

## RESEARCH ON THE VOLUNTEERS RESILIENCE DURING MARTIAL LAW

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*The purpose of the article is to present the findings of a research on the resilience features of volunteers in martial law. Theoretical aspects include analyzing, comparing, systematizing, and summarizing scientific sources and data from experimental research; empirical aspects involve psychodiagnostics methods: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) (adapted by Z. Kireeva, O. Odnostalko, B. Biron); the "Brief Resilience Scale" (by B. Smith et al., adapted by O. Shevchenko); the "Hardiness Survey" by S. Maddi (adapted by D. Leontiev). The defined psychodiagnostics tools allowed for the investigation, analysis, and interpretation of the resilience levels of volunteers under martial law. The general sample parameters: 31 volunteers, including 27 women and 4 men; age range from 26 to 59 years (average age of the sample is 34 years). 74% of the surveyed volunteers were in Ukraine, most of whom were in frontline cities, while 25.8% were volunteers forced to move abroad. This research presents an analysis of resilience as a psychological phenomenon. It includes an analysis of theoretical research on scientific approaches to defining and understanding the concept of "resilience". It presents scientists' views on resilience depending on the subject of research, in particular, this phenomenon is considered as a personality trait, a dynamic process, and an adaptive-defensive mechanism. The types and components of resilience were defined. The emergence and development of the volunteer movement in Ukraine, as well as the flourishing of volunteer activities during the full-scale invasion, were analyzed. The mental health risks for volunteers during the war were systematized. The need to form and develop resilience in volunteers during wartime and post-war periods was highlighted. It was noted that the resilience level of most surveyed volunteers was low. Volunteers with a high level of resilience, meaning those who can overcome tension, recover, and grow personally even in martial law, were few. The resilience level of volunteers living in Ukraine under conditions of daily stress and military threats was mostly low, hence insufficient. Meanwhile, volunteers living abroad tend to have an average level of resilience, making it easier for these respondents to adapt to new changes, considering the safe conditions.*

**Key words:** resilience, mental health, volunteer, martial law, involvement, control, risk acceptance.

### **Щербак Тетяна. Дослідження резильєнтності волонтерів під час воєнного стану**

*Мета статті полягає у презентації результатів дослідження особливостей резильєнтності волонтерів в умовах війни. Застосовано теоретичні методи: аналізування, порівняння, систематизації, узагальнення літературних наукових джерел і даних експериментальних досліджень; емпіричні: психодіагностичні методики: шкала резильєнтності CD-RISC-10 К. Коннера та Дж. Девідсона; «Коротка шкала резильєнтності» Б. Сміта, «Методика діагностики життєстійкості» С. Мадді. Визначений психодіагностичний інструментарій дав змогу дослідити, проаналізувати та інтерпретувати рівні резильєнтності волонтерів в умовах війни. Загальні параметри вибірки: кількість респондентів – 31 волонтер, з яких 27 жінок та 4 чоловіки; віковий діапазон – від 26 до 59 років (середній вік вибірки – 34 роки). 74% волонтерів з опитаних перебували в Україні, більшість – у прифронтових містах, тоді як 25,8% становили волонтери, що вимушені були переїхати за кордон.*

*Дослідження презентує аналіз резильєнтності як психологічного феномена. Подано аналіз теоретичних досліджень наукових підходів до визначення та змісту поняття «резильєнтність». Представлено погляди науковців на резильєнтність залежно від предмета дослідження, зокрема цей феномен розглянуто як рису особистості, динамічний процес та адаптаційно-захисний механізм. Визначено типи та компоненти резильєнтності.*

*Проаналізовано виникнення та розвиток волонтерського руху в Україні, а також розквіт волонтерської діяльності під час повномасштабного вторгнення. Систематизовано ризики психічного здоров'я волонтерів під час війни. Виділено та окреслено необхідність формування та розвитку резильєнтності волонтерів у воєнний та післявоєнний часи.*

*Констатовано, що рівень резильєнтності більшості опитаних волонтерів є низьким. Волонтерів з високим рівнем резильєнтності, отже, тих, що можуть подолати напруженість, відновитися та зрости особистісно навіть в умовах війни, незначна кількість.*

*Рівень резильєнтності волонтерів, які проживають в Україні в умовах щоденних стресів та воєнних загроз, переважно низький, отже, недостатній. При цьому у волонтерів, які вимушено проживають за кордоном, децю переважає середній рівень резильєнтності, отже, цим респондентам легше пристосуватися до нових змін з огляду на безпечні умови.*

**Ключові слова:** резильєнтність, психічне здоров'я, волонтерство, воєнний стан, включеність, контроль, прийняття ризику.

