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## WAYS TO ENHANCE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE OF OFFICERS IN THE MILITARY UNITS OF UKRAINE'S DEFENCE FORCES

*The article examines ways of improving the psychological and pedagogical competencies of officers of the Defence Forces of Ukraine under the conditions of repelling large-scale armed aggression. Based on a theoretical analysis of scientific literature and an empirical study, fifteen critically important psychological and pedagogical competencies have been identified, and ten practical approaches to their improvement have been proposed.*

*The application of the study's results is suggested for updating officer training programs and organizing their professional development in the course of service and combat activities.*

**Keywords:** *personnel management, psychological and pedagogical competencies, professional training, officer's professional development, professionalization, officers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.*

**Statement of the problem.** Under the conditions of repelling large-scale armed aggression, the primary task of the Defence Forces of Ukraine is to enhance the effectiveness of the preparation and employment of military units. One of the key factors in accomplishing this task is the level of officer's proficiency in managing personnel.

At the same time, the implementation of NATO standards in the Armed Forces of Ukraine requires a fundamental change in approaches to personnel management. These changes necessitate an increased role for each officer in working with subordinates, particularly in the context of developing military leadership.

Personnel management constitutes a mandatory component of officer's activities in all positions, regardless of their specialty. Regardless of the number of subordinates, each officer makes a significant contribution to the unified system of work with service members of the military unit. Moreover, an officer's career advancement, accompanied by an increased degree of service responsibility, also entails higher requirements for the development of his or her psychological and pedagogical competencies. Therefore, improving these competencies is an essential component of an officer's professional training.

Military practice demonstrates that the level of psychological and pedagogical competencies of

officers plays a decisive role in ensuring the effectiveness of the preparation and employment of military units of the Defence Forces of Ukraine. The results of analyzing the professional development of military leaders indicate that, alongside the growing need for effective unit management, some officers exhibit insufficient readiness to work with personnel. The reduced effectiveness of officers in fulfilling their social role adversely affects the moral and psychological state of subordinates and the quality of their task performance.

Therefore, the need to improve the psychological and pedagogical competencies of officers of the Defence Forces of Ukraine under the conditions of repelling large-scale armed aggression determines the relevance of this study.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The analysis of the outlined problem has revealed a significant number of scholarly works examining its various aspects in the context of the current tasks and challenges faced by the Defence Forces of Ukraine. A broad range of researchers focuses on the training of future officers in higher military educational institutions: O. A. Danylchenko on social and legal competence [1]; O. M. Kernyskyi and R. V. Prystynskyi on methodological competence [2]; A. V. Lytvyn and L. A. Rudenko on psychological training [3]; S. Sobolieva on social competence [4]; Yu. Strazhnyk on the

psychological conditions for the development of resilience [5]; P. V. Khomenko and Ye. V. Denysenko on methodological foundations of humanitarian and pedagogical modeling of professional competence development [6]; V. Yahupov and R. Shostak on pedagogical design of the model for forming managerial competence [7].

Among the studies focusing on the professional development of officers after graduating from higher military educational institutions, the following scholarly works should be noted: I. I. Zelenyi on the components of officer's continuous professional growth in accordance with NATO standards [8]; O. Kovalenko on the phenomenon of managerial competence of operational-level officer's [9]; V. O. Torichnyi and O. M. Olytskyi on the formation of officer-leaders based on models of NATO countries' leadership courses [10].

However, despite the considerable number of scholarly works on the professional development of military specialists, the issue of improving officer's psychological and pedagogical competencies in the course of military professional activity under modern conditions remains insufficiently explored. In particular, further study is needed of the factors and conditions of officer's professionalization and the empirical investigation of their impact, as well as the identification of critically important psychological and pedagogical competencies and the substantiation of ways to improve them.

**The purpose of the article** is the scientific substantiation of ways to improve the psychological and pedagogical competencies of officers of the military units of the Defence Forces of Ukraine.

**Summary of the main material.** Presentation of the main material. The analysis of scientific literature shows that a substantial body of scholarly works is decisive in defining the methodological foundations, conceptual framework, and current approaches to studying the phenomenon of professionalization (professional training, professional development) of specialists in various professional fields. The content and specificity of the process of personal professionalization, along with the contributions of foreign scholars, are extensively reflected in the works of Ukrainian researchers: S. M. Kalishchuk [11], O. M. Kokun [12], N. I. Kryvokon [13], H. V. Lozhkin [14], S. D. Maksymenko [15], V. V. Moskalenko and

T. A. Zelenska [16], V. I. Osiodlo [15, 17], V. M. Sych [18], N. V. Chepelieva and N. I. Poviakel [19].

According to contemporary approaches, an important process in professionalization is professional self-determination, which is implemented through successive stages: self-knowledge, self-management, self-creation, and self-monitoring. This dynamic ensures not only the gradual formation of a specialist but also the continuous renewal of values, goals, and methods of self-realization [20].

