National Guard of Ukraine and to identify possible ways of their effective overcoming.

Summary of the main material. One of the problems on the way to the effective implementation of the State gender policy in the National Guard of Ukraine is the insufficient development of the institutional and organisational mechanism ensuring the implementation of the gender approach in the daily activities of the units. Despite the existence of national strategic documents [11, 14], the structure of the NGU significantly lacks clearly defined organisational forms, responsible persons and procedures that would ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of gender integration at the practical level. It has been established that more than 60 % of the military units of the NGU do not have structural elements or designated officials responsible for the implementation of the state gender policy. Only 7 % of commanders were able to provide examples of existing internal algorithms for responding to cases of violations of the principles of equality or discriminatory behaviour. The researchers also noted the lack of a vertically integrated gender policy management system – from the NGU HQ to the level of units [2].

The problem is not unique to Ukraine. The UN Women document "The Gender Snapshot 2023" states that in most countries in armed conflict, the biggest barrier to gender integration in the army is organisational immaturity: the lack of a clear institutional structure, accountability mechanisms and systemic reporting. Ukraine, despite the active

participation of women in the national resistance, is no exception to this rule [20].

The results of a sociological study conducted in 2023 by the Centre for Gender Culture among the National Guard of Ukraine show that there are systemic problems in the implementation of gender policy. In particular, 71 % of respondents noted the absence of clearly defined instructions or regulations in their units aimed at ensuring gender equality, and more than half of respondents could not identify the person responsible for gender policy in their unit. This state of affairs creates an environment of blurred responsibilities, in which even constructive initiatives remain fragmented and do not receive adequate institutional support and further development.

At the same time, according to the UN Women Ukraine monitoring report for 2022, the National Guard of Ukraine demonstrates lower rates of implementation of the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security compared to other structures of the security and defence sector, including the Armed Forces of Ukraine. One of the main reasons for this is the absence of a specialised coordination unit, as well as the lack of clearly defined functional responsibilities at the command level. This organisational uncertainty makes it difficult to systematically implement the principles of gender equality both in everyday service activities and in the process of preparation for participation in combat operations [15]. Such an approach contradicts the standards of the UN, NATO and the Council of Europe, where institutional sustainability and the presence of a gender component in governance are criteria for successful integration.

In addition, the lack of clear mechanisms for monitoring and controlling the observance of equal rights and opportunities for women and men, as well as weak reporting in this area, reduce the level of accountability of commanders. This, combined with limited resources (human, financial, information) and a lack of indicators for assessing the effectiveness of gender policy, creates an environment where even existing initiatives remain sporadic and lack sustainable support.

Even before the start of the full-scale invasion, there was a steady trend that showed that socio-cultural and psychological factors remain among the most persistent and, at the same time, the most difficult barriers to overcoming in the implementation of gender equality in the military.

Their basis has been formed over decades within the traditional gender paradigm, according to which military service was seen exclusively as a sphere of male fulfilment. According to the results of the empirical study, even with high personal motivation, professionalism and self-discipline, women in the NGU continue to face prejudice regarding their ability to perform leadership functions and undergo combat training on an equal footing with men. In particular, only 38 % of the women surveyed felt that their commanders recognised their ability to fully absorb combat training, and more than a fifth of the respondents said that military teams did not accept women as commanders, regardless of their professional qualities. This indicates that patriarchal attitudes are deeply rooted in the military environment, which impede the implementation of gender equality in practice [9].

After the beginning of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, structural contradictions related to established gender stereotypes in the military environment have become more acute. These stereotypes lead to a biased attitude towards the professional capacity of female servicewomen, limit their participation in service activities, and create both hidden and open barriers to professional interaction. Discriminatory practices, including humiliation, sexism, and sexual harassment, remain common, causing psychological pressure, emotional burnout, decreased motivation, and social isolation. The combination of these factors not only violates women's fundamental rights, but also directly affects the combat capability and effectiveness of management in military units. Numerous sociological studies and analytical reports have pointed to this. In particular, the results of studies show that almost 50 % of female servicewomen have experienced distrust in their professional qualities, and more than a third have experienced sexism or humiliation [2]. In 64 % of units, women are not involved in decision-making processes, and 53 % of respondents openly declare their distrust of women in command roles [19]. In addition, according to a field study conducted by the Women's Veterans Movement, out of 186 female servicewomen surveyed, 72 % said that their military merits had not been recognised, 41 % reported systemic sexism and discrimination, and about 20 % experienced isolation or underestimation of their combat achievements based on their gender [3]. Such practices are

accompanied by psychological pressure, increase emotional exhaustion and deepen social alienation, which has negative consequences for the functional cohesion of units and the quality of military management [17].