**Introduction.** In 2022, Ukraine ranked 10th out of 119 countries in the World Giving Index 2022. Since then, engagement and donations have only increased. The full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against

Ukraine led to the active deployment of volunteers, volunteer organizations, charitable foundations, and assistance centers.

As of January 1, 2022, there were 20,498 charitable organizations, and by January 1, 2023, their number had

reached 26,846. Hundreds of thousands of motivated Ukrainians who have joined the volunteer movement demonstrate not only social awareness, charity, humanity, responsibility, but also high efficiency in their activities.

Despite the fact that in the conditions of war, volunteering is a valuable resource and an important direction of the rear support of the military, social, humanitarian and other spheres of the country's public life, nevertheless, this type of activity still remains the most stressful, with a high risk of burnout. Having close emotional contact with soldiers on the front lines, people who have suffered indignities, captivity, torture, or other hardships during the occupation, and with displaced persons who have lost their relatives, homes, and jobs, volunteers experience constant worries, fear, stress, psychological, and emotional exhaustion. Additionally, volunteers, like military or civilians, may feel fear for their safety and the safety of their relatives, lose contact with loved ones, be in combat zones or occupied territories, face forced displacement, or other problems arising from emergency situations. Therefore, maintaining the psychological stability of volunteers in wartime conditions becomes particularly important.

Normal functioning of mental processes, states and properties is evidence of mental health. Resilience, as an adaptive and protective mechanism of the individual, contributes to the restoration of personal and social resources, and therefore to the preservation of mental health of volunteers.

The attention of Ukrainian researchers to the problem of volunteer resilience in wartime conditions remains understudied. However, the organization of psychological support to increase the resilience of volunteers in particular, and to preserve their mental health in general, is an extremely relevant and important issue. The results of research by both domestic and foreign scientists, aimed at theoretical substantiation and expanded content of the phenomenon of resilience, will be a good basis for conducting empirical research and developing a psycho-correctional program for volunteers [1; 2; 3].

The purpose is to theoretically substantiate and empirically investigate the psychological characteristics of volunteer resilience in martial law.

**Materials and methods.** To achieve the set tasks, the following complex of theoretical and experimental methods was used: theoretical methods: analysis, synthesis, generalization, classification, and systematization of modern scientific and empirical research of resilience; empirical methods: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) (adapted by Z. Kireeva, O. Odnostalko, B. Biron); the "Brief Resilience Scale" (by B. Smith et al., adapted by O. Shevchenko); the "Hardiness Survey" by S. Maddi (adapted by D. Leontiev).

**Results.** The World Health Organization (WHO) defines resilience in two directions. Firstly, resilience as personal resourcefulness, the development of which occurs through protective mechanisms. Secondly, resilience as the ability to cope relatively well with difficult situations.

Resilience is the process and consequence of positive adaptation to difficult life events, especially through mental,

emotional, or behavioral flexibility and adaptation to external and internal demands. This definition, approved by the American Psychological Association (APA), is the most common and used.

The global community recognizes the importance of the volunteer movement as a way to strengthen and preserve universal human values, the realization of rights and responsibilities of citizens, and personal growth through the realization of human potential. The United Nations considers volunteerism to be socially beneficial activity on a voluntary basis, primarily aimed at solving problems in the fight against poverty, overcoming social inequality and discrimination, timely response and prevention of disasters, social integration, etc. [3].