At the same time, general psychological and pedagogical competencies constitutes a component of professional competence and integrates both content-activity and personal components [21, 22]. The process of developing psychological and pedagogical competencies is inseparable from the process of professionalization.

The professionalization of an officer involves the accumulation of professional experience, the development of abilities, the transformation of personal orientation, and the improvement of professionally significant qualities, which collectively ensure psychological readiness to perform official duties [23]. In this process, professionally important qualities [24] play a key role, among which psychological characteristics hold a prominent place [17, 25].

An important stage in the professionalization of an officer is the period following appointment to the initial position, which entails adaptation to new conditions, professional self-determination, awareness of social roles, and the acquisition of professional experience. At this stage, professional psychological difficulties may arise, manifesting as feelings of incompetence. The timely identification of such difficulties and the provision of qualified assistance contribute to the officer's professional improvement, particularly in working with personnel [26].

For the effective professionalization of officers, it is essential to develop internal motivation and ensure satisfaction with professional activities [27]. One effective tool for professional development is the introduction of coaching elements, which facilitates the optimization of the processes of training, motivation, and team building [28].

Performing the leadership role is one of the defining aspects of an officer's activity. The development of military leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is understood as a continuous, value-oriented process of improving the

professional and personal competencies of service members, encompassing all stages of their careers [29].

In the National Guard of Ukraine, military leadership is regarded as a key factor of professional effectiveness that shapes the culture of the military collective, maintains discipline, and fosters trust [30]. The implementation of the leadership role presupposes the presence of leadership potential, professional competence, an understanding of the essence of leadership, favorable service conditions, an effective motivation system, as well as adequate informational-methodological and psychological support [31].

The development of a specialist's psychological and pedagogical competencies is influenced by significant external and internal factors [23, 32]. These can be divided into three groups:

- objective (the system of professional activity, the organization of service);
- subjective (individual qualities, motivation, intellectual level);
- objective-subjective (the quality of organization and management, including the professionalism of supervisors).

The theoretical analysis of scholarly works, taking into account the essence and content of the specialist's professionalization process, has made it possible to identify important aspects that mediate the opportunities for improving an officer's psychological and pedagogical competencies:

- the specific features and conditions of his or her activity;
- the presence of two components of professional competence, namely: the personal (qualities) and the content-activity (qualification);
- the individualized nature of professional development;
- the existence of three groups of factors influencing the process of professionalization, namely: objective, subjective, and objective-subjective.

These aspects were taken into account in organizing the empirical part of the study, which was conducted using a specially designed questionnaire. The study sample consisted of 212 officers from nine military units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including 188 men (88.7 %) and 24 women (11.3 %). In terms of key characteristics (socio-demographic data and respondent's professional experience), this sample is representative.

Owing to the focus of the questionnaire items, a body of empirical data was obtained that made it possible to study the following.

1. The main problems officers face when working with subordinates during the performance of combat tasks. This made it possible to compile a list of such problems, calculate their rank scores and determine the structure of their interrelationships, as well as to identify the problems that hinder officer's work with personnel and have a systemic nature, and those that complicate the implementation or improvement of officer's own psychological and pedagogical competencies. The range of current tasks performed by officers when working with personnel under modern conditions was also outlined.

2. The level of formation of officer's psychological and pedagogical competencies at the time of the full-scale invasion (44.8 % had a sufficient level, 40.1 % an insufficient level, and 15.1 % an unsatisfactory level) and the frequency of their use (about 65 % of respondents at the time of the survey had sufficient experience in their application). The highest level of psychological and pedagogical competencies was observed among graduates of higher military educational institutions, considerably lower among graduates of reserve officer training departments (faculties), and the lowest among graduates of training courses lasting up to three months.

3. The level of relevance of tasks related to working with personnel and the effectiveness of the system for preparing officers to address them. Respondents identified as most relevant those tasks whose resolution directly affects the combat capability of the unit (and this impact is evident). Such a task as managing the professional and personal development of subordinates – which requires thorough knowledge of subordinates, a certain strategy, and time – was perceived by respondents as less relevant. Work with the families of service members was rated by respondents as the least relevant.

It has been established that the existing system of officer training is more focused on the formation (development) of competencies necessary for working with the collective as a whole. The competencies required for individually oriented work with subordinates are developed to a lesser extent, and those needed for work with the families of service members are clearly underdeveloped.