The regulatory framework remains insufficiently detailed and does not fully take into account the practical needs of the service. There is a lack of specialised internal regulations, standards of behaviour and algorithms of action. The absence of accountability for non-compliance with legislation on equal rights and opportunities for women and men contributes to the preservation of paternalistic approaches. Less than 10 % of NGU military units have internal documents on gender policy implementation, and 84 % of units have no mechanisms for responding to discriminatory cases at all [2]. Without internal detailing of norms, job descriptions and action algorithms, the implementation of gender standards remains formal [20]. This creates conditions for the preservation of paternalistic models of leadership and prevents sustainable gender integration in the National Guard of Ukraine.

Women are less likely to hold command positions. The reasons for this include the lack of conditions for combining service with family responsibilities, stereotypes, and a lack of mentoring. In addition, some men face barriers because they do not meet the idea of an "ideal warrior".

The infrastructure of most military units in Ukraine has long been designed with male dominance in mind, which has resulted in its one-sided functionality. However, the growing proportion of women in military units is highlighting the need to modernise infrastructure conditions, particularly in the area of hygiene, amenities and housing. The lack of properly equipped showers, sanitary facilities, and personal hygiene facilities creates barriers not only for female servicewomen, but also negatively affects the daily living conditions of all personnel, especially in barracks or field-based settings. This state of affairs contradicts the principles of ensuring decent and safe conditions of service and requires bringing the material and amenity infrastructure in line with modern standards of inclusiveness and gender sensitivity. The system of logistical support in military formations does not always take into account the individual physiological characteristics of servicewomen, which is confirmed by the results of research [2].

In particular, female servicewomen often face a shortage of personal protective equipment of the appropriate size – bulletproof vests, helmets, and equipment elements adapted to their anatomical features. At the same time, similar difficulties are observed among male servicemen. The mismatch of equipment with physical parameters leads to a decrease in mobility, efficiency of combat missions and, most importantly, directly increases the risk of injury or death in the combat zone. This requires a systematic review of approaches to logistics planning, taking into account the principles of gender equality and individualisation of provision.

The system of medical support for the National Guard of Ukraine is still dominated by a unified approach that does not take into account the gender, age and psychophysiological characteristics of servicemen. The lack of gender-sensitive medical services results in inaccessibility of gynaecological care for women and andrological and urological consultations for men, especially in remote units and in the field. More than 70 % of female servicewomen in the NGU do not have regular access to a gynaecologist, and 63 % of units do not have separate protocols for medical care for women [2]. There is still a systemic problem of a lack of professional psychologists with competence in gender-sensitive support in cases of post-traumatic disorders, depression or combat stress. Almost half of women who have returned from combat have not been able to receive adequate medical or psychological support, which only exacerbates the psycho-emotional consequences of service [3].

Formally, the military education system in Ukraine is open to all citizens regardless of gender. According to the Law of Ukraine "On Military Duty and Military Service", women have equal rights with men to enter higher military educational institutions (HMEIs) and to obtain any military speciality [10]. However, in actual practice, informal barriers remain that significantly limit the exercise of these rights. The most common is the practice of internal instructional restrictions, when the management of institutions or military authorities set unspoken quotas, gender restrictions on certain specialities or "recommended" limits on the number of women enrolled in training. Such orders usually do not have a regulatory status, but they do affect the selection procedures, creating a situation of hidden discrimination. Some results show that more than 37 % of girls who applied to higher education institutions reported receiving

verbal recommendations to choose "more female specialties", and 24 % faced non-public restrictions during enrolment [2]. Similar findings are confirmed by a study by the NGO Legal Initiatives, which notes the lack of transparent mechanisms for justifying refusals to admit women to "combat" or command areas, which contradicts both Ukrainian legislation and Ukraine's international obligations to ensure equal access to education and professional development [4]. This practice not only limits women's opportunities for professional fulfilment, but also contradicts the principle of equal access to education enshrined in international documents, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women [7].