The creation of the Helpline service in 1992 is considered to be the beginning of volunteerism in independent Ukraine. On December 10, 2003, for the first time by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the resolution "On the Approval of the Regulation on Volunteer Activities in the Field of Social Services" officially recognized volunteer activity, and in 2011, the The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law "On Volunteer Activity".

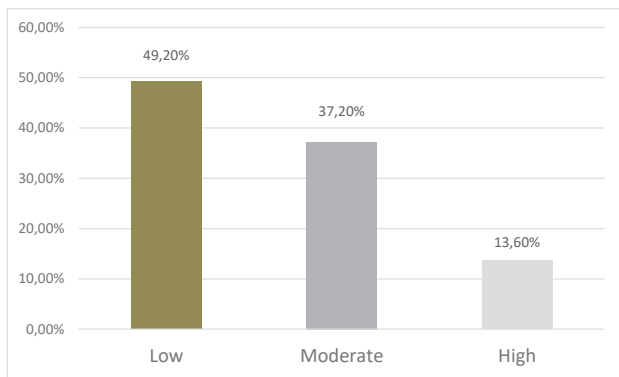
The Law "On Volunteer Activity" defines volunteering as selfless, voluntary, socially oriented, non-profit activity carried out by volunteers and volunteer organizations through the provision of volunteer services. Due to the security situation caused by the martial law, empirical research to identify the psychological characteristics of volunteer resilience was conducted online, in one stage. In July 2022, data collection was conducted using a Google form.

The research involved 31 volunteers, including 27 women and 4 men. The age of the respondents ranged from 26 to 59 years (the average age in the sample was 34 years). During the psychodiagnostic methods, 74.2% of the volunteers we surveyed lived in Ukraine, mostly in front-line cities, while 25.8% of people were forced to stay abroad.

For the empirical research of resilience characteristics, the following psychodiagnostic tools have been used: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) (adapted by Z. Kireeva, O. Odnostalko, B. Biron) [4] was used to determine the overall level of personality resilience; the "Brief Resilience Scale" (by B. Smith et al., adapted by O. Shevchenko) and the "Hardiness Survey" by S. Maddi (adapted by D. Leontiev) [5; 6] was used with the aim of determining the level of hardiness and its structural components in volunteers.

It is worth starting the analysis and interpretation of the obtained results with the first applied method – CD-RISC-10, using which we determined the level of resilience among volunteers. The results regarding the resilience levels of the studied volunteers were presented in Fig. 1.

Analyzing the results, we found that almost half of the studied volunteers, namely 49.2%, have a low level of resilience. Such volunteers are prone to a low level of stress resistance, have a low resistance to change, find it very difficult to withstand stressful situations, return to a previous emotionally stable state, and especially to grow under conditions of negative life experiences.



**Fig. 1. Levels of volunteers' resilience (according to the CD-RISC-10)**

37.2% of volunteers have a moderate level of resilience. It is worth noting that a moderate level of resilience is characteristic of individuals who are relatively resistant to new stressful situations, but find it quite difficult to recover, psychologically grow, and strengthen after difficult life events, especially those caused by war and constant danger. They do not always make the right decisions because they only sometimes feel confident. And only 13.6% of the studied volunteers exhibited a high level of resilience, indicating their high capacity for recovery and adaptation in stressful, traumatic events, as well as a propensity for utilizing opportunities and growing in challenging situations.

Since our sample consists of studied volunteers who are in Ukraine as well as those who are forced to stay abroad, we decided to compare their results and visually represent them in Fig. 2. Among respondents who are forced to live abroad, a significantly higher number of individuals have moderate (53.8%) and low levels of resilience (33.5%) compared to those living in Ukraine. Thus, 54.2% of volunteers remaining in Ukraine, mostly in front-line cities, consequently facing a feeling of constant anxiety from danger and vulnerability, naturally have a low level of resilience. The percentage of individuals with a high level of resilience in both studied categories is very low, namely 12.7% and 10.4%, who have a high capacity for recovery and were able to adapt even to stressful, traumatic situations caused by war.