4. The current level of development of psychological and pedagogical competencies and the demand for their improvement. It has been determined that the least developed competency concerns work with the families of service members, particularly in addressing problems related to family difficulties and in supporting military families to maintain their morale.

Competencies identified as critically important for maintaining unit combat capability but developed below the average level include:

- conflict management;
- regulation of subordinates' activities under conditions of increased stress and psychophysiological discomfort;
- conducting systematic monitoring of the moral and psychological state of subordinates and organizing and planning activities for their psychological recovery (rest);
- methodology for setting objectives in working with personnel, as well as for planning and organizing such work;
- conducting psychological preparation of personnel for the performance of combat tasks and maintaining an adequate level of their psychological readiness (moral and psychological state) during military professional activity;
- understanding the main socio-psychological conditions for ensuring the effectiveness of group activities of personnel and their reliability during the execution of combat tasks;
- knowledge of and ability to apply in practice the provisions of international humanitarian law and military legislation regarding the responsibility of service members for war (military) crimes and violations of rules of conduct among service members in everyday and combat conditions;
- providing direct psychological support to personnel under combat conditions and, when necessary, administering first psychological aid.

The key components of respondents' requests for improving psychological and pedagogical competencies were communication skills, knowledge and skills in combating combat stress, and motivational skills. Equally important to consider is the demand for the formation and development of the necessary personal qualities among respondents.

The implementation of the empirical part of the study made it possible to identify 15 critically important psychological and pedagogical competencies among officers serving in the military units of the Defence Forces of Ukraine,

actualized by the practice of performing combat tasks.

Ability to provide psychological support to personnel under combat conditions, including first psychological aid.

Skills in managing the behavior of subordinates in stressful and psychophysiological demanding conditions with flexible responses to changes in the situation.

Competence in the psychological preparation of service members for combat operations and in maintaining their psychological resilience.

Knowledge of the socio-psychological factors of group effectiveness during the execution of combat tasks.

Ability to motivate personnel, foster team spirit, and build unit cohesion.

Skills in systematic monitoring of the moral and psychological state of subordinates and in organizing psychological recovery activities.

Understanding the nature of leadership, its impact on service outcomes, and the ability to effectively implement the leadership role.

Ability to exert individualized influence on subordinates, taking into account their values, motives, and needs.

Ability to positively influence the socio-psychological climate of the unit and maintain military discipline.

Knowledge of conflict management principles, the ability to prevent conflicts, and to resolve them constructively.

Competence in organizing combat training and the professional growth of subordinates.

Methodological skills in planning and organizing personnel management.

Awareness of the moral and ethical requirements for the educator (mentor), as well as contraindications to performing this role under combat conditions.

Knowledge of the basics of communication with the families of service members and the ability to support their morale.

Knowledge of regulatory documents concerning personnel management and the ability to apply them in service practice.

Based on the theoretical analysis of the content and factors of the process of developing an officer's psychological and pedagogical competencies during professionalization, as well as on the results of the empirical study – which revealed the current problems officers face in working with personnel, the insufficient level of psychological and



pedagogical competencies among a significant proportion of officers, and made it possible to identify critically important competencies – practical ways of improving the latter have been substantiated. This comprehensive approach has made it possible to develop a practice-oriented system of measures to enhance the effectiveness of officer's work with personnel under combat conditions.

The proposed approaches take into account the factors of officer's professionalization identified during the study, their current requests for competency development, and the specifics of performing combat tasks.

Encouraging officers toward self-knowledge, reflection, and awareness of the impact of psychological and pedagogical competencies on the effectiveness of service activities and the execution of combat tasks.

Developing motivation for continuous professional self-improvement in the sphere of interaction with personnel.

Updating the system of professional requirements for officers, taking into account current combat conditions and NATO approaches to personnel management.

Providing access to up-to-date informational and methodological resources to support psychological and pedagogical training.

Developing methodological skills and updating the forms of officer preparation for working with personnel.

Involving commanders in shaping an exemplary leadership style as a model to emulate.

Integrating individual psychological support (coaching, mentoring, monitoring) into the system of service activities.

Developing and implementing a program for forming officer's critically important psychological and pedagogical competencies.

Introducing an effective system for developing officer's leadership qualities at all levels of military service.

Forming officer's skills of constructive communication with service members and their families, including in complex situations.

The conducted study achieved its stated objective, as it made it possible to scientifically substantiate ways of improving the psychological and pedagogical competencies of officer's of the Defence Forces of Ukraine. These approaches take into account current combat requirements, officers' requests, and the real challenges of service

activities, encompassing motivational and reflective development, a system of methodological support, institutional backing, and individual psychological support for officers.