The situation is further complicated by insufficient infrastructure conditions in many military educational institutions, which are traditionally designed for men. The lack of separate dormitories, shower rooms, and sanitary facilities for women creates additional problems for organising their full participation in the educational process. This is also often used as an argument in favour of reducing the number of girls enrolled or restricting their access to certain forms of training, such as field exercises or tactical training.

Thus, despite the absence of formal legal prohibitions, in practice, access to military education in Ukraine is accompanied by a number of socio-cultural, organisational and institutional barriers that need to be understood and systematically addressed as part of the overall state policy of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

Effective implementation of the state gender policy in the National Guard of Ukraine requires a holistic, interdisciplinary approach that includes institutional, regulatory, educational, cultural and behavioural components. Despite the measures already taken to achieve gender equality, a number of systemic problems remain in practice that require strategic review and targeted solutions. In this context, it is advisable to rely on the international experience of UN member states, NATO, and the EU, as well as on the national peculiarities of the functioning of the security and defence sector of Ukraine.

First, one of the key tasks is to strengthen institutional capacity to implement gender policy. Given that most units of the NGU do not have gender advisers or do not formally function, there is a need to create a vertically integrated

management structure that provides for clear functional responsibilities, systematic professional training of responsible persons, and mechanisms of personalised accountability for compliance with gender legislation.

Secondly, it is important to introduce a permanent monitoring, evaluation and reporting system focused on the use of gender performance indicators. This approach will allow timely detection of cases of violations of the principles of equality, tracking progress in policy implementation and forming an analytical basis for sound management decisions. The evaluation system should be integrated into the overall architecture of personnel management, combat training planning and improving the combat readiness of units.

Thirdly, gender stereotypes should be deconstructed through educational and motivational programmes. Command staff, instructors, lecturers and other categories of servicemen should receive mandatory training on gender competence, covering aspects of ethics of professional interaction, prevention of discrimination, and response to cases of sexual violence. As part of the system of professional military education, it is advisable to institutionalise gender equality training modules at all levels of officer and NCO training. Fourthly, it is extremely important to review and harmonise the legal framework governing gender policy in the military sector, in particular in the units of the National Guard of Ukraine. The internal regulations and normative documents of the NGU should be brought in line with the provisions of the Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" [11], the Strategy of the State Gender Policy until 2030 [14], the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" [12], the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030 [13], and NATO gender integration standards [18, 21]. The absence of unified internal procedures, algorithms for responding to violations and mechanisms for protecting the rights of servicewomen and servicemen creates a regulatory gap that is filled by subjective management decisions of commanders, which often leads to the reproduction of discriminatory practices.

Fifthly, the implementation of the state gender policy in the NGU is impossible without modernisation of infrastructure, medical and

logistical support, taking into account the gender, age, social and physiological characteristics of all categories of servicemen. In particular, this includes the arrangement of separate premises for women and men, the introduction of standardised clothing with anthropometric parameters, as well as a gender-sensitive medical care system that includes components of mental health, prevention of post-traumatic stress disorder, and access to reproductive and specialised (gynaecological and andrological) medical support.

Sixthly, one of the key areas is the removal of hidden barriers in the field of military education. Despite the formal openness of the military education system to women, in practice, unspoken restrictions are applied, in particular in the form of quotas or selection by "instruction". This situation calls for a public audit of selection procedures, a review of selection criteria and the introduction of mechanisms to guarantee equal access to all forms of professional training, specialities and career development. This applies to both women and men whose professional trajectory goes beyond the traditional idea of a military serviceman.

Conclusions

1. The implementation of the state gender policy in the National Guard of Ukraine is carried out in the context of numerous challenges of an institutional, regulatory, socio-cultural, infrastructural and organisational nature.

2. Despite the existence of strategic documents, current legislation and Ukraine's international commitments, the implementation of gender policy remains fragmented, uneven and often formalised. This is due to low institutional capacity and the lack of effective management mechanisms at all levels of military command and control.

3. The main barriers to gender mainstreaming include: lack of proper control and personalised responsibility for compliance with the principles of equality; persistence of stereotypical ideas about the role of women in the army; lack of institutional support, including human resources and training programmes for gender advisers; limited opportunities for career development and protection of the rights of all categories of servicewomen and men.

4. Unequal access to infrastructure resources, supplies, weapons, medical services and military education creates additional difficulties for women and men who do not meet the traditional

perceptions of a "typical serviceman", limiting their effective participation in service activities.