Overall, we can assume that the majority of volunteers living abroad were able to adapt more easily to new changes,

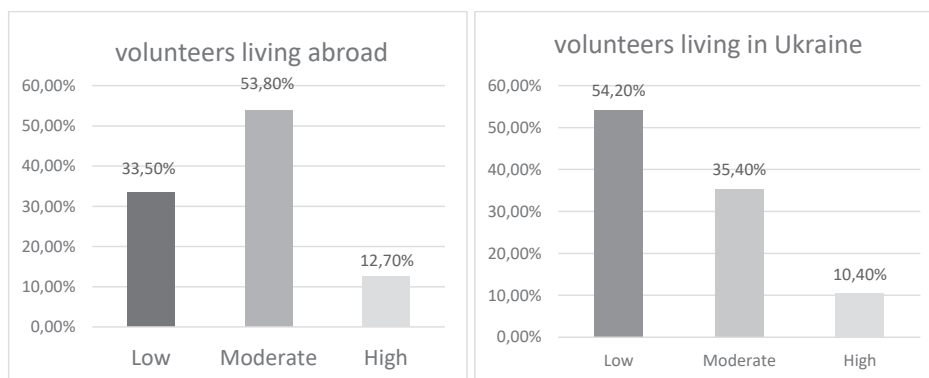
being in safe conditions. However, it remains an open question regarding their resilience levels to the forced relocation caused by the start of the full-scale invasion. We also determined the overall resilience indicator of volunteers during the war using the "Brief Resilience Scale" (by B. Smith et al., adapted by O. Shevchenko) and its results are shown Fig. 3.

Analyzing the obtained data, we concluded that the vast majority of volunteers have an insufficient level of resilience development. 44.3% of the studied volunteers have a low level of resilience, therefore, they struggle with and particularly suffer from life's stressful situations, especially in conditions of war. It is difficult for them to recover and, moreover, to return to the emotional state that preceded the traumatic event.

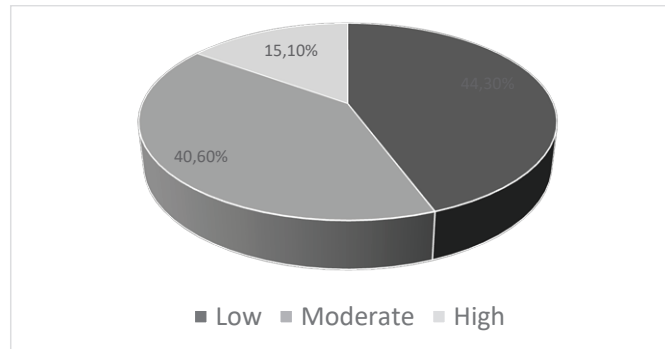
40.6% of volunteers with an average level of resilience can overcome a significant number of problems and adversities without serious consequences for their own mental health and have partially developed resilience. However, in conditions of war, it will be difficult to emotionally recover and grow. Only a small part of volunteers, namely 15.1%, have a high level of resilience and can quite easily cope with tension, daily stressful situations that arise during volunteer activities. A high level of resilience development also contributes to adaptation, recovery, and personal growth even in traumatic, threatening events caused by war.

A comparative analysis of the resilience levels of volunteers depending on their place of residence was also conducted (see Fig. 4). According to the obtained data, a slightly larger part of volunteers living abroad have a moderate level of resilience, namely 44.6%. 38.9% of respondents have a low level, while 16.5% of surveyed volunteers have a high level. Among those living in Ukraine, the majority of interviewed volunteers – 51.3% have a low level of resilience, 38.8% and 10.9% have an average and high level, respectively.