The results of the study can be implemented both within the system of military education and directly in military units to enhance the effectiveness of personnel management.

## **Conclusions**

1. Based on the theoretical analysis of the phenomenon of specialist professionalization, particularly in the military context, it has been established that the development of an officer's psychological and pedagogical competencies should occur as a continuous, personally determined process encompassing the stages of self-knowledge, self-management, self-creation, and self-monitoring. This model can serve as the foundation for designing programs of officer's professional self-development in preparation for combat tasks.

2. The theoretical generalization of factors of officer's professionalization (objective, subjective, and objective – subjective) has made it possible to form a three-component system of influence relevant to the practice of working with personnel. This system enables the creation of individualized trajectories of competency development depending on the type of tasks, service environment, and personal characteristics of the officer.

3. The results of the empirical study, which involved 212 officers from nine military units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, revealed significant disparities in the level of formation of psychological and pedagogical competencies depending on the training programs completed. In particular, a considerable deficiency in the preparation of officers who graduated from short-term courses was identified, which should be taken into account when designing individualized retraining programs.

4. Based on the assessment of the actual difficulties faced by officers during the performance of combat tasks, the relevance of tasks related to working with personnel, the effectiveness of the system for preparing officers to address them, the level of formation of officer's psychological and pedagogical competencies, and their demand for improvement, 15 critically important psychological and pedagogical competencies have been identified. This list can

serve as a basis for the development of targeted programs for advanced training, commander preparation, and methodological support for their activities under combat conditions.

5. It has been determined that the existing system of officer training is insufficiently focused on developing skills for individualized work with subordinates, providing psychological support, and working with the families of service members. This necessitates a substantial revision of the content of training programs and an expansion of extracurricular, practice-oriented training formats.

6. Ten practical ways of improving officer's psychological and pedagogical competencies have been proposed, encompassing motivational and reflective development, updating the system of requirements and methodological support, creating institutional backing, providing individual psychological support (in the form of coaching/mentoring), and enhancing skills for working with the families of service members. Implementing these directions will improve both the overall level of an officer's managerial effectiveness and his or her ability to influence the moral and psychological state of the unit.

7. The results of the study can be applied both at the level of military educational institutions to update training programs and at the level of military units as a guide for internal training, evaluation, mentoring, and professional support of officers managing personnel under combat conditions.

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**ШЛЯХИ ВДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ ПСИХОЛОГО-ПЕДАГОГІЧНИХ  
КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТЕЙ ОФІЦЕРІВ ВІЙСЬКОВИХ ЧАСТИН  
СИЛ ОБОРОНИ УКРАЇНИ**

*Досліджено шляхи вдосконалення психолого-педагогічних компетентностей офіцерів Сил оборони України в умовах відбиття повномасштабної збройної агресії. На основі теоретичного аналізу феномена професіоналізації військових фахівців та емпіричного дослідження, яке охопило 212 офіцерів із дев'яти військових частин Збройних Сил України, визначено актуальні проблеми в роботі з особовим складом, рівень сформованості психолого-педагогічних компетентностей та запитів щодо їх удосконалення.*

*Установлено значне розширення рівня сформованості компетентностей залежно від системи підготовки офіцерів, зокрема виявлено брак підготовки у випускників короткострокових курсів. Виокремлено критично важливі психолого-педагогічні компетентності: здатність надавати психологічну підтримку в бойових умовах; навички регулювання поведінки підлеглих у стресових ситуаціях; уміння мотивувати особовий склад та формувати згуртованість підрозділу; компетентність у психологічній підготовці до бойових дій. Виявлено, що чинна система підготовки офіцерів недостатньо орієнтована на формування навичок індивідуальної роботи з підлеглими, надання психологічної підтримки та взаємодії з родинами військовослужбовців.*

*Визначено практичні шляхи вдосконалення психолого-педагогічних компетентностей офіцерів, які охоплюють мотиваційно-рефлексивний розвиток, оновлення системи вимог і методичного забезпечення, створення інституційної підтримки, індивідуальний психологічний супровід і вдосконалення навичок роботи із сім'ями військовослужбовців.*

*Запропоновано застосування результатів дослідження для оновлення навчальних програм військово-освітніх установ, а також в організації підготовки офіцерів безпосередньо у військових частинах.*

**Ключові слова:** *робота з особовим складом, психолого-педагогічна компетентність, професійна підготовка, професійне становлення офіцера, професіоналізація, офіцери Збройних Сил України.*

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