5. The absence of gender-sensitive infrastructure and standardised procedures for ensuring equality in the educational and service environment reduces the effectiveness of women's integration in the security and defence sector. The formally declared right to equal access is often levelled by informal restrictions and stereotypical approaches.

6. Overcoming these problems requires a systematic rethinking of the conceptual and practical foundations of gender policy implementation in the National Guard of Ukraine. Such an approach should be based on the principles of equal access, non-discrimination, respect for human dignity, and compliance with international standards and gender mainstreaming practices.

7. Effective implementation of the gender policy is possible only with comprehensive, consistent and targeted actions that include: internal organisational reform; transformation of the culture of leadership and professional interaction; and formation of an environment of real, not declarative, equality in the daily practice of the National Guard of Ukraine.

Promising areas for further research include: development of mechanisms for gender monitoring in the military management system; creation of indicators for assessing the effectiveness of gender policy implementation; improvement of methods of personnel training with a gender approach; and practical implementation of gender audit procedures in military units and military education institutions.

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The article was submitted to the editorial office on 20 April 2025

УДК [351.743:355.1]:342.72:305-055.2(477)

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ПРОБЛЕМИ ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ДЕРЖАВНОЇ ГЕНДЕРНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ У НАЦІОНАЛЬНІЙ ГВАРДІЇ УКРАЇНИ ТА МОЖЛИВОСТІ ЇХ ВИРІШЕННЯ

Подано комплексний аналіз викликів, пов'язаних із упровадженням державної гендерної політики у Національній гвардії України. Незважаючи на наявність нормативно-правової бази, національних стратегій та міжнародних зобов'язань України у сфері забезпечення гендерної рівності, фактична інтеграція гендерних підходів у повсякденну діяльність підрозділів Національної гвардії України залишається фрагментарною, несистемною та переважно формальною. У дослідженні виокремлено інституційні, регуляторні, організаційні, соціокультурні, інфраструктурні та освітні бар'єри, які перешкоджають практичній реалізації принципів рівності та недискримінації у військовому середовищі.

Особливу увагу приділено браку ефективних механізмів гендерного моніторингу та обмеженій інституційній спроможності Національної гвардії України до послідовного здійснення заходів гендерної політики. Акцентовано на відсутності посад гендерних радників, недостатній підготовці персоналу, а також нестачі стандартизованих процедур для оцінювання рівня інтеграції гендерного підходу в підрозділах. Гендерні стереотипи та неформальні обмеження, часто вкорінені в організаційній культурі, продовжують впливати на сприйняття лідерства, кар'єрного зростання і функціонального призначення, особливо щодо військовослужбовців-жінок.

У дослідженні також виявлено системні нерівності в доступі до інфраструктури, спорядження, медичного обслуговування та військової освіти. Ці відмінності мають як організаційний, так і фізичний характер, адже логістичні й матеріальні системи залишаються неадаптованими до антропометричних, фізіологічних і соціальних потреб жінок і чоловіків у війську. Зокрема, індивідуальні засоби бронезахисту та польове спорядження часто не враховують фізичних параметрів жінок, що може створювати ризики під час бойових дій та знижувати загальну ефективність і моральний стан особового складу.

У відповідь на виявлені проблеми авторами запропоновано низку практичних рекомендацій, спрямованих на поліпшення реалізації гендерної політики в Національній гвардії України. Серед них – посилення інституційної спроможності, розроблення та інституціоналізація програм гендерного навчання, модернізація інфраструктури й логістики шляхом проведення гендерного аудиту, а також формування культури лідерства, орієнтованої на інклюзивність і рівні можливості. Крім того, у дослідженні підкреслено важливість узгодження військових практик України зі стандартами НАТО та ООН щодо гендерного мейнстрімінгу у сфері безпеки й оборони.

Результати аналізу можуть стати підґрунтям для подальших досліджень і розвитку політик у сфері гендерної інтеграції у війську. Вони також надають практичні орієнтири для осіб, які приймають рішення щодо реформування управління персоналом, військової освіти й оперативного планування відповідно до міжнародних принципів гендерної рівності та прав людини.

Ключові слова: державна гендерна політика, Національна гвардія України, гендерна рівність, військова освіта, готовність, інституційний механізм, дискримінація, гендерні стереотипи.

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