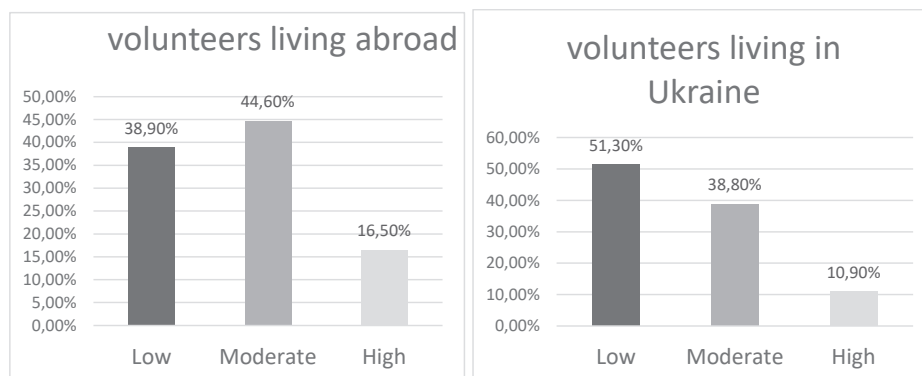
The next phase involved analyzing and interpreting the characteristics of the resilience level of volunteers through the "Hardiness Survey" by S. Maddi (adapted by D. Leontiev). It was analyzed both the overall indicator of resilience level and its main components, namely: involvement, control and risk acceptance. In general, the better these indicators and components are expressed, the easier it is for a person to overcome stress and resist internal tension under difficult life circumstances.



**Fig. 2. Levels of volunteers' resilience depending on the place of residence (according to the CD-RISC-10)**



**Fig. 3. Levels of volunteers' resilience (according to the "Brief Resilience Scale")**



**Fig. 4. Levels of volunteers' resilience depending on their place of residence (according to the "Brief Resilience Scale")**

Analysis of the general resilience indicator, graphically presented in Fig. 5, allowed us to conclude that nearly half of the studied volunteers, namely 48.9%, have an average level of resilience. It can be said that it is characteristic of such personalities to cope with stress situationally, occasionally demonstrate psychological flexibility, personal motivation, and prevent the emergence of internal tension when overcoming problematic situations. 36% of the study participants had a low level of resilience. Typically, such volunteers have a high level of anxiety, find it difficult to cope with stressful situations, and to find optimal paths for self-development under difficult life circumstances. People with a low level of resilience often live as if in the past, feel dissatisfied with their own lives, do not believe that they can control events in their lives.

Only a small part of the volunteers, namely 15.1%, have a high level of resilience that is, they have a persistently expressed system of ideas about themselves, the world and relationships with others, their lives have a specific purpose and are meaningful. They can relatively easily cope with tension and daily stressful situations that arise during volunteer activities. A high level of resilience development also facilitates adaptation, recovery, and personal growth even in the face of traumatic, threatening events caused by war.

Next, we analyzed the results of three scales—components of resilience, namely: involvement, control and risk acceptance. The group results of the expression of resilience components among volunteers during the war were

presented in Table 1. One of the important indicators of resilience is involvement, which gives respondents a sense of significance and fulfillment, fascination with their own activities, and satisfaction from work. It was found that the dominant level on the "involvement" scale is medium. Such volunteers exhibit situational satisfaction with their activities.

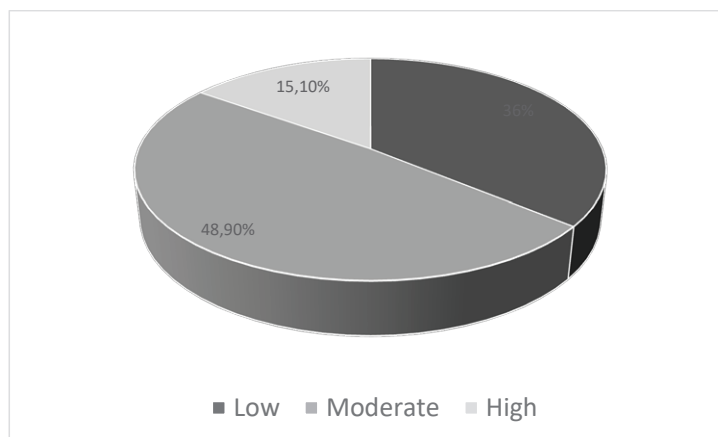
28.1% of the surveyed volunteers have a low level of the "involvement" scale, meaning they do not feel sufficient satisfaction from their own activities and may perceive themselves as "outside" of life. They are characterized by uncertainty, often convinced that it is impossible to enjoy work.

A slightly lower percentage of people, namely 23.9%, have a high level of involvement according to the same scale. They tend to be creative, purposeful and self-motivated. Involvement gives them strength, a sense of personal value, and significance.

The "control" scale indicates the degree of control over one's life and the ability to choose one's path. Among the volunteers, the average level of control was dominant, accounting for 55.4%, which means that their control is most often situational. Such personalities are characterized by confidence in their own abilities, control and understanding, that influence the outcome, as well as helplessness, a belief in their own inability to solve life's problems.

25.8% of respondents have a high level on this scale, thus likely to feel that they have maximum control over





**Fig. 5. Indicators of the general level of volunteers' resilience (according to the "Brief Resilience Scale")**

Table 1

**The expression of resilience components among volunteers according to the "Brief Resilience Scale"**

Scale	Low level	Medium level	High level
Involvement	28.1%	48%	23.9%
Control	18.8%	55.4%	25.8%
Risk acceptance	25.4%	58.2%	16.4%

the situation and personally choose their own activities and life path. Such volunteers are convinced that personal resources will help them cope with life's troubles and difficulties. 18.8% of volunteers with a low level on the "control" scale most likely often feel helpless, tend to believe that they do not affect the outcome of their own activities. They have difficulties in making decisions and need the support of loved ones.

The "risk acceptance" scale indicates the perception of positive or negative experiences as a means of personal development and acquiring new knowledge. It was found that the majority of the studied volunteers, namely 58.2%, have an average level on this indicator. They are characterized by a situational tendency to perceive personal experience as further self-development. 25.4% of the subjects have a low level. Such volunteers feel the fear of failure. They tend to avoid negative experiences as resourceful, because they are prone to comfort, seeking safety and the absence of risk.

A minority, namely 16.4% of volunteers, have a high level on the "risk acceptance" scale, meaning they are convinced that any experience, skills, and knowledge contribute to their own development. Since such people interpret life as a way of gaining personal experience, they may take risks even in the absence of success guarantees.

The summarized results of the empirical study showed that the majority of the studied volunteers have a low or average level of resilience. The resilience level of the vast majority of the surveyed volunteers living in Ukraine (74.2%) under conditions of daily stress and military threats is insufficient. Therefore, the obtained research results serve as a basis for developing a program to increase the resilience level of volunteers.

**Conclusions.** Scientists' attention in defining the concept focuses on considering resilience as a personality trait,

a dynamic process, or an adaptive-defensive mechanism. To improve mental health and support psychosocial well-being, it is important to develop and improve resilience. Volunteering is a valuable resource and an important direction for supporting military, social, humanitarian, and other areas of a country's social life, especially in martial law. This type of activity requires high responsibility, social activity, empathy, tolerance, and humanism from volunteers.

It should be noted that volunteer activity is one of the most stressful, with constant tension and a high risk of emotional burnout. In martial law volunteers experience constant stress, exhaustion, emotional burnout, and are affected by traumatic events and stories from those who have suffered from the war. Resilience, as a defense mechanism of the personality, contributes to the restoration of personal and social resources, and thus, the preservation of volunteers' mental health.

Within the empirical research, it has been found: according to the "Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale" (CD-RISC-10), almost half of the studied volunteers have a low level of resilience, almost half of the studied volunteers have a low level of resilience, making them prone to a low level of stress resistance, having low resistance to change, and struggling to withstand stressful situations.

According to the "Brief Resilience Scale" by B. Smith, slightly less than half of the respondents have a low, insufficient level of resilience. Such volunteers find it difficult to recover in stressful, in martial law and return to their own emotional state that preceded the traumatic event.

Overall, the resilience level of the majority of the surveyed volunteers was found to be low. Only a small number of the respondents had a high level of resilience, meaning they can overcome tension, recover, and grow personally in the face of threatening events caused by war.

The resilience level of volunteers living in Ukraine under conditions of daily stress and military threats is mostly low, thus insufficient. Meanwhile, volunteers living abroad

involuntarily have a somewhat predominant average level of resilience. We can assume that such respondents find it easier to adapt to new changes, considering the safe conditions.